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# The Invisible and the Visible: Understanding Intercultural Friendships of Chinese Immigrant Youth

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Invisible and the Visible: Understanding Intercultural Friendships  
of Chinese Immigrant Youth

by

Xiaohong Feng

A THESIS

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### Abstract

This research, a critical ethnographic case study of a western city in Canada, explored the visible and hidden barriers young Chinese immigrants face when forming and developing friendships with non-immigrant peers. Qualitative data collection methods included 74 interviews with Chinese immigrant youth (16- to 18-year-old newcomers, Generation 1.5, and Generation 2), their parents, and teachers; school and home observations; documents; and autoethnography. By employing the theoretical perspective of postcolonial theories, critical pedagogy, and acculturation to contextualize the historical impact of social inequalities, cultural hegemony, and linguistic dominance, the research revealed the lived experiences of the marginalized in schools and sought both to disrupt hidden forms of racism and to build bridges for sociocultural integration in schools. The research presented here recognizes the dynamic dialectic nature of intercultural friendship-building set within a pluralistic world that is in cultural and social conflict. Barriers to intercultural relationships fall into three main categories: (a) cross-cultural exclusions, including polite exclusion, lack of acceptance, ignorance due to lack of contact, bullying, intangible psychological distance, and local cultural superiority; (b) family cultural influence, including parental ideologies, educational beliefs and values, and survival pressures; and (c) beyond cultural differences, including parents' inability to be role models, curricular content, teaching strategies, and the hidden curriculum. Given the diversity of Canadian classrooms, a critical understanding of intercultural friendships is crucial to the ongoing achievement of social equity. This research thus takes a positive step towards intercultural communication, understanding, and respect.

*Keywords:* Chinese immigrant youth, intercultural friendships, intercultural exclusion, parental socialization

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the Chinese immigrant youth  
whose challenges have been visible and invisible in their journey of  
intercultural friendship building.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Research Problem**

Our family (my husband, my daughter, and I) emigrated from China to Canada ten years ago. As an immigrant mother, I have been perplexed for many years by observing the low frequency of social interactions between Chinese ethnic youth and their European Canadian peers both in and out of school.

If people live in a stable world from an early age, they may not realize the feelings of isolation, because one's place is secure, and everything in the world is taken for granted. Only upon moving hastily, from one world to another, and fundamentally, breaking connections with what is familiar and known, and confronting a world in which everything is new, does one experience feelings of homelessness and the loss of family and friends.

For many new immigrants arriving in Canada for the first time, the most intolerable feeling is breaking away and leaving their former lives. With no old classmates, no relatives, no community, no common language, no other people's understanding and sympathy, they only suffer and endure. Newcomers find themselves overwhelmed by an unspeakable sense of segregation and feeling that they do not belong to this place.

My family too, experienced cultural shock, confusion, and feelings of loneliness. I could still seemingly learn how to cope with these encounters gradually. However, in my heart, I do not feel I am a Canadian since my detachment cannot be resolved here.

As a family, we have each faced significant difficulties with integration, especially our daughter; however, despite immigration and settlement problems encountered, we have held onto a positive vision for our future life. Although we knew based on common sense understandings that our family's migration to a new country with a new language, a different culture, and

unfamiliar customs would demand major changes from all of us, we hoped to be able to help our daughter and ourselves integrate effectively into the innovative Canadian culture.

As we started our new lives, my husband and I tried our best to make new friends, especially with European Canadian peers. The formation of intercultural friendships holds great promise for the development of intercultural understanding and acceptance (Jackson, 2005), but at the same time, it is neither a simple nor linear process. For example, when I was a diploma student in social work at an Albertan university, I realized that I was often the only non-native English-speaking student in some of my classes. Understandably, the isolation was subtle. Some classmates were polite, but some were indifferent, and some ignored me. If I tried to build friendships with them, there was an intangible and unspoken distance between us. Often, my peers were reluctant to work with immigrant classmates on projects. When I had opportunities to discuss what we were learning, some European Canadian peers' tone, mood, facial expressions, and sometimes impatient attitudes made me feel uncomfortable. The classroom culture was not welcoming, and I felt excluded. If some of them chatted with me after class, they were only curious about why I had immigrated to Canada. They were not interested in me as a person. This isolating, depressing classroom atmosphere disappointed me.

Later, I became aware that I had been labelled and categorized as a foreign woman, a Chinese person, or an Asian student, with all the attendant negative stereotypes that came with such labels. As Elabor-Idemudia (2005) stated quite rightly:

The process of integration has been unidirectional, with immigrant groups expected to give up their cultural values and adopt the cultural attributes of the host country. Immigrants are often perceived as primitive and backward people from poor Third World countries, without the knowledge of English or French, and therefore, "Otherized" and alienated. (p. 60)

Despite our initial difficulties, my husband and I still believed that human commonalities (such as love, trust, understanding, respect, appreciation, friendships) would transcend the differences. We were hopeful that our child would be able to form intercultural friendships more easily at school. However, when my daughter was placed in a public elementary school, she built friendships only within her same ethnic group. She said that her European Canadian peers already had their own friends, and that they were reluctant to play with her. I realized then that it is a long journey to build intercultural friendships.

When my daughter started Grade 7, she was the only Chinese immigrant in her classroom. Research has shown that adolescence is a significant period of growth and development in a child's life. This is a time when major life decisions are made, such as developing one's educational path, occupation, and family goals (Nurmi, 1991). It is also a time when one's personality is continuing to develop. Peer relationships play an especially significant role in the psychological well-being of youths (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). As an immigrant mother of a 13-year-old only child, I hoped that my daughter would integrate successfully but not be assimilated into the mainstream culture. However, she has indicated that she has, thus far, been isolated in her attempts to build intercultural friendships.

Due to these and other personal experiences with racialization, I started to ponder about where I fit within the Canadian power spectrum. Briskin (1998) noted aptly that "naming the practices of power can be unsettling for those who benefit from them and even for those who do not benefit but have developed a comfortable acceptance of and familiarity with them" (p. 27). Introspection has led me to think about how new immigrants and their children are treated. Based on my subsequent observations and communications with other Chinese immigrant parents, I have gradually realized that it is a shared experience for Chinese immigrant youth to prefer to

keep same-culture friendships. In fact, I think that most Chinese immigrant youth in Canada form same-culture friendships. For example, when my daughter was in primary school, I lived in an apartment building in which the majority of the immigrant residents had lived there for several years. The immigrant children from the building always played together, both in and out of school. One reason for this was that their parents could contact and communicate with each other more easily because of their many cultural commonalities.

It is difficult for immigrant parents to connect with non-immigrant parents. Furthermore, as immigrant parents, our personal experiences with struggling to adjust to our host country may sometimes affect our children's decision-making abilities regarding intercultural friendships. Moreover, teachers, for convenience, often encourage children from the same country to work together in and out of school for projects, which further influences children to form friendships with similar peers.

Some have argued that such low frequency intergroup contact is natural and normal, due to physical and cultural differences. However, I have observed many young children with different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds playing together and enjoying themselves in daycare and even elementary schools. Therefore, I keep returning to one significant question: Why do many immigrant youths feel that it is so difficult to form intercultural friendships? I believe, as does M. Kim (2011) that after children grow up, problems "in racial or cultural stereotypes construction [lead to] . . . the creation of difference" (p. 113), especially in high schools.

To sum up, several challenges appear to affect intercultural friendships, including peer exclusion, psychological distance in ideology, different values, consciousness of racialized backgrounds, comfort zones, life beliefs, negative media influences, ethnic stereotypes, and one-



way adaptation. Such factors contribute to ethnic group divisions in schools and workplaces. This study was designed to explore the barriers to intercultural friendships between immigrant youths and their mainstream Canadian peers in high schools.

### **Context of the Study**

I geared this study to be intersubjective and to facilitate an understanding of the experiences of Chinese immigrant youths, the challenges they face, and the barriers they come up against when deciding whether to create intercultural friendships. As background to the study, I discuss four research contexts: first, the demographic background; second, the impact of Chinese immigration history in Canada; third, Generation 1.5 Chinese immigrant youth; and fourth, the role of immigrant parents in intercultural friendships.

**Demographic background.** Demographically, Canadian society is linguistically, religiously, ethnically, and culturally pluralistic. According to a census profile in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016a), the number of Chinese immigrants in Canada was 1,805,705 in 2016. China has been one of the top source countries for immigrants since 1998, according to the 2017 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2017). In 2016, Mandarin was ranked as the number one unofficial language spoken at home (Statistics Canada, 2016b), and the admissions of Chinese-speaking permanent residents was increasing from 7.65 percent of total admissions in 2015 to 9.74 percent in 2016 (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2016). In Calgary alone, Chinese immigrants account for around 5 percent of the city's total population (Statistics Canada, 2016a). The percentage of immigrant children in Canadian schools is growing faster than the number of native-born Canadian children attending Canadian schools. The largest proportion of the immigrant youth population in Canada comes from the Asia Pacific region (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2011). Based on Statistics Canada (2006) data, the

number of Chinese immigrant youth (ages 15–24) was 186,925, making them the largest, visible minority youth population in Canada. However, such an increase in the number of immigrants has not resulted in a corresponding adjustment to the school system.

There is a myth that ethnic exclusion is nonexistent in Canada (Lund, 2006) due to Canada's cultural mosaic. Ethnic and cultural diversity due to migration can create "tensions and divisions, . . . [given that] immigrants are often cast as outsiders who are different from, and sometimes opposed to, Canadian values and traditions" (P. S. Li, 2003, p. 131). For instance, in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and the Prairies, "between 25 percent and 37 percent of new immigrant children reported perceiving unfair treatment by their peers and by teachers" (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 383), despite "Canada's agreement to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 2, in principle" (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 383). Otherness and distinction of values and behaviours, including labelling people with different skin colour or appearance, may be seen as "incompatible with traditions in Canada" (P. S. Li, 2003, p. 131) and as "undermining Canadian cohesiveness" (P. S. Li, 2003, p. 131). Yet Asian immigrant youths often "grow up among strangers" (Sudra, 2009) who do not fully accept them. As a result, immigrant youth struggle with two dissimilar influences: their parents' Asian parenting style and the westernized school culture.

**Chinese immigration history in Canada.** My research inquiry was generated through exploring the complexity of the concept of positionality. By positioning and repositioning myself (or being repositioned by others) as the mother of an immigrant youth, or as a Chinese immigrant woman in a Canadian context, I began to perceive the historical impact of social inequalities, which cultural hegemony and linguistic dominance, as well as social marginalization in a harsh school environment, have brought about. P. S. Li (1998) stated that the prospects of the Chinese

in Canada depend on “how receptive Canadian society is to be growing racial and cultural diversity” (p. 155). Despite “the financial and occupational achievements” (P. S. Li, 1998, p. 154) of Chinese Canadians, sections of Canadian society have shown “reluctance to accept them as full-fledged Canadians” (P. S. Li, 1998, p. 154).

Chinese people were excluded in Canada in the past, from 1885 to 1962. They were “subjected to more racist laws than any other group in Canadian history” (Law Union of Ontario, 1981, as cited in Taylor, 1991, p. 22). According to Zhang, the Chinese ancestors suffered numerous injustices in Canada. She described stories of “a lengthy and profound journey of two races finally becoming reconciled after a century of distrust and rejection” (Zhang, 2011, p. ix). Zhang also illustrated that from 1878 to 1885, Chinese people braved the ocean and left aging parents, newlywed wives, or young children behind to come to a wild, foreign land, British Columbia (BC), to pursue a good living and prosperity. However, at parties celebrating the last railroad spike, the Chinese labourers who had given their lives to building the Pacific railroad were not even given the respect of being mentioned. Furthermore, Chinese workers became separated from their families in China by the head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act. As well, Chinese soldiers who “volunteered to fight under the Canadian flag on the battle fronts of Europe and Asia” (Zhang, 2011, p. 481) were still “not permitted to take Canadian citizenship” (Zhang, 2011, p. 481) when they returned to Canada.

Furthermore, Chinese students were not allowed to attend the same schools as the local students in Vancouver, BC, in 1922 and 1923 (Stanley, 2011). Most residents saw Chinese children and their parents as aliens who did not really belong in BC. It seemed self-evident that “the Chinese” and “Canadians” were different groups; “the former needed special actions and did not belong in the same schools as the latter” (Stanley, 2011, p. 231). However, such segregation

tends to ignore the agency of the excluded group. As a result, Chinese students went on strike to protest the school board's attempt to impose segregation.

In the book *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians*, Canadian historian Stanley (2011) analyzed how racism victimized Chinese students, and how they were able to respond and organize against the established belief system. The result was a new and hybrid form of identity for Chinese Canadians. As Stanley described it, "It was at heart a struggle over what it meant to be human, to have shared humanity recognized and real rather than imagined differences engaged" (2011, p. 230). Nonetheless, people with Chinese origins continue to be categorized as outsiders to the Canadian nation and may be subjected to racist aggression and discrimination.

**Generation 1.5 Chinese immigrant youths' educational background.** Roberge (2005) stated that the term Generation 1.5 (sometimes written as 1.5G) referred to "people who immigrate to a new country before or during when they are teens" (as cited in Yoon, 2008, p. 5). That is, they bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their integration and socialization in the new country. Their identities usually blend their new culture and their old ethnic traditions. Specifically, in the case of the cultural influences of traditional values on Chinese immigrant youths, there are six points to consider.

First, regarding class participation, in traditional Chinese classrooms, listening is superior to speaking; hence, Chinese immigrant youths are generally less comfortable giving presentations, participating in discussions and debates, offering explanations, and making comments (Zheng, 2008), because in China, learning is teacher-centred and students are not accustomed to speaking frequently. For example, it is written in *Analects of Confucius* (Waley, 2005), 言多必失 (He who speaks more is prone to make errors), and 敏于思而慎于言 (He

should use active thinking but be careful in his speech).

Second, for reading and writing, parents emphasize the importance of reading over writing in order to build a strong knowledge base. Consequently, teens may be poor writers (Zheng, 2008). Parents also often expect their children to obey their teachers' orders and be obedient.

Third, teens are generally not accustomed to critical thinking, because Chinese culture stresses harmony, and more specifically, that harmony is the best policy: 以和为贵 (The relationship between people is more important than being right). Parents often discourage their children from having their own opinions. These three characteristics may make Chinese youth feel that it is hard to fit into a new culture that stresses individualism, communication, and interaction. When children feel frustrated, parents may be inclined to help them solve problems in person, showing over-protective parenting styles and high expectations around academic achievements.

Fourth, some Chinese immigrant children are not sociable because their parents do not attach importance to having a social life. These youths therefore have limited learning opportunities outside the family and school environments.

Fifth, some immigrant children lack self-confidence because their parents believe that pride leads to loss, whereas modesty brings benefit (满招损，谦受益). As a result, they often praise their children cautiously. Chinese parents may ignore the difference between pride and self-confidence.

Last, Chinese immigrant youth, especially those recently arrived, may lack creativity because their parents have likely emphasized loyalty, filial affection, humility (忠孝和顺), and

“in-the-box” thinking. Therefore, students may lack the ability to think “outside the box” or engage in divergent thinking. To sum up, I believe that some of these Confucian ideals are not applicable within current Canadian contexts and that they create an ideological clash. As immigrant youths grow older, there seems to be increased parent–youth conflict due to contrasting ideas about youth authority and autonomy (Fuligni, 1998).

**Role of immigrant parents.** Confucianism is a “cultural ideology upon which socialization, familial, and parent–child relationships” (Leong, Qin, & Way, 2011, p. 176) are built in the Chinese culture. Culturally embedded modes of being, thinking, valuing, and behaving originate in people’s daily lives and in a world shaped by culture and history. Based upon Confucian ideals, first-generation Chinese immigrant parents generally think highly of children’s academic marks and strongly support and encourage them to study hard due to the spirit of sayings such as “万般皆下品，惟有读书高” (The worth of other pursuits is small, the study of books exceeds them all). The ethic of filial piety highlights that parents are responsible for governing, teaching, and disciplining their children. Accordingly, offspring should be educated to respect, honour, and obey their parents. Also, closely related to the tenets of Confucian philosophy is collectivist thought, with the goals of the group superseding those of the individual (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

As immigrant parents, my husband and I are partially responsible for our child’s ability to adapt within the dynamic process of constructing a new culture (J. Li, 2009). The third culture construction is framed by Casmir (1999), who pointed out that human communication should be built on establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. He defined third culture building as

the construction of a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved. . . . Third culture building is not in short-term interactions, but instead it was developed to assist us in a better understanding of the long-term building processes, which are at the root of any cultural construction. (Casmir, 1999, p. 92)

Chinese immigrant youth who grow up in both China and Canada continue to be socialized within the Chinese culture in their families. They gain knowledge of Canadian culture in their schools and from the media. They may form their own unique blended culture beyond the traditional and the new. Furthermore, many Chinese immigrant parents such as myself, may realize that early peer experiences and interactions are critically important for their children's holistic development (including social competence, academic achievement, and self-esteem). As my daughter grows into adolescence, I am acutely aware of the importance of the development of intercultural competences as it is defined in educational research.

The thought that I must be well prepared for the potential conflicts that may hinder my child's growth continues to haunt me. I feel that raising a child in Canada is like probing in the darkness. This may be so for many other immigrant parents, regardless of culture, ethnicity, educational level, and religion. It is not that they know nothing about how to deal with parental duties; it is that parents often rely on the methods their parents used to raise them. For example, it has become a natural part of our family life for me to teach my child about our native language and culture, out of consideration that children should know their mother language and carry on their parents' cultural heritage. However, I find this might unwittingly affects our child's ability to build intercultural friendships in Canada. While learning about her heritage language and culture can be helpful for building her Chinese identity, it may also make her aware of how these values, behaviours, and customs are different from those of her peers. Children raised in these circumstances may feel lost at times as to where they fit in and what they should do about it.

Cultural practice and knowledge also play an important role in intercultural relationship building. Viewing this process from the perspective of the theory of cultural assimilation, in which the immigrant gains possible acceptance at the cost of the heritage culture and ethnic cultural identity (Waters & Jiménez, 2005), may help people to reflect on the obstacles that stand in the way of immigrant youths' paths to intercultural friendships. As Nieto (1999) wrote:

Assimilation can result in what Felix Boateng (1990) has called deculturalization, a process by which individuals are forcibly deprived of their culture. This does not mean the loss of a group's culture—something that usually takes several generations—but rather, it can result in the failure to acknowledge the important role that culture may have in students' values and behaviour. (p. 34)

### **Research Aims and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, I aimed to analyze and reveal the visible and invisible barriers standing in the way of intercultural friendships for Chinese immigrant youths. These barriers get involved in historical racial discrimination and the dominance of whiteness in society, including the numerous injustices Chinese ancestors suffered in Canada. Second, this study was designed to explore the relationships between cultural socialization and intercultural friendships. It is my belief that intercultural friendships, or lack thereof, are often associated with parental attitudes. I explored this concept by encouraging both parents and youth to share their experiences, challenges, and perceptions, and in the process bring to the forefront their voices, concerns, and perspectives. Third, I hoped that this study would raise awareness among school teachers, parents, and youth concerning the importance of intercultural education by investigating the intersubjective connections of difficulties, and suggesting that intercultural relationships may be helpful for these youths to bridge the gap between home, school, and the broader societal context.

Therefore, the overarching research question was, "What visible and invisible barriers do



Chinese immigrant youths face when forming intercultural friendships?” Subquestions based on this initial question were as follows:

- 1) To what extent do Chinese immigrant youths and their parents perceive that they are excluded? (See Chapter 4.)
- 2) How do Chinese immigrant youths negotiate the challenges of intercultural friendship building while their identities develop? To what extent does parental cultural socialization affect the development of intercultural friendships of Chinese immigrant youths? (See Chapter 5.)
- 3) To what extent do teachers understand the obstacles of intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youths and local peers? (See Chapter 6.)

### **Assumptions**

Four main assumptions underpinned this study. First, my primary assumption was that cultural factors do not comprise all of the challenges for Chinese immigrant youths in forming intercultural friendships. The challenges that Chinese immigrant youth face are rooted not only in their own culture, but also in host youths' exclusion, in the superficial nature of Canadian multiculturalism, and in a host of other issues that have largely to do with power. When I acknowledge that people do not see the hidden part of a cultural iceberg, it is likely for them to treat a strange culture as an alien product with a discriminatory attitude, and generate racial biases and stereotypes. Consequently, it is difficult for host youths to accept or understand the difference.

Second, both Canadian and Chinese youths face typical teen developmental stresses and intercultural pressures. Canadian youth may not understand the cultural differences and may be reluctant to accept immigrant students due to some pressures from in-group members' exclusion.

Third, I assumed that factors such as history, power, and feelings of cultural supremacy were at the root of the barriers. Recognition of high school immigrant youths' experiences and perceptions about intercultural friendships was crucial in the exploration of the barriers to intercultural interaction in multicultural classrooms and schools.

A final assumption I made is that intercultural friendships play a great role in all-round development of immigrant high school students. Chinese parents may need to place as much importance on intercultural friendships as new language learning and academic improvement. Also, teachers may need to transform their conservative beliefs, develop more critical self-consciousness of biases in their teaching, and recognize the location of culture diversity in pedagogy.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study offers a critical inquiry into the intercultural relationships between immigrant youths and their non-immigrant counterparts in a modern school-based Canadian context. I hope to have contributed to the field by providing a better understanding of the attributes influencing intercultural friendship building and the development of a deeper sense of belonging for immigrant youth. Specifically, I have examined the formation and development of the friendships, or lack thereof, between immigrant youths and their non-immigrant counterparts, and the complex relationships that exist arising from the influence of historical Chinese immigration, parental messages, teachers' attitudes, and the intercultural friendships choices made by immigrant youth. I have also developed suggestions for pre-service teacher training, parents, curriculum design, diverse classroom culture and inclusive teaching practices, in order to build bridges of sociocultural integration in schools.

This study is significant for a number of reasons. First, it provides new information for

designing curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher training and could help improve the teaching practices of social studies and intercultural education curricula, from which would emerge the teaching style of critical thinking and the acceptance of diverse values and other ways of seeing the world. It could also make school teachers think about their roles as cultural workers in supporting youth who are socially isolated in classrooms.

Second, the study findings help high school students prepare for more challenging intergroup socialization, which could inspire youth to build their confidence so as to be able to manage a greater breadth of intergroup encounters. Such preparation may make youth more likely to establish friendships with racialized out-group members (Tran & Lee, 2011).

Third, the study offers important comparative data on student identity. “Intercultural friendships provide us [researchers] with the opportunity to compare cultural influences on perceptions of self and other, especially the different cultural conceptions of private and public identities” (Kudo & Simkin, 2003, p. 92). In addition, kaleidoscopic identity is developed in the process of cultural negotiation.

Fourth, this study delivers recent facts about Chinese immigrant youths’ perceptions and challenges when forming relationships with their peers, as well as insight into how youth get along with each other. This study’s findings could be useful to educators, researchers, and parents by helping them be aware of the role of hidden or polite racism and the significance of bullying prevention during the process of intercultural friendship building. The “discriminatory attitudes [and] . . . assimilationist discourse” (Steinbach, 2010b, p. 106) of the host society students may begin to diminish with intercultural educational activities.

Fifth, this study is helpful in suggesting ways to create and promote more “inclusive discourses” (Willoughby, 2007, p. 256) within schools, including at the administrative and extra-

curricular levels, where students of all backgrounds feel they are “respected and valued members of the school community” (Willoughby, 2007, p. 256) to create “globally minded citizens, preparing them to work in international contexts and creating a more democratic society” (Gopal, 2011, p. 381). Given the ethnic diversity of Canadian classrooms, a better, more critical understanding of youths’ intercultural friendships is crucial to “ensuring the continuing success of Canada’s multicultural mosaic” (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010, p. 224).

This research aimed to mirror the image of Canadian society through the eyes of Chinese immigrant students, teachers, and parents in order to set the stage for embracing the development of a multicultural policy. This may require multiple perspectives and diverse ways of thinking in order for each cultural group to understand and learn from each other, which is the ideal state. By consequence, this multicultural country would become stronger and more competitive. An additional significance is that this study could also benefit other various social institutions including schools, communities, and countries that are facing and overcoming the challenges of being inclusive.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Intercultural friendships.** Involves close contact or friendships, rather than romantic relationships, between immigrant youth from different cultural backgrounds and non-immigrant peers in and out of the school environment over time, through a mutually beneficial, ongoing effort. These friendships may aid in the recognition of a self-hybrid identity, promote integration into the mainstream society from a social angle, and be helpful for the cultural adjustment and psychological adaptation process required for social interaction with host counterparts.

**Cultural socialization.** May involve teaching children about their ethnic history, encouraging use of the native language, and promoting ethnic pride (T. Brown & Krishnakumar,

2007).

**Integration.** Means sociocultural integration. Sociocultural integration allows youth to “integrate institutionally with identification with and recognition of new institutions, new cultures and with Canada as a whole” (Kymlicka, 1998, p. 53), especially in a “purely psychological sense” (Kymlicka, 1998, p. 53).

**Intercultural education (multicultural education).** Refers “broadly to pedagogical and curricular approaches that attend positively toward diversity, promoting equitable opportunities and outcomes for all learners regardless of ethnic or cultural origins, or other aspects of social identity” (Lund, 2014, p. 8).

**Generation 1.5.** Refers to people who immigrate to a new country before or during their early teens. They bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their integration and socialization in the new country. Their identity is thus a combination of new and old culture and traditions.

**White.** I use the term *White* rather than *Caucasian* as the Chinese-English translation of the word Caucasian is out of date. The descriptor “White” is not an attempt to categorize people simply by skin colour, but rather to signify a racialized identity following critical Whiteness studies (e.g., Lund & Carr, 2015).

**Racialization.** In this dissertation, I consider race as a dynamic social construction under the influence of power and privilege and not as a biological reality. However, the reader may note that, through the eyes of some participants, race is sometimes referred to as a ‘real’ distinction – which opens up the possibility of their discussing race as both cultural and biological differences.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1, “Introduction,” has examined the impact of Chinese immigration to Canada and the role of immigrant parents in helping Chinese immigrant youth, especially Generation 1.5, integrate into their new culture. It has also explored the reflexivity of the researcher’s multiple identities.

Chapter 2, “A Review of the Literature: Chinese Immigrant Youth and Intercultural Friendships,” discusses the theoretical framework of this study, including the intersection of critical pedagogy, acculturation, and postcolonial theories. It reviews the major literature pertaining to Chinese Canadian youth and intercultural friendships, literature regarding parental socialization in terms of family cultural influence. There is also a reflection on history of national Chinese in Canada.

Chapter 3, “Research Methodology,” discusses the selection and employment of critical ethnographic case studies as the research methodology. It highlights my philosophical assumptions and multiple identities as the researcher, situates the positions of this study, explains the theoretical considerations in radical human paradigms, and discusses the qualitative data collection methods I employed, such as school and home observations, interviews, and data analysis, and describes the process of entering the field and generating the data. The final sections address concerns over validity and reliability and limitations as well as delimitations.

Three further discussions analyze the findings and point out the challenges contextualized in both the family and school environments that affect Chinese youths’ competencies to build intercultural friendships. Those are in Chapter 4, “Cross-Cultural Distance and Peer Exclusion”; Chapter 5, “Family Cultural Influence and Beyond Cultural Difference: Through the Eyes of Chinese Immigrant Youth and Parents”; and Chapter 6, “Beyond Teaching Borders: Rethinking

Intercultural Friendships Through the Eyes of Teachers; Chapter 7, “Conclusion,” summarizes the findings of the study and provides recommendations for future research. The final chapter also presents the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, implications for future research, and my reflections upon the study.

### **Summary of Introduction**

This chapter provided an introduction of the study topic, identified the contexts for this research project, including a brief demographic description of Canada, the historical background of national Chinese immigrants, and the role of first-generation Chinese parents and their Generation 1.5 youths. It also included the research problem, the research purpose and questions, the rationales, and the significance of conducting this research in senior high schools in Southern Alberta. It concluded with definitions of terms used within the study. This study aimed to expand upon current research regarding youth intercultural friendships from a critical perspective. Specifically, it aimed to rethink intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youths and their mainstream Canadian peers in high schools in light of the impact of Chinese immigration history in Canada, the critical understanding of racialized identity, and Chinese immigrant youths’ intercultural friendship choices. Critical perspectives on intercultural friendships can offer suggestions for better teacher training, teaching practices, and classroom management, and can improve curriculum delivery to help build bridges of integration in schools. Given that the children of immigrants are key constituents in a multicultural society, this research project can offer a positive step forward towards intercultural communication, understanding, and respect. In the following chapter, I present the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research, including a wide range of literature that focuses on the issues and challenges immigrant students face within schools.

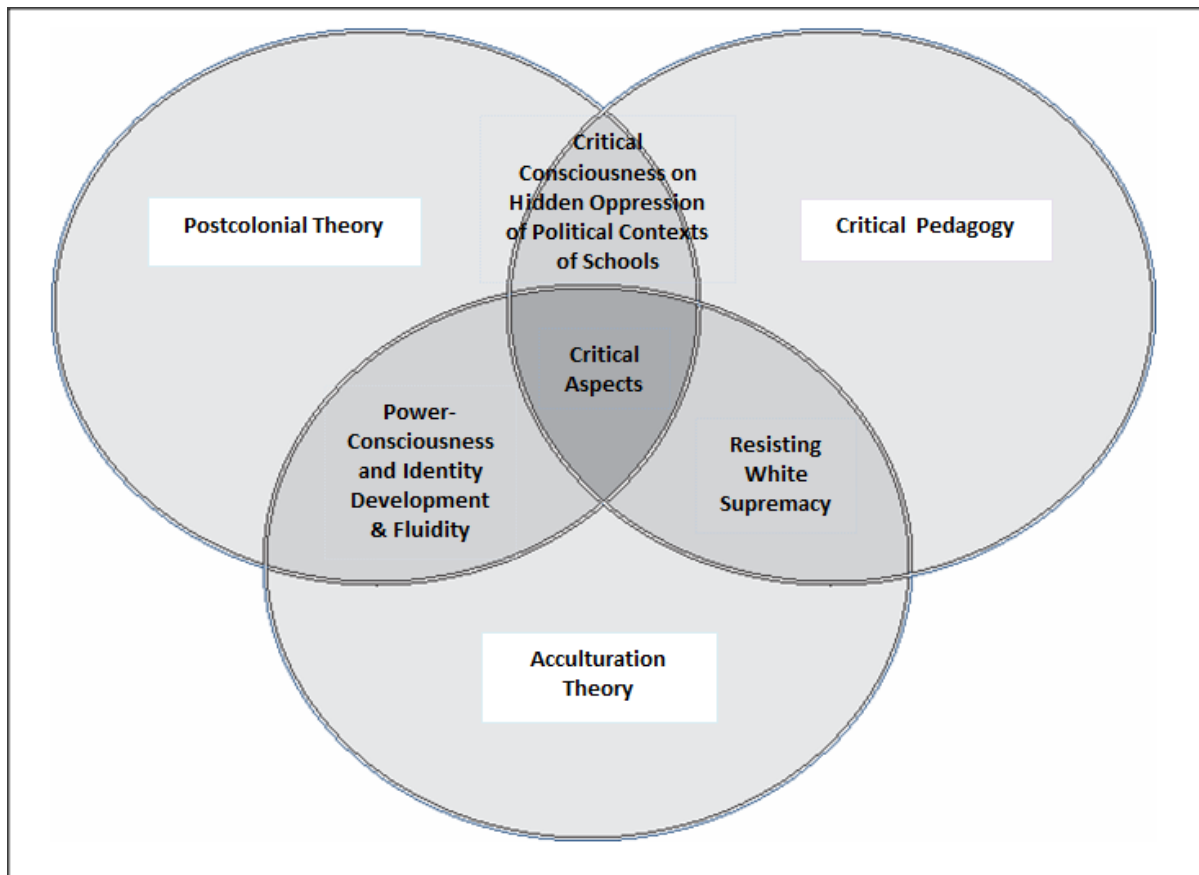
## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Review of the Literature**

In this chapter, I describe theoretical perspectives of my research project, including literature related to intercultural friendships and reflections on national Chinese immigration history in Canada. A close look at previous publications demonstrates that research in these areas is still scarce. The literature on intercultural friendships and Chinese immigration informs the main research question that underpinned this study: What challenges do Chinese immigrant youths face when forming intercultural friendships?

### **Theoretical Framework**

In previous studies of intercultural friendships, researchers have taken different perspectives while employing various theories to explore peer relations, such as Gareis' (1995, 2000) cultural identity perspective, or P. W. Lee's (2006) and Sias et al.'s (2008) identity management theory and third culture building model. As well, Yeh et al.'s (2008) ecological systems perspective, Edmonds and Killen's (2009) social cognitive domain theory, and Williams' (2010) contact theory and social balance theory have added to the knowledge base regarding peer friendships. Although these theories have been applied towards the exploration of peer relations, they have not included a critical postcolonial perspective, from which to reveal the hidden challenges which may impact a social justice framework in a specific historical context. To address this oversight, the conceptual framework of my project is guided by postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and theories of acculturation, which offer a critical lens that shapes the theoretical framework (see Figure 1). In this section, I describe the three aforementioned theories in greater detail, explaining why I have drawn upon them to answer my research questions and how these theories helped raise and articulate my research inquiry.





*Figure 1.* Venn diagram illustration of the relationship between three theories.

**Postcolonial theories.** Postcolonial theories are interdisciplinary theories that examine interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the last few centuries (Ren, 2008). The field also deals with the impact of colonization on postcolonial history, economy, science, and the cultural productions of colonized societies (Henry & Tator, 2006), as well as how these impacts influence individuals' lives (Young, 2001). Postcolonial theory reveals taken-for-granted cultural superiority and the connection between cultural supremacy and the dynamic process of identity change (Andreotti, 2011). That is, it demonstrates how the feeling of supremacy creates an imagined difference between the oppressor and the oppressed (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998). Racialized division is an influential split, and unseen White hegemony

is a unique feature of a modern society that stratifies itself based on racialized identity (Carr & Lund, 2007, p. viii). Such racialized or ethnic divisions may be controlling potential societal equality and may hinder possibilities of fairness in contemporary society, especially in schools. As described in Carr and Lund's (2009) study, "The social construction and intersectionality of identity provide a medium in which whiteness can be deconstructed and problematized" (p. 47). Inequity or unfairness in society may distort young people's cognition and formation of values and identity development.

Dyson (2003) added that hidden institutional prejudice is able to distort power to the advantage of the dominant group, while at the same time being represented as unbiased in social relationships in order to rationalize discrimination against non-whites. Carr and Lund (2007) wrote that whiteness "implies owning up to complicities and responsibilities for the maintenance of oppression" (p. ix). In terms of intercultural contact, concepts such as *otherness* and *whiteness* also have explanatory power in interpreting perceptions of communication barriers between majority and marginalized youths. Otherness may be also taken for granted by people based on varying "supremacist assumptions" (Bonnett, 1997, p. 213). However, this supremacy may turn into "tension with racialized others" (Madison, 2012, p. 88) when such unconscious superiority is challenged. Madison (2012) pointed out other issues involved with racial privilege:

Unmarked and unnamed ways in which the residents, in manner and attitude, were not simply constituted by racial privilege but were, more importantly, so uncritical of the privilege they inherited that they behaved with arrogance and entitlement when a radicalised other was placed in a position of authority/power over them. (p. 88)

Chinese immigrant youths come from a country with a half-colonial past and enter into a postcolonial present, "with all the symbolic and material remnants passed down from the history of colonialism" (Madison, 2012, p. 55). Thus, my study is inseparable from the examination of

postcolonial theories. My theory for this study is influenced by Edward Said's (1978b) seminal book, *Orientalism*, and the work of John Willinsky (1998) and postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha (2004). I explore their various theories in the sections that follow.

To begin, Said's (1978b) elaboration of *Orientalism* helped readers develop a critical awareness of the Euro-American norm. The superiority of position that "Europe enjoys vis-à-vis the Orient derives from cultural hegemony" (Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 8).

Specifically, Europe has traditionally held a cultural hegemony over most of Asia. "Cultural hegemony functions by identifying a collective European self and its opposite as an equally collective non-European other" (Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 8). Thus, Said (as cited in Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012) illustrated that the "major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (p. 7). Orientalism is an emblematic framework in which, in terms of otherness, cultural differences have been described as exotic, primitive, passive, and silenced. Andreotti (2011) wrote that "colonial authority is essentially dependent on the notion of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness, a process that defines racial differences and produces the colonized as entirely knowable, unchangeable, and predictable" (p. 27). To be precise, otherness, a type of negative theory about the colonized and the exoticized, is maintained through the influence of ideology, and these negative images may hinder the process of equality development in society.

On the other hand, current "liberal discourses of multiculturalism reinforce the notion of racial equality" (Shariff, 2008, p. 72). Chinese immigrant youths, who are situated within a "context that constantly tells them that race and racial difference do not matter" (Handa, 2003, p. 114), feel frustrated when experiencing racism. In fact, "the multicultural narrative is constituted

through a positioning of white Anglophone and Francophone Canadians as the founding peoples of the nation” (Kelly, 2004, p. 79). Chinese immigrant youths have a tension of sameness and difference that exists between their home culture and their adopted culture (Handa, 2003). This tension produces a tug of war between the two and a feeling of belonging to neither. To be exact, they either maintain or lose their own identity, or they keep both new and traditional identities. Thus, Chinese immigrant youths may become otherized by a mainstream culture. Unfortunately, “in the twenty-first century, this process of othering continues and is at times reinforced through multicultural discourses that are dominant in Canada” (Kelly, 2004, p. 25). As Aujla (2000) wrote, “[Immigrants] are othered by a dominant culture which categorizes them as visible minorities, ethnics, immigrants, and foreigners—categories considered incommensurable with being a real Canadian, despite the promises of multiculturalism” (p. 41).

Moreover, Said (1978b) proposed that it is important to explore how to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with people who have different traditions, languages, religious views, and histories; how to accept differences without hostility and violence; and how to transform Euro-American identity so that it may include others. It is also necessary to ponder how people view culture in different ways, perspectives, and layers, if human beings are to live with cultural diversity. For instance, Bhabha (1994) saw culture as the effect of “discriminatory practices—the production of cultural differentiation as signs of authority” (p. 38). Indeed, the problem of cultural difference focuses on the “ambivalence of cultural authority” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 34). Explicitly, when there is differentiation, cultural supremacy and power dominance naturally appear. Consequently, the challenge of intercultural interaction comes into being, and in my dissertation, I discuss specifically how the meanings and values of Eastern culture are misinterpreted.

The aforementioned arguments and scholarship have informed this project. Based on these theories, I propose that cultural hegemony arises out of specific historical formations. Schools have traditionally been immersed in the dominant culture, and because of their insulated environment, they are reluctant and slow to change. Hence, researchers may need to consider both adding the concept of *others* into the hidden curriculum in regards to education practice, and more importantly, questioning how the concept of *other* is produced, constructed, and represented in society (Dei & Rummens, 2010; Raghuram & Madge, 2006). Relatedly, Shariff's (2012) study considered the benefits of using critical thinking for postcolonial history:

Postcolonial material and teaching strategies geared towards critical thinking can provide students with opportunities to consider the significance of the historical past in shaping their lives. Students have the opportunity to look outward and to see ambivalences in their own cultural heritages, as well as intersections between their own lives and those of others. (p. 76)

Bhabha (1994) used the term “hybrid” to describe persons who are “in between two cultures and how designations of identity involve processes of symbolic interaction” (p. 4). K. H. Chen (1996) added that “cultural identity is not fixed, . . . it is always hybrid” (p. 502), and this fluid hybrid identity comes out of “very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation, [such] that it can constitute a positionality, which we call, provisionally, identity” (p. 502). Such an identity can move in many directions between Chinese and Canadian, the margin and the centre, and the developing world and the developed world. As well, in the postcolonial context, “hybridity marks the tensions, dialectics, and appropriations amongst colonizing forces and those who were colonized” (Madison, 2012, p. 57).

Bhabha (1994) has further explained hybridity by defining a “third space,” a space of hybridity of culture difference rather than cultural diversity. Based on my understanding, immigrant youths’ culture and behaviour are “neither one nor the other, but something else

besides, the in-between space” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219), where culture and behaviour “carry the burden of the meaning of cultural diversity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). For Chinese immigrant youths, this third space may enfold their hybrid identity. They are not Chinese enough at home, and may come into conflict with parents who are not used to a questioning of their authority, while they are not Canadian enough at school because of a lack of acceptance by their host peers. It is a constant balancing of both cultures that leads to unending stress, when the chances are enormous for making decisions that may upset either or both cultures. This may be viewed as a constant challenge and feature of transformation. Transformation and its challenges are in close association with hybrid identities in the intersections of cultural dimensions and postcolonial historical attribution. However, in transformative spaces, power may be divided in dominant discourse by hybridity, which “represents that ambivalent turn of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 113). While it may be disturbing and unsettling, the leading authority needs to hear the voice of marginalized non-whites. In sum, the multicultural nature of Canadian society makes this social discourse especially relevant because of its emphasis on identity and culture difference, the complex ongoing processes of changing identity and culture, as well as establishing the third space where immigrant youth and locals reside together.

The areas of study mentioned above have implications for the exploration of barriers to intercultural friendship building. For example, some notions from postcolonial theories such as hybridity, cultural difference, and third space can be applied towards the identity construction of immigrant youths living amidst the two worlds. For Chinese immigrant young people, there is constant crossing and smudging of boundaries between cultures, but a complete erasing of

boundaries is unlikely. Even after many generations, youth can be identified by physical features and may be expected to retain aspects of their home culture based solely on their appearance. As Barker (1999) argued (after Pieterse, 1995), “Cultural hybridization distinguishes between cultural responses ranging from assimilation, through forms of separation, to hybrids that destabilize and blur cultural boundaries” (p. 70). Such a hybridity would indicate “a degree of boundary crossing” (Barker, 1999, p. 70) but not the “erasure of boundaries” (Barker, 1999, p. 70). Therefore, in accordance with the view of some immigrant students, hybridization does not eliminate cultural borders, “Canadian identity is perceived as problematic, not readily available [because] . . . official citizenship does not automatically lead to recognition of self or acceptance by others as Canadian” (Kelly, 2004, p. 149).

Willinsky (1998) proposed that colonialism and imperialism shape “the barriers between East and West out of a compound of race, ethnicity, and nationality, as well as gender in the West’s feminized conception of the Oriental as other” (p. 6). He added that such division based on colonial achievement cannot be changed in spite of multicultural policy in contemporary society, due to the unseen linkage between education and conquest, and conservative educational philosophy in dominant schools (Willinsky, 1998, p. 6). This is a factor in intercultural communication for youth in school contexts. This powerful division may breed mistrust and suspicion between teachers and students, and inhibit fairness and equity of education in schools’ political climate. The phenomenon of low frequency of intercultural friendships for immigrant youths in schools may arise from such a colonial history and differences in power relationships to some extent.

Research has indicated that such splits have composed a recurring part of the structure of the schools for many years. Even though “given and underlying conflicts and problems” (Nieto,

1999, p. 105), are scarcely talked about, schools have provided the young with little assistance to make them understand why “this sense of difference in race, culture, and nation is so closely woven into the fabric of society” (Willinsky, 1998, p. 5), and schools. Schools should not educate the young with colonial perspectives of cultural difference without a critical perspective. Critical philosophy “discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men, and perceives reality as process and transformation” (Freire, 1972a, p. 65). Educators and students should be aware of the implication that “challenging the structuring of those differences requires equally public acts of refusing their original and intended meanings” (Willinsky, 1998, p. 5).

As such, one of the barriers of intercultural friendships in postcolonial society may be located directly on the continuum of colonial history. For instance, as described previously, young Chinese immigrants in Vancouver in 1922 and 1923 were excluded by host peers due to power, privilege, racism, stereotypes, and bias (Stanley, 2011). Willinsky’s (1998, as cited in Kincheloe, 2008) related study explained teachers’ self-consciousness as embedded in a belief as to “how education has been shaped to reflect governing ideas” (p. 99). Educators need to be aware of colonial history to set a tone of social justice within the context of intercultural education and should recognize their vital role and responsibility in multicultural classrooms through critical self-consciousness.

**Critical pedagogy.** While postcolonial theories applied to education settings draw attention to the phenomena of low-level and low-frequency intercultural interactions in high schools, critical pedagogy that resists “Eurocentric ways of viewing the world, [and] patriarchal oppression” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 34) may be the best fit for contesting “the harmful effects of dominant power” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 34) within educational contexts. Indeed, bell hooks (as cited in Kincheloe, 2008), articulated that teachers should “transform consciousness and create



an atmosphere of open expression that is the mark of an emancipator education” (p. 80).

Kincheloe (2008) cautioned that critical educators need to penetrate hidden political assumptions that are embedded in textbooks and curriculum in the name of equality and fairness to brainwash teachers and students (p. 34). Critical pedagogy, as it is used in this study, is defined below:

A way of thinking more openly and critically about learning [rather than] . . . a linear process from knowledge to reflection to action, [because] . . . problems and issues can be viewed from a variety of perspectives; there is rarely just one right answer to complex problems. (Nieto, 1999, p. 104)

In any classroom, there is always a huge imbalance of power between the teacher and the students, and sometimes between students as well. As such, educators require heightened self-awareness and should undertake self-criticism when their behaviours involve oppression; seek a better understanding of the different cultures in their multicultural classrooms; and be flexible, fair, compassionate, and open-minded in their dealings with students. As Kincheloe (2008) declared, regarding the political context of schools, critical educators need to keep the spotlight on “the act of contextualization in every aspect of their work [and develop a] . . . rich understanding of the social backgrounds of students” (p. 32). When “problems arise, they [then] stand ready to connect the difficulty to a wider frame of reference with a wide array of possible causes” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 33). Further, Kincheloe (2008) maintained that critical teachers also need to be attentive to the regeneration of racialized supremacy in the globalized era and aim to eliminate it. Additionally, Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, and Zine (2003) have argued that intercultural competency can be advanced through the platform of curriculum.

If curriculum content can develop ‘cultural competencies,’ in an inclusive environment, learners may develop an understanding of the cultural achievements of colonized peoples and historically disadvantaged groups in society through the process of decentering Eurocentric knowledge and providing space for these alternative ways of knowing. (p. 237)

Inclusive environments can also encourage youth to view cultural differences from various angles and learn to understand and accept their immigrant peers. Educators with a critical line of thought are able to put themselves in immigrant youths' shoes and in turn, they can help their students to do the same, while also encouraging them to listen to and reflect on each other's stories.

Moreover, critical pedagogy and empowerment are “at the very heart of learning” (Nieto, 1999, p. 103). “The coin of empowerment has two sides: one side of the coin is domination with violence, selfishness, hierarchy, and victimization for control and the other side of the coin involves empowerment with challenges for liberation” (Nieto, 1999, p. 105). The aim of critical pedagogy is empowerment. In schools, empowerment requires group effort—a social engagement (Kreisberg, 1992). To explore the links between critical pedagogy and empowerment, I begin by exploring the relationship between critical pedagogy and intercultural education, given that they both challenge power relations (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Culture may have a significant impact on students' values and behaviours. When dominant values are constructed as normal, those considered *others* are imposed on to “undergo a process of deculturation” (Nieto, 1999, p. 34).

Empowerment is critical for the process of social transformation, “given the dreadful state of affairs of the education of bicultural students” (Nieto, 1999, p. 106). As Crotty (1998) stated, it is noticeably difficult for the oppressed to become “critically aware of their true situation, intervene in its reality and thus take charge of their destiny” (p. 154) because they belong to “the culture of silence” (p. 154). Worse, the oppressed may “internalize the image of the oppressor and adopt the oppressor's guidelines” (Crotty, 1998, p. 154). Such ramifications further justify invisible whiteness, societal inequity, and unfairness. Freire (1972b) further

illustrated that these vulnerable populations lack conscientization, and their voices are missing in the sociohistorical transformation of existing society. Therefore, their active social involvement is necessary for their own liberation (Crotty, 1998).

In teaching practice, Freire (1972a) has described this process as *praxis*, stating that “reflection—true reflection—leads to action” (p. 66). Bartolomé (1994) proposed that critical reflection can provide teachers with positive social changes and develop a critical intercultural perspective through their teaching philosophy, pedagogical strategies, and position concerning the nature of authority and supremacy. As Giroux (2002) wrote, pedagogy “not only negotiates difference, but takes seriously the imperative to make knowledge meaningful in order that it might become critical and transformative” (p. 59). Currently, in Canada, some “tokenistic attempts to show diversity . . . sustain the notion that the dominant culture must tolerate those who are other” (Steinberg, 2009, p. xi). In addition, establishing diverse learning environments such as multicultural classrooms and school cultures is a challenge that offers the possibility of inclusive education and schooling by breaking down artificial barriers and by welcoming diversity to transform our society (Dei et al., 2003). Consequently, “being tolerated, being tokenized is not enough” (Steinberg, 2009, p. xi). It is high time that efforts were made to alter the status quo towards acceptance and integration instead of assimilation in dominant schools.

In conclusion, these viewpoints advocating critical pedagogy have heavily informed this research project. Teachers are often reluctant to challenge textbooks, school policies, and practices, because it is much easier to “make superficial, nonthreatening changes that fit in with the status quo than it is to propose more substantive changes that make waves” (Nieto, 1999, pp. 107–108). As a case in point, social studies textbooks often exclude information on unpopular perspectives; treat the others’ cultures with omissions, reductions, or distortions; or “give short

shift to the perspective of disempowered groups” (Nieto, 1999, p. 105). Marginalized students in schools have to be introspective and question whether they are in a position of oppression. Teachers with a critical line of thought may be willing to challenge any unfairness for newcomers in their multicultural classrooms if they realize how important their actions are in building a comfortable learning community. Creating a multicultural community in the classroom is crucial for immigrant students to have a more welcoming place to learn. As such, for educators, a critical consciousness about their responsibility in accepting and respecting all students, and developing intercultural education in and out of the classroom, is crucial. Actions and programs based upon critical pedagogy offer recently arrived immigrant youths tutoring and mentorship opportunities, as well as a sense of security in the forms of classroom activities, seating arrangements, and empowering intercultural communicative opportunities in a receptive and friendly atmosphere, while also helping to promote school cohesion, strengthen mutual understanding, and broaden the general vision of culture.

**Acculturation.** The third theory I employ is acculturation theory. The concept of acculturation comes from the field of cultural anthropology. Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) proposed the first definition, stating that “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). The acculturation process involves cultural and psychological changes due to intercultural interaction between individual members, but it can also generate culture clash and tension during cross-cultural communication (Berry, 2005). Additionally, Kottak’s (as cited in Leong, Chao, & Hardin, 2000) acculturation theory is concerned with “the extent to which ethnic identity is maintained when an ethnic group is in continuous contact with the dominant group”

(p. 180).

Berry (1997) proposed two dimensions of acculturation: the desire for maintaining cultural identity and a willingness to engage with the majority community. Adding to this analysis, Berry (2008) identified four basic strategies of acculturation: integration, assimilation, separation or segregation, and marginalization. He suggested that *integration* causes the maintenance of existing cultures and behaviours with daily contact, *assimilation* results in the loss of immigrants' home culture when the dominant culture is accepted, *separation* leads to cultural and psychological maintenance when groups or individuals avoid contact, and *marginalization* brings about a loss of culture and mental health owing to exclusion. Although an integrationist strategy has been suggested as the most effective way to acculturate, the generalizability of these findings was suspect according to Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001). The linkage between pressure to integrate, identity development, and intercultural contact needs further inquiry. I thus delve into the role of acculturative stress in the dynamic ongoing process of identity identification and intercultural interaction.

Receiving-society members' subconscious beliefs about how immigrant youths should acculturate in schools may guide minority members' adaptation into the new world (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). I agree with this viewpoint. Currently, most researchers have applied acculturation theory to investigate how a minority group should adjust into a fresh environment by taking a variety of strategies in diverse social contexts. However, these studies have overlooked the responsibility that the host students should take. Acculturation research may offer newcomers information on how to adapt and make change, but then fail to provide the host students with information on how to accept their immigrant peers and understand their different perspectives. As explained in Rudmin's (2003) empirical study,

acculturation theory excessively highlights minority members' need to change, while neglecting acculturation strategies and attitudes adopted by the majority cultural group. Berry (2008) added, "It is obvious that nondominant groups and their individual members do not have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate" (p. 331).

Therefore, the acculturation theory informing this project adopts a new critical perspective within a social justice framework, believing that the dominant group's perceptions of acculturation orientation have an impact on minority group members' acculturation strategies, given that there are power imbalances between visible immigrant groups and host majority groups in schools. It is also believed that it is unavoidable for new Chinese immigrant youths to be more likely than White immigrants to experience discrimination and hostility from members of the receiving society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). It is understood that immigrant youths generally hope to find group belonging. Thus, if they would like to be accepted by their host counterparts, they may have to pay a price to assimilate into the dominant society and culture, which may entail the revision of their home culture. Otherwise, the majority group members may not accept their ethnic identity.

I disagree with Berry's (2008) notion that mutual change in both dominant and minority groups is part of acculturation, at both cultural and psychological levels. In my opinion, such mutual changes in both communities are an ideal goal rather than the current cruel reality. Critical educators need to shine a spotlight on "power-consciousness" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 71) and the "intricate, systemic, and pervasive nature of racism" (Carr & Lund, 2007, p. 2), especially in daily life contact. As such, the guidance and support of teachers play a crucial role in the process of acceptance by host peers to ease young immigrants' integration into mainstream schools. In addition, Telzer (2011) proposed four new patterns regarding the acculturation of

immigrant parents and their offspring: child is more acculturated than parent in host culture, child is less acculturated than parent in host culture, child is more acculturated than parent in traditional culture, child less acculturated than parent in traditional culture. Namely, both immigrant parents and their children have to face challenges of acculturation between traditional culture and local culture despite of variation in extent regarding integration.

In sum, although each theory has been defined separately, the overlapping themes and distinctions that occur between postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy and acculturation theory are all interwoven in this study. These three theories, which come from different disciplines including education, sociology, and psychology, can complement and connect with one another. Both postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy illuminate and complement each other because they are both critical theories. Although acculturation theory is not a critical theory, this theory is also tested through a critical lens. These three theories are intertwined based on their individual backgrounds. The postcolonial theory looks at the broader social-political background of an individual or group by considering the historical background of Chinese immigration in relation to such areas as social justice and education equality, whereas critical pedagogy and acculturation theory offer a more intimate look into the school setting and the family environment. For example, critical pedagogy explores the school setting, where important insight into understanding the process of immigrant youth's acculturation into a new country and new culture may be explored. Relatedly, acculturation theory is applied to intercultural dynamics and is directed at an understanding of the experiences of Chinese immigrant parents and their children within the family as well as school settings, while also allowing this researcher to highlight the interactions between parents and children during daily parenting management within their Chinese community.

These three theories, as they fit together, can reveal a general picture of the barriers that Chinese immigrant youths face when trying to make intercultural friendships in senior high schools. This picture then helps teachers, parents, and researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the social relevance and complex links existing among the dominant society, schools, local students, immigrant youth, and their families. These three theories combine and interact to investigate different dimensions in society and offer a critical lens through which to understand these kinds of cultural phenomena.

The postcolonial, critical pedagogy, and acculturation theories are also entangled with social justice, in that they attempt to foster critical consciousness regarding hidden oppression within the political contexts in schools, resist White supremacy, incorporate positive intercultural attitudes and behaviours into the daily routine of schools through exposing the hidden curriculum and fostering intercultural education, and encourage the creation of healthy identities through positive psychological change. The critical understanding at the intersection of these three theories (see Figure 1) allows for a transformation of consciousness regarding how minority youth integrate into schools in the context of postcolonial society. Thus, the conceptual framework of postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and acculturation aided me in answering my research questions and in interpreting the influences on the low level of intercultural friendships being achieved.

It is inevitable for Generation 1.5 Chinese immigrant youths to wish for the construction of a third space with cultural hybridity to some extent. The process of acculturation is more likely to involve forging from the two different worlds, a blended culture with hybrid identities, where intercultural friendship building, and growth may play an important role in the process of youths' acculturation. If immigrant youth successfully build good intercultural friendships, their



sociocultural integration into schools and mainstream society moves in a positive direction and their development is more well-rounded; otherwise, they may be marginalized, separated, or assimilated, and they may perform passively and in unconstructive ways to contest their exclusion. Throughout the process of integration and intercultural friendships formation, it is important that critical educators take a supportive stance towards immigrant learners, in order to set the social justice tone for an intercultural education that increases mutual understanding.

Taken as a whole, these three theories are closely linked with one another through different layers, such as family, school, and society. They can be applied within this project as a conceptual framework to attend to the barriers of intercultural friendships formation and development (see Figure 1). Postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy intersect to focus on consciousness transformation and liberation, while conceptualizations of hybrid identity and the social dynamic process of a third space can be articulated from within both acculturation and postcolonial theories. The connection between acculturation and critical pedagogy within this project shines a spotlight on the importance of critical educators contesting White supremacy, who must work with power consciousness to promote constant adjustments through intercultural learning that elicits a more socially just, pluralistic society, and as a result fosters the development of intercultural friendships. I discuss the connections between critical pedagogy and intercultural friendships further in the next section.

## **Review of the Literature**

**Intercultural friendships.** Friendships are an exclusive and significant kind of interpersonal connection (Sias et al., 2008) when based on equality. Adolescence is a stage of development where individuals struggle to explore their own identity and to extend their social networks (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1996). For youth, successful, intercultural experiences can be

transformative processes contributing to personal growth and development (Anderson, 1994). When the members of friendships know how to recognize their common interests and understand their cultural differences, intercultural friendships can be as strong and last as long as intracultural friendships (Gaines & Agnew, 2003). However, intercultural friendships are still elusive in schools and a thorny issue since they are not experienced in the same ways as intracultural friendships (Collier, 1998; Gareis, 1995, 2000). In the last three decades, the expanding volume of literature regarding international students in universities and immigrant youths in high schools, as well as studies specific to Chinese immigrant youths, has provided productive groundwork for research on intercultural contact, communication, and adaptation.

My research balanced both cultural differences and power influence. In terms of intercultural exchange, the key words “barriers of intercultural friendship” mostly emerged in the journal articles regarding study-abroad university students. For immigrant school-aged children, scholars primarily focused on cross-cultural friendships involving racialized issues. I would like to find both the factors of influencing intercultural friendships on the basis of equity and inequity in order to fill in the gap. Therefore, a discussion of several different studies regarding intercultural friendships such as international university students’ intercultural contact, cross-cultural peer relationships, and identity formation for immigrant school-aged children follows. As well, issues of parental socialization, conflicts between home and school life, psychological adjustment, peer relationships, and social network support issues in regard to Chinese immigrant youth are examined.

***Study-abroad university students and intercultural friendships.*** Intercultural friendships are characterized by differences in each individual’s culture, which provide both benefits and drawbacks (Sias et al., 2008). The benefits include more opportunities to learn the host language,

better social integration, and a greater sojourn satisfaction (Gareis, Merkin, & Goldman, 2011). By opening their minds, international students can negotiate cultural differences in values, obtain more cultural knowledge, break stereotypes (Sias et al., 2008), have better scholarly performance and life happiness (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Ward & Masgoret, 2004), have lower levels of stress (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993), express positive sentiments (Furnham & Erdmann, 1995), and improve their constructive perception of the host's way of life (Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003). For the host community, the rewards include exposure to other cultures, networking and travel opportunities for local host counterparts, and an enhanced global image of life overseas (Mak & Buckingham, 2007; Ward & Masgoret, 2004).

Nonetheless, international students are often short of meaningful contact with host nationals (Gareis, 1995; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). Such a lack of host–peer relations tends to result from weaker language skills and poor adjustment (Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Previous research has also discussed international students' less-than-positive intercultural friendship experiences in the United States and other countries (Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1985; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Dissatisfaction with host–national interaction may result in the making of a minority group identity that is based on perceptions of mutual negative response, which further impacts integration initiatives (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003). Finally, this disappointment may also create intercultural stress. Ward and Kennedy (1993) put forward two key reactions to intercultural stress: “psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation” (p. 222).

Researchers have found a number of factors relating to cultural, social, and educational psychology that affect intercultural friendship formation and development among international

university students, including the host's supremacy regarding the knowledge of institutional regulations, institutional affordances and restrictions, English language domination, different situational contexts, as well as numerous possible influences such as targeted socialization, cultural similarities and differences, levels of cross-cultural adjustment, prior intercultural experience, stereotypes, hostility or prejudice, communicative competence, cultural compatibility, sojourn expectations, degree of cultural identification, agency, friendship conceptualizations, frequency of contact, similarity of personal characteristics and age, self-disclosure, host-national receptivity, institutional support and social exchanges (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007; Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013, Colvin, Fozdar, & Volet, 2014, 2015; Dunne, 2013; Gareis, 1995, 1999; Jon, 2012; Kimmel & Volet, 2012a; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007; Marginson et al., 2010; Massengill & Nash, 2009; Pitts, 2009; Sias et al., 2008; Ujitani, 2006; Ward, 1996; Ying, 2002). Furthermore, Sias et al. (2008), have argued that "cultural difference" (p. 11) can be supportive of intercultural friendships formation, and that language differences can both get in the way and make possible the development of interaction.

However, I feel that these findings are unclear, because studies have included both host residents and foreign college students from different countries. The analysis by Sias et al. (2008), for example, is vague as to whether these factors applied to the international students, host representatives, or both. However, the results do offer evidence of the uniqueness and complexity of communication in these relationships, and their study was successful in demonstrating that people with different cultural backgrounds may have various ways to communicate. However, the authors failed to acknowledge that individual micro-culture environments (Ward & Masgoret, 2004) and macro contexts can impact experiences and the results of research examining intercultural friendships in differing settings.

In another study, Gareis et al. (2011) proposed that international students rated their American friendships lower than their home-culture friendships. Friendships numbers and satisfaction were significantly related to communicative adaptability and loneliness. There was no significant correlation between friendship success and willingness to communicate or length of stay. However, this research limited itself to quantitative testing by means of survey correlations; thus, such findings lack qualitative reporting and in-depth exploration.

The most recent research on intercultural friendships has focused on university students' perceptions of "friends" or shared experiences, because an overseas learning experience is likely to be "a significant transitional event that brings with it a considerable amount of accompanying stress, involving both confrontation and adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological experiences and changes" (Cushner & Karim, 2004, p. 292). Among these stresses are culture shock (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001), learning shock (Gu, 2005) or education shock (Yamazaki, 2005), and language shock (Agar, 1996). For example, Boucher (1998) examined international students' experiences of racism in Ireland and found that although students reported few instances of direct racism, their frequency of contact with host students was low and the quality of the relationships formed was superficial.

A study by Gareis (2000) illustrated that the word "friend" has different layers of meaning. This diversity may bring about misunderstandings for intercultural interaction in American universities. However, this study employed only interviews and lacked multiple methods such as direct observation to collect data in school contexts. Furthermore, the research methodology did not constitute a case study, as defined by Yin (2009), given that triangulation did not exist in the research design. This may lead to incomplete, non-intensive, and less in-depth findings and perspectives.

In a later study, Hsiehmin (2007) reported that a quiet Chinese girl perceived herself to be worthless in group discussions due to her host classmates' sense of cultural superiority and the preference of cultural homogeneity in an American university. This frustration in her learning experience eroded her self-confidence, and she became powerless. Hsiehmin's study findings suggested that educators should not attribute Chinese international students' silence to only their ethnic culture influences or personalities; rather, they should also consider the possible factor of educational setting. I believe that there was likely an imbalance of power in the classroom relationships and a hidden, discriminative attitude from the host students due to the Chinese girl's cultural identity. Based upon the experience of many Chinese immigrants, it is likely that these host classmates lacked the patience and respect to offer her opportunities to share her opinions.

Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) argued that interculturality needs nurturing for international students' academic success in British universities. They posited that the limitations of intercultural communication resulted from unequal positions, limited opportunities, and different learning goals. Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative methods (case study) were used in Schweisfurth and Gu's research. Such mixed approaches can balance one another and enhance the quality of data.

Other research has been conducted concerning host university students' perspectives on intercultural friendships. For instance, Tan and Goh (2006) argued that intercultural contact with low frequency is superficial due to the domestic counterparts' perception of international students inferiority (Mak & Neil, 2006; Sam, 2001; Takeda & St. John-Ives, 2005; UKCOSA, 2006; Wright & Lander, 2003). Moreover, Dunne (2009) found that host students are reluctant to make intercultural friends due to differences in culture, values, and behaviours, as well as

attitudes towards academic work, communicative language barriers including slang and humour, and in-group members' pressures from a "referral system" (p. 230). Dunne (2009) further noted that host students feel that intercultural friendships are more demanding and less rewarding than same-culture friendships.

Guirdham (1999) posited his thoughts regarding social exchange theory:

Social exchange theory provides an explanation for the tendency of people in mixed culture groups to form "cliques" with people from their own culture: the perceived costs of interaction with people from different cultures outweigh the perceived benefits and/or the perceived balance of benefit over cost from such interaction is lower than from own-culture interactions. (p. 136)

Although this explanation sounds reasonable, in my own research I suggest that social exchange theory is neither realistic nor convincing, as it neglects the issue of privilege in the education system and the impact of education on equality and fairness.

In terms of the conceptual frameworks for the study of intercultural friendships, there are Volet's (2001) person-in-context model of learning and Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 2005), ecological model of human development (Kudo, Volet, & Whits, 2017), which include the individual microsystem (personal and interpersonal), and the four environmental layers: situational (mesosystem), institutional (exosystem), sociocultural (macrosystem), and global (chronosystem). These models also have focused attention on intercultural conflict and its influence on family, health, and motivation to learn (DiClemente, Salazar, Crosby, & Rosenthal, 2005; Dorjee, Baig, & Ting-Toomey, 2012; Gurtner, Monnard, & Genoud, 2001; Oetzel, Dhar, & Kirschbaum, 2007). However, little is known about the forms and the extent of intercultural clash within a framework of social justice.

In summary, scholarly attention on intercultural contact between foreign students and host nationals has focused on college students and local residents instead of young immigrants. I

think the factors summarized above may not always be applicable to immigrant youths in high school contexts. There are numerous differences between immigrant youths and both university students and adult foreign visitors (also known as sojourners), such as age, identity, duration of residence in their host countries, home involvement, living experience, and communication competence. Of the many differences, four stand out as being most significant. The first significant difference is permanence: “some people are settled into a plural society permanently, while others are only temporary sojourners” (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011, p. 310). The second significant difference is family influence. Immigrant youth often live with their parents, while many international students stay in a culturally plural society, without accompanying family members. A third difference relates to the important elements of identity and sense of belonging. Some immigrant youth start elementary school in Canada and regard themselves as permanent residents or Canadian citizens, while many foreign students study only in Canadian universities or colleges and consider themselves temporary visitors. Thus, they may have a different sense of belonging. Finally, the ages of foreign university students and immigrant youths are different. Notably, immigrant students in high schools are in the transitional period of adolescence. Therefore, it is necessary to gather critical context-bound experiential and situational information specific to immigrant youth, and in this case, specific to Chinese immigrant youth.

Numerous research studies have related to study-abroad institutions, investigating or describing difficulties of intercultural friendships simply from cultural perspectives. Such findings are problematic—these studies have failed to examine the influences of teaching staff, the educational environment, and family influences such as parental cultural socialization.

***Immigrant school-aged children and intercultural friendships.*** Productive interethnic



friendships have become a continuous goal in the attempt to reduce cultural segregation (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003) and exclusionist discourse in society and the media (Steinbach, 2010a). I am convinced that cross-cultural peer friendships can decrease subtle and overt prejudice and discrimination (Aberson, Shoemaker, & Tomolillo, 2004; Antonio, 2001; Rummens, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000), and increase the occurrence of cross-cultural interactions and integration of youth in educational environments (K. Y. Chen, 2009; Ellison & Powers, 1994; Jackman & Crane, 1986). In addition to improving attitudes, intercultural friendships are thought to enhance minorities' access to resources and information, so they may become part of the dominant social network with access to the occupational opportunities generally controlled by the host group (Wells & Robert, 1994). Cross-cultural friendships can also work to form ties and bridge racialized divisions in order to build a more ideal, cohesive society (Briggs, 2007). Children with intercultural friends are more sociable and competitive than in-group members who form no intercultural friendships (Hunter & Elias, 1999). Largely, these types of friendships can have a fundamental impact on the educational and social experiences of immigrant students in multicultural schools (Williams, 2010).

However, some studies have focused on the low frequency of intercultural friendships, and how such a phenomenon might be caused by a complicated set of factors such as stability, reciprocity, closeness, and racialized perceptions and attitudes (Kao & Joyner, 2004; Rude & Herda, 2010; Vaquera & Kao, 2008). Intercultural friendships are often less stable than same-culture friendships (Rude & Herda, 2010). Additionally, it is almost impossible to forecast the stability of cross-cultural relationships by using factors such as identity, shared interests and activities, achievement level, behaviours, and background characteristics (Rude & Herda, 2010). As demonstrated by this review of the literature, children of colour are more accepting of out-

group members, and they have more intercultural friendships than White children (Aboud, 1988; Graham & Cohen, 1997; Graham, Cohen, Zbikowski, & Secrist, 1998; Howes & Wu, 1990; Kao & Joyner, 2004; Ramsey & Myers, 1990). This may be because host students in secondary high schools are reluctant to communicate with newcomers (Steinbach, 2010a). As children grow older, there is a sharp decrease in positive perceptions of intercultural communication (Aboud et al., 2003; Clark & Ayers, 1992; Graham & Cohen, 1997; Graham et al., 1998; Howes & Wu, 1990; Pica-Smith, 2011). Accordingly, this decrease in positive perception often indicates an increase of racialized prejudice and biases (Stephan & Stephan, 2004).

Previous research has been completed on the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant youths when attempting to make cross-cultural friendships in various school settings, and as a result, a number of key barriers have been identified. To begin with, although Asians are willing to request help for concrete learning problems, they rarely seek assistance for emotional anxieties that might inhibit their ability to make new intercultural friendships (Atkinson, Lowe, & Matthews, 1995; Leong & Serafica, 2001). A second barrier is that Asian concepts of self are more fluid and more relationally driven, while Westernized concepts of self are more fixed and independent (Yeh & Hwang, 2000). Such differences may cause immigrant youths to feel uncomfortable (Yeh, 1996) and to change their self-perception with each situation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), while also attempting to comprehend how they fit into their new school surroundings.

A third key barrier is that recently arrived visible-minority youths often feel socially isolated due to their peers' tendencies to create friendship groups based on ethnic and cultural commonalities (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000; Schofield, 1991). As a result, many immigrant youth

may eventually consider school “traumatic” (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000, p. 10). Additionally, the data reveal the incredible impact this discriminatory practice has on dissimilarity in cultural values and the anger these distinctions can incite. Immigrant students feel disliked due to host peers’ impatience with accents, and speed of language delivery, or fluency, which hinders intercultural communication. Steinbach’s (2010b) findings further caution that in provinces such as Quebec, even after 10 years of studying this issue, there is still an urgent need to provide immigrant high school students with support in order for them to successfully integrate into their new schools. Relatedly, as Perron’s (1996, as cited in Steinbach, 2010b) study concluded, it is more challenging for students to overcome the social barriers existing in their educational environments than to learn the host language.

A fourth barrier to making intercultural friendships is the tendency for immigrant students attending multicultural schools to choose friends with similar backgrounds—especially those who understand the difficulties of integrating into a new culture—in order to avoid facing racial discrimination. For example, in Chan and Birman’s (2009) empirical study, there were fewer cross-cultural friendships in schools with multicultural backgrounds. Therefore, school diversity may have a negative impact on the quantity and quality of cross-cultural friendships, because the students have more choices among their own ethnic group for friends. A fifth barrier is that homogeneous schools can provide the potential for racial biases. For example, McGlothlin and Killen (2010) found that European American children attending homogeneous schools rather than heterogeneous schools displayed racial bias in their interpretations of ambiguous situations.

Fortunately, some research has found that classroom management and teacher intervention may promote social acceptance and enhance intercultural interaction. For instance, multiple strategies such as cooperative team-learning activities and arranged seating plans

(Khelmov & Hallinan, 1999; Pettigrew, 2004; Williams, 2010) already exist to help educators encourage the success of intergroup friendships. Additionally, after-school programs and extracurricular opportunities at schools should be oriented towards welcoming immigrant youths through the creation of friendship-building opportunities and the inclusion of activities and sports that are popular in diverse cultures (Anisef & Kilbride, 2000). Such intercultural exposure helps students become more culturally sensitive and knowledgeable (Williams, 2010).

Conversely, when this same topic is explored from the host youths' perspective, the dominant thought is that immigrant counterparts should integrate more seamlessly into the dominant Canadian culture (Steinbach, 2010a). Host youths highlighted the differences between themselves and their immigrant peers, noting characteristics such as different ways of dressing and different notions of space. Through their eyes, dealing with immigrant students requires too much effort, and the differences are not worth overcoming. Such annoyance towards the simple presence of immigrant newcomers in the school environment indicates a high level of unacceptance on the part of host youth. Similarly, Potvin's (2008, as cited in Steinbach, 2010a) study illustrated that the negative propaganda of the media, the postcolonial context, and the intolerability of ethnic diversity all had an unconstructive impact on the assumptions formed by these students.

Considering these findings, current educational reforms should focus on improving locally born students' acceptance of diversity instead of attempting to increase their knowledge of cultural differences. Steinbach (2010a) affirmed that the emphasis be on "'newcomers' reception by host society students" (p. 543). As an immigrant and mother of an immigrant adolescent, I agree with Steinbach's (2010a) argument and have personally observed that newcomers have little social capital and cultural capital in their host society. However,

Steinbach's (2010a) study methodology was limited to students' focus groups and did not provide systemic perspectives, such as the perceptions of teaching staff and parents, on these complex issues.

In addition to the attitudes and beliefs of students, and the overall educational climate, teachers also play a significant role in the process of friendships development between immigrant youths and their host peers. When teachers demonstrate, even implicitly, that they selectively provide solutions for nonmarginalized students, they are unintentionally promoting unequal status among children, which violates the positive intergroup contact conditions conducive to intergroup friendships (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). For example, many immigrant youths felt that their teachers and other educational staff constituted part of their school difficulties (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000).

However, what is missing from the literature is a deeper, more critical understanding of the school context, which has been shaped by imperialism and colonialism, and which must be considered in light of the impact of immigration history. Also, there has not yet been a study investigating the complex relationship between parents' messages and immigrant youths' intercultural friendship choices, especially within Chinese ethnic groups. I believe it is vital for researchers to consider the linkages between intercultural contact and ethnic identity in order to more thoroughly understand the process of establishing intercultural friendships.

***Intercultural friendships and identity development.*** As part of the process of identity development, young people explore their ethnic and cultural identities and dialectics during adolescence (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Meeus, Iedemaa, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Phinney, 2006; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006), which often results in an increasing understanding of self (Liebkind et al, 2004). Ethnic identity,

can be regarded as a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group, and individuals derive self-esteem from such belonging (Phinney, 1990). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) research with youths confirmed there are two elements to ethnic identity: ethnic affirmation and belonging (Phinney, 1992). Further, youths begin to make friends with others based on their own identity, rather than a pure group identity (Williams, 2010). Friends may help one another with identity support and are thus inspired to retain intimate contact over time (Weisz & Wood, 2005). However, there are some contradictory data in light of the connection between intercultural friendships and identity development.

The first issue is that peer intercultural contact becomes increasingly significant as teenagers construct and develop their identities and expand their social engagement beyond their families (B. B. Brown & Klute, 2003). For instance, P. W. Lee (2006) proposed that “relational identity is developed through information exchange and interactions between members in an intercultural friendship” (p. 18). She also categorized seven types of activities that shape relational identity during the process of intercultural friendships in universities: (a) providing mutual assistance to one another; (b) rituals, activities, rules, and roles; (c) self-disclosure; (d) networking; (e) exploring cultures and languages; (f) emphasizing similarities and exploring differences; and (g) conflict management.

However, the development of a stable ethnic identity is challenged by “the co-occurrence of developmental and cultural changes” (Costigan, Su, & Hua, 2009, p. 261). Tsang, Irving, Alaggia, Chau, and Benjamin (2003) reported that Chinese immigrant youths negotiated their fluid ethnic identity across time and place with great challenges. That is to say, when youth move into a new world and establish contact with peers from diverse cultural settings, especially host peers, cultural differences and individual ethnic identity are developed alongside major doubts

and questions (Phinney, 2006). Pahl and Way (2006) further declared that experiencing discrimination and racism often accelerated the process of ethnic and racialized identity exploration for teens of colour. The vast majority of young immigrants felt that they would never “feel Canadian” (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000, p. 9). The negative perceptions and stereotypes held by the dominant society impacts immigrant youths’ ability to form strong, healthy identities as Canadians and as members of their ethnic group (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It is generally argued that the non-native members in intercultural relationships are more likely to adapt their own values to those of the host culture—engaging in a constant negotiating process in order to fit into the social life of the host cultural environment (Y. Kim, 2002).

In contrast, another issue concerning the linkage between friendships and identity development is that immigrant youths have been shown to have high levels of friendship homophily, the tendency to prefer intra-ethnic friends (Wade & Okesola, 2002). One reason for this is ethnic group categorization, which results in the prioritization of same-ethnic friendships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Second, cultural identity is superior or stronger in same-ethnic contexts as opposed to different-ethnic backgrounds (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Kiang, Harter, & Whitesell, 2007). A third reason for the display of friendship homophily by immigrant youths is the positive attitudes shown toward in-group members by youths with a strong sense of ethnic identity (Hamm & Coleman, 2001). Last, similar identities can help youth find their sense of belonging within like-minded peer groups (Hamm, 2000; Quillian & Campbell, 2003).

In conclusion, I view immigrant children’s identities from a critical perspective as fluid, multiple, endless, and sometimes contradictory. Due to their engagement in transnational and multilingual communities featuring inequitably structured power relations, they struggle to seek ways to negotiate with more than one ethnic and cultural group. Although the majority of the

research conducted has been in terms of the ethnic identity of youths and the conflicts between their identity and intercultural friendships, the focus has not been on the extent and the process of negotiating their immigrant status family socialization and the negative perceptions held by host peers. This gap presents my second set of subquestions: How do Chinese immigrant youths negotiate the challenges of intercultural friendship building while their identities develop? To what extent does parental cultural socialization affect the development of intercultural friendships of Chinese immigrant youths?

**Parental socialization and cultural mismatches between schools and homes.**

Extensive developmental research has found that parents play a significant role in adolescent social cognition and attitudes (Smetana, 1989, 2006), especially through parental socialization, which may involve parents sharing their ethnic history, the native language, and ethnic pride in their culture (T. Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007). Some recent studies have examined how parental socialization encourages accomplishment and even moves beyond cultural beliefs and practice. For example, “children’s understanding and positive reception of different ethnic and racial groups can be nurtured by their parents” (Tran & Lee, 2011, p. 2).

In visible minority families, parental socialization may have an impact on children’s educational beliefs, peer interactions, and habits (Hughes et al., 2006; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). For example, Asian American parents are more likely than White American parents to structure their youths’ home time (Leong et al., 2011). Krahn and Taylor (2005) further reported that about 88 percent of ethnic-minority immigrant parents stated that they hoped their children would acquire a university degree to improve their career accessibility.

However, there is a cultural mismatch between home and school. There are some comparative data to indicate the collision between “Western liberal, democratic values . . . [and]



disciplinary parenting” (J. Li, 2009, p. 496). To be exact, Chinese parents’ traditional, one-dimensional vision promotes Confucian values such as filial loyalty, obedience, and hard work (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Fuligni & Zhang, 2004), whereas the education system values “independence, questioning authority, and active participation” (Zheng, 2008, p. 65). Students experience a “socially marginalized status at school and family hierarchy, . . . nurturance of creativity and independent thinking [at school, and] . . . restrictive and disciplinary” (J. Li, 2009, pp. 497–498) management at home. Such a contrast may impassion various complaints and cultural misconceptions. For example, parents may complain their children play too many games at school and ignore the positive side of games such as fostering imagination, competition, and teamwork. Traditional, exam-driven, Chinese teaching pedagogies make parents request their children do much more homework to achieve learning outcomes (Zheng, 2008). As well, school teachers may misinterpret parental messages.

Another issue of mismatching is that immigrant parents may feel there are barriers to being involved in school-based activities and that this might influence their children’s learning. In Canada, data from 18 communities demonstrated less-educated parents seemed to struggle to “integrate in the new school environment because of a lack of language proficiency and less engagement in children’s school activities” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 385). Zhong and Zhou (2011) further noted that Chinese parents face various challenges due to new language proficiency, social and cultural capital (Zheng, 2008), employment inequality, and discrepancies in the social and education systems between home country and host country. Specifically, language barriers, lack of time and energy, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian school culture have been reported as the major impediments to immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s learning process.

Also, immigrant parents feel conflicted between high motivation and low involvement. For example, parent–teacher interviews often make them feel disappointed because they do not know what to say or how to express themselves, or they do not know what they can contribute to the schools. This sense of unfamiliarity often leads immigrant parents to avoid going to their children’s school without a direct invitation from the teachers. Therefore, parents may feel somewhat disconnected from their children’s school contexts; this means that they have no guidance to tutor their children. For instance, Ma (2009) found that some Chinese immigrant parents relied on their prior Chinese experience and Chinese cultural values such as hard work, self-discipline, and listening to knowledgeable parents and instructor, to frame their children’s learning and growth in American contexts.

I believe such a cultural clash between schools and homes is not absolute; there are moderating influences. Although Chinese parents pay much attention to academic work, they still hope their children build healthy intercultural friendships in real-life contexts. To date, no published study has explicitly examined the association between parental socialization and intercultural friendships. Chinese youths are one of the largest groups of non-native youth in Canada today. My inquiry calls attention to parental socialization as a cultural moderator that negotiates children’s identity during the development of intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youths and their host peers in southern Alberta high schools.

**Chinese immigrant youths.** By 2031, the Chinese Canadian population is projected to reach between 2.4 to 3.0 million, constituting approximately six percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2010). Many studies have suggested that Chinese descendants face certain culture-specific academic, social, linguistic, psychological, and familial challenges at mainstream schools. Discussion about the difficulty some youths face when living in two

distinctive worlds has fostered dialogue about a model minority myth and psychological adjustment, peer relationships, and social support.

***Model minority myth and psychological adjustment.*** Cunningham and Spencer (2000) put forward the “model minority myth” (p. 180), in which “Asian Americans are stereotyped as the most successful minority” (p. 180) in the United States. I would argue this myth applies to Canada as well. This implicit assumption “ignores the bimodal distribution in many Asian American communities where there are successful Asian Americans as well as Asian Americans living at the poverty level and working in sweat shops” (Cunningham & Spencer, 2000, p. 180). Specifically, the model minority stereotype overemphasizes academic achievement and one-dimensional adjustment in a way that discourages a holistic perspective on the adjustment of Asian immigrant youth.

One of the most enduring features of the model minority stereotype is the notion that Asian Americans do better academically than other ethnic groups in America. Interview data (S. Lee, 1996) and empirical data (Kao, 1995) have shown that Asian American youth are viewed as better students by peers and teachers. Accordingly, Asian American youth are aware of being judged by this stereotype. This representation of high educational achievement has perpetuated the misconception that Asian American youth do not encounter any barriers (Zhou, Siu, & Xin, 2009). Qin (2008) further proposed that these young immigrants tend to be stereotyped as quiet, diligent, and highly successful. Such stereotypical images can often lead to their needs being neglected by researchers, educators, and counselors. Thus, it is important to consider the long-term implications of low adjustment and problematic acculturation.

In fact, Asian American youth face tremendous challenges at home and at school. For example, Asian American youths do not succeed easily in school and often study diligently (Qin,

2008). Moreover, many feel that their career opportunities are limited, and nearly all “experience pressures to conform to the model minority standards” (Cunningham & Spencer, 2000, p. 203). The model minority stereotype takes no notice of nonacademic problems (Costigan et al., 2010). For example, the rate of suicide of Chinese American youth is higher than average (Zhou et al., 2009).

There is likely a strong parallel in Canada. For example, Oxman-Martinez et al. (2012) examined the ramification of “perceived ethnic discrimination by significant social others” (p. 383) such as peers and teachers, as well as by different forms of social exclusion, in the case of recent Chinese immigrant children living in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and the Prairies. The numerical data indicate that such supposed discrimination leads to social isolation characteristics such as “lower self-esteem, lower sense of social competence in peer relationships and less sense of academic competence” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 383). This is an unfortunate situation, as many Chinese children encounter high levels of psychological distress, particularly in the form of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Zhou et al., 2009), but underutilize the available school counseling services (Qin, 2008), and rarely tell their sad stories to teachers and parents.

Considering the two extremes of Chinese immigrant students’ good academic performance and the contrasting challenges of their psychological well-being, I delve deeper into research regarding their psychological adjustment. Chinese immigrant youth have been found to experience increased psychological stress due to intercultural (Chui & Ring, 1998; Yeh, 2003) and intergenerational conflicts (Morrow, 1994). For those who are newcomers, their sudden change in location imposes significant pressures, meaning that they inevitably experience more painful intercultural transitions. Relatedly, when combined with an academic burden, integrating

into a foreign land with a completely exotic culture, customs, and language, newcomers are more likely to have social and psychological problems (Pfundmair, Graupmann, Du, Frey, & Aydin, 2015). For instance, Qin (2008) found that high-achieving, distressed youths felt that their parents expressed excessively high expectations for academic achievement over other aspects of their development, such as social competence and emotional stability. Although academic success is critically important, it is not the only variable affecting Chinese immigrant youths' schooling, bicultural identity, and personal holistic development (Han & Hsu, 2004).

In reality, there may be multidimensional emotional, psychological, and familial issues behind their academic achievement (Ma, 2009). For example, "it was not the presence of parent control that negatively impacted youths' psychological adjustment, but rather youths' perceived experience of reduced parental warmth or rejection" (Yoo & Miller, 2011, p. 46). S. K. Wong (1998) and S. L. Wong (2001) further claimed that for Asian youth, positive relationships with parents and peers have been linked with lower levels of psychological isolation. A Swedish study (Johansson & Olofsson, 2011) has also already shown that the interactions between friends of dissimilar cultures could have a dramatic, positive impact on each of their life plans, and on the educational or occupational career choices of these young people. Therefore, I believe that peer friendships, especially intercultural friendships, are vital for Chinese immigrant youths to successfully integrate into a new world and achieve well-balanced growth.

***Peer relationships.*** Harris (1998) effectively summed up the importance of peer relationships: "Peers matter more than parents" (p. 462). Over the last three decades, researchers have conducted studies on the impact of peer relationships on immigrant youths. The majority of recent research has been conducted on barriers that stand in the way of building friendships (Kao & Joyner, 2004).

First, English proficiency is an essential precondition for making friends with host peers and attending some activities organized in communities (Cole, 1998). For example, when newcomers are placed within English as a Second Language classes, other youth do not have the proper opportunity to get to know and understand them, and this can result in the new students being viewed as inferior and undesirable. Second, “slower acculturation” (Kao & Joyner, 2004, p. 193) may be another possible reason for fewer intercultural peer relationships among Chinese students.

Third, Chinese students may feel other psychological and social barriers such as high levels of distress, particularly in the form of depression, anxiety, loneliness (J. Li, 2009; Zhou et al., 2009), and isolation (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Zhou et al., 2009). As well, social difficulties with peers (J. Li, 2009) and peer harassment, including physical harassment and teasing, result in feelings of marginalization and internalization of racial discrimination (J. Li, 2009; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Thus, Chinese students cherish their same-ethnic social life involving people who hold similar interests and values, as they feel it is safer and more comfortable (J. Li, 2009).

Most importantly, relationships with peers may also suffer due to ethnic discrimination and exclusion in peer socialization. The documentation on the high rates of peer discrimination such as name-calling, social exclusion, teasing, and harassment (Qin, Way, & Rana, 2008) is especially true for those immigrant youths from Eastern cultures (Costigan et al., 2010). There is also “subtle” peer exclusion (J. Li, 2009, p. 493) and “perceived ethnic discrimination by peers” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 383). For example, J. Li’s (2009, 2010) data indicated “racist bully[ing]” (J. Li, 2009, p. 494) in an English as a Second Language separation class, resulting in a non-inclusive peer environment, “inequitable peer relationships” (J. Li, 2010, p. 132) and a

“feeling of alienation and degradation” (J. Li, 2010, p. 131) between Chinese students and host students. Such negative experiences and perceptions impassion “psychological isolation” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 385), “poor psychosocial functioning” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 377), “internalized negative image,” and “social distance” (J. Li, 2009, p. 497). Additionally, peer social exclusion in schools leads to feelings of “alienation and degradation, [as well as] . . . low self-esteem and high social anxiety” (J. Li, 2010, p. 131).

Fourth, teachers’ praise of immigrant students’ good qualities and hard work leads to uncomfortable feelings on the part of their host peers (Costigan et al., 2010). As a result, the peers’ negative feelings can sometimes lead to mistreatment (Qin, Way, & Rana, 2008). As such, teachers’ preferences towards certain students can distance Chinese students from their host peer groups.

Finally, parental expectations of high academic achievement further the struggle to form intercultural friendships. For example, immigrant Chinese parents may demand their children socialize only with children who are doing well or control other social interaction activities (J. Li, 2009). Thus, these children may miss opportunities to develop close bonds with various peer counterparts. They may also encounter conflict between the desire to meet their parents’ expectations and the desire to fit in with their peers in their new culture (Costigan et al., 2010).

In summary, the above-mentioned barriers, which can prevent the formation of intercultural relationships, have been demonstrated through various research studies. However, these studies either (a) employed quantitative surveys or lacked an explanation as to why such perceived discrimination was happening, or (b) they used qualitative interviews but overlooked the wider national and historical context of Chinese immigration and the influence of power on cultural differences. Such a narrow interpretation is inadequate to deeply understand the hidden

role of cultural hegemony.

Pressures on youth to conform creates unnecessary and considerable stress. For high school students, as their circle of friends shifts, new friends with different appeals move into their sphere. Peer pressure is unfortunately an undeniable part of the ritual of growing up, and there is tremendous pressure on high school students to alter the way they look, change what they wear and adjust the language they use, adding new phrases and expressions that then become everyday practice. However, for immigrant youth, there are other sources of stress besides those faced by local peers and one of those stressors is a significant lack of social support or belonging.

***Social support.*** For immigrants, social support is an especially crucial source to help them out of crises, especially in a transition period. In terms of immigrant youths, as they experiment with taking on more adult roles, social support systems should encourage and provide them with necessary assistance in their practices (Cunningham & Spencer, 2000). However, many Asian immigrant youth have reported that there are no sufficient and available emotional and academic resources for them to seek (Zhou, Peverly, Xin, Huang, & Wang, 2003). Alternatively, they often ask for help from their ethnic peers (Way & Chen, 2000; Yeh et al., 2003).

Unfortunately, in low-income, Chinese immigrant families, immigrant parents are unable to provide direct academic support (J. Li, Holloway, Bempechat, & Loh, 2008). However, J. Li et al. (2008) found that higher achievement is related to being able to access social network support outside of the family. Accessible resources can be found in “schools, communities, and homes” (Cunningham & Spencer, 2000, p. 254), but poor families were less likely to access these types of support systems in their social networks. Specifically, poor parents tried to use



whatever support they could find, such as by co-opting older siblings or grandparents into assisting the student. However, the supports were often not enough or were not handled in a way the student could use; therefore, it is likely that these children might want to seek support from peers at school instead.

In summary, a significant amount of empirical research concerning immigrant youths has been conducted. However, much of this research has not taken into account the rich context surrounding immigrant youth. Without attending to immigrant youths' voices and understanding them in a historical context, and instead reducing them to numerical findings, "the richness and the vitality of diverse human life stories are lost in the scientific quantification" (J. Li, 2009, p. 4). There is a dearth of research focusing on school peer support from the perspective of intercultural friendships. Therefore, research regarding how a multicultural nation can provide immigrant youth with the social support required for the effective formation of intercultural friendships in high schools is indispensable.

**Teachers and intercultural friendships.** Although there is a great deal of scholarship examining cultural diversity in classrooms and schools, the bulk of these findings shed light on the experiences of students and teachers. However, the research to date has not focused on understanding Chinese immigrant youth and the topic of intercultural friendships. Further, little is known about the views of students, teachers, and parents on intercultural friendships. This research seeks to extend our understanding in these areas by exploring the school experiences of Chinese immigrant youth as they attempt to make intercultural friendships.

### **Reflection on History of National Chinese in Canada**

The present is the continuation of the past; hence, the "past-present" (Willinsky, 1998, p. 10) becomes part of the requirement of social reality production. Unfortunately, superficial, low-

frequency, intercultural contact is considered normal by most people, when in reality it is not. This is something that I question, but it is also something that I have consciously referred to when reflecting on the connection between current reality and past circumstances. Thus, in this section, I bring the past to mind and ponder how this has brought Canadians to present day thinking with the aim of better understanding the complexities and possibilities of the present (Stanley, 2011). Such an inspection of history provides a basis for my critical reflection on the present. Stanley's (2011) critical analysis may renew the past and lead educators to rethink the unseen challenges of intercultural friendships for Chinese immigrant youths within a national Chinese immigration historical context.

Steinbach (2010b) wrote that the barriers of intercultural friendships are partially explained by "historical and political elements" (p. 96). This task of explanation may be necessary for educators to see how schools echo society (J. Li, 2010) and to see "how the historical event is represented in a discourse that is somehow beyond control" (Willinsky, 1998, p. 18). Certain behaviours and beliefs are transmitted from parents to their children; this may strongly manipulate their decision-making. Crotty (1998) explained that the world is "an historical evolution in which human beings have a guiding hand" (p. 149). Therefore, reality is never totally objective, and neither is an individual's perception of it (Freire, 1972b). Human beings must be seen "as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 1972a, p. 56).

I believe that the relationship between history and reality is closely interwoven. They cannot be separated from each other. History is like a mirror, reflecting the transition of life and its impact on our society now. The past is unfolded by rethinking the present within a social justice framework and through a critical lens.

In Stanley's (2011) book, *Contesting White Supremacy*, the author examined how Chinese students, the majority of whom were Canadian-born, third-generation residents of Victoria, were segregated and placed into Chinese-only schools in Vancouver, BC, in 1922 and 1923. While this decision may seem shocking, it clearly fits into colonial notions existing in Canadian history. Stanley expressed his thoughts on the issue of racism in Canada:

By 1920, B.C. government-controlled schools had indoctrinated the rising generation into the taken-for-granted cultural politics that naturalized the occupation of the territory by people of European origins, legitimized Canadian state formation, and seamlessly integrated racist knowledge into the understanding of the age. (p. 231)

For instance, to justify their actions of segregation, the school board made statements such as, "The very small children born here are anxious to take part in school entertainments and in school sports, in contrast to those born in the Orient who seems to care for none of these things" (Stanley, 2011, p. 225). Besides, various residents of Victoria regarded Chinese children and their parents as foreigners who did not really belong in BC, let alone in schools. Many residents believed that the Chinese students were too different in a myriad of ways, and their presence in regular schools would delay their own children's development. Stanley (2011) refuted this thinking noting the fact that most of the Chinese students were performing higher than class averages. As such, Stanley noted that the Victoria School Board's statements rationalizing segregation also tried to modify the meaning of "Chinese" to fix who was integrated into the group.

The history of national Chinese immigration is situated within an understanding of the colonial past, illustrating that White supremacy, discrimination, exclusion, and racism have shaped the identity of Chinese Canadians (Stanley, 2011; Willinsky, 1998). Throughout Canadian history, Chinese have been excluded in many ways from mainstream Canadian life.

Unfortunately, the majority community at that time did not question their racist beliefs and stereotypes. The 1884–1885 Royal Commission on Chinese immigration formalized what many already believed: Chinese immigrants should be excluded from mainstream society. This belief still exists to some degree today as illustrated by the fact that a large number of immigrant youth still experience some racism and bullying in schools in Canada (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012).

The logic that led to these exclusions also applied to schooling. Schools are at the center of children's lives; as such, schools play a crucial role in the integration process for young immigrants. It seemed self-evident that the "Chinese" and "Canadians" were different groups, and the former did not belong in the same schools as the latter (Stanley, 2011). Based on a report from the Canadian Council on Social Development, educators today are astonished that the vast majority of young immigrants still have the idea that "a Canadian was . . . a white person of Anglo-Saxon descent who had been born in Canada" (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000, p. 6). These immigrant youths never felt they were truly Canadian because they were not born in Canada and because they still spoke with an accent. The implication of a critical reflection on this national history is that educational equality and fairness is essential for all children.

An understanding of history and how racialized perceptions are formed is vital for anti-racism education, because racism can be expressed in many different, implicit ways and can be deep-seated and tough to separate from general knowledge (Stanley, 2011). This reality was noted by Mr. Robert Philp, Queen's Counsel of the Alberta Human Rights Commission: "[Racial profiling and incitement to hatred], including in the context of migration, highlights the continued racial discrimination that exists and the intolerance, hate, racism and exclusion that emerges when fear, lack of understanding and prejudices are prevalent and fostered" (Alberta

Human Rights Commission, 2017, para. 2).

Consequently, a closer look at history is important to avoid “establishing new exclusions as old ones end, and to impose new consequences as old ones are mitigated” (Stanley, 2011, p. 233). Racism is not only about people’s prejudices, it is also a historical creation. However, Stanley (2011) cautioned that racism is not an inevitable outcome of human difference. Therefore, I support the hypothesis that cultural and racialized differences may be formed “through social processes rather than natural or biological ones” (Stanley, 2011, p. 8), and, subsequently, may lead to segregation and exclusions.

Bhabha (2004) further stated that people ignore history at their peril. Studying history reveals the “oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs [people] to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery” (p. xi). Therefore, he encourages people to move beyond dichotomies of “citizen and the stranger” (Bhabha, 2004, p. xxi), and to work out differences to maintain a peaceful, multicultural society.

Despite social advancement and educational reforms in schools, I think we have to consider how the exclusion and segregation of Chinese and other non-White students within educational institutions continue to have an impact today. As Willinsky (1998) has said, this history “forms part of the past that we have inherited” (p. 5). In Canada today, few public figures openly express concern over the number of people of colour migrating to Canada. However, many non-White Canadian citizens are nonetheless marginalized, and “the term immigrant becomes code for ‘Asian,’ ‘African,’ ‘Latin American,’ or outsider” (Stanley, 2011, p. 52).

What is missing from the school segregation discourse is discussion beyond the articulation of cultural differences; beyond being neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). As an immigrant, I find myself in the moment of transit “where space and

time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). The new identity is formed “in-between spaces” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). In fact, everyone is an immigrant in North America except for First Nations people. Education may change the hidden forms of racism through intercultural education, effective communication, and a deeper understanding in a context in which racialization becomes meaningless socially (Stanley, 2011). To date, no critical ethnographic case study has been conducted to explore intercultural friendships through the lens of social justice in Canada. My hope is that lessons such as those resulting from the school segregation of the Chinese in BC can be seen critically within a historical framework (Willinsky, 1998), so that educators can keep the past and the present in their minds as they plan for the future. Therefore, my research contributes important knowledge surrounding Chinese immigrant youths’ social integration and intercultural friendships.

## **Discussion**

I focused my research questions and employed a broad literature review to assess the range of available research literature through Eric, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Academic Complete databases to search articles and to identify gaps to shape and direct my research while I managed references in Endnote. The literature on international students and immigrant youths is growing, and it covers a wide range of generating factors related to intercultural friendship formation and development, as well as understanding of immigrants’ experiences and perceptions. However, many researchers consider ethnic division as part of multiculturalism and take it for granted in the process of cross-cultural communication. They obviously neglect the hidden layers of challenges that occur during the course of intercultural peer relationships. Such findings may make readers see only the superficial, visible challenges rather than the invisible

challenges and barriers. Garth (1994) argued that being invisible is not being “nonexistent” (p. 8). Such unseen barriers are caused by “social structures” (Garth, 1994, p. 8) that make vulnerable populations disempowered.

As demonstrated by this review of the literature, despite ongoing interest and repeated calls for research, to my knowledge, there has been little work done to document and analyze the nature of barriers to intercultural friendships through a critical lens and within an acknowledged postcolonial context. This type of research could transform existing knowledge of intercultural communication and contribute in a new way to the formation in education settings of intercultural friendships between immigrant youth and their host counterparts. In addition, what is missing from current findings is a critical understanding of kaleidoscopic identity and Chinese immigrant youths’ intercultural friendship choices. No study has viewed this social phenomenon through the mirror of history in order to interpret the current social exclusion in high schools—specifically, the low frequency of interactions between different ethnic groups. As such, research inquiry fills a significant omission in the literature and contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge.

Moreover, most literature has been too narrowly focused, or based either on surveys reporting broad trends, single qualitative methods, mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, or small-scale studies of one group. Similarly, some existing approaches are overly simplistic and problematic. To date, no study has employed qualitative mixed methods. As such, these studies lack rigor and complexity in terms of data collection. Of equal importance is the fact that “experience is completely a mixture of subjective and objective, of fact and interpretation, of consciousness and thing” (Sadler, 1969, p. 16). As the researcher of this study, a Chinese immigrant, and the mother of an immigrant youth, I provide my study an in-group member’s

perspective, to help in giving voice to a marginalized population.

Therefore, based on the general findings and contributions from the researchers cited, my study has identified some new information regarding the invisible challenges related to intercultural friendship formation and development within the specific national immigration history of China and through the lens of social justice. These findings update and complement previous results by employing a critical qualitative approach, which uses methods such as in-depth interviews, observations, reflection journals, field notes, and autoethnography to provide a systems perspective on the controversial issues under study, including youth perspectives, teaching beliefs, and parental cultural socialization. Maximizing intercultural contact between immigrant children and their host counterparts can constitute a crucial step toward advancing acculturation goodwill, furthering the success of multicultural policy, and improving the lives and the social and educational integration of young students. This study was devised to explore the existing barriers and reveal ways to maximize intercultural contact for immigrant children in school settings.



### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodological framework of my study and provides an in-depth discussion of the qualitative, critical ethnographic, case study approach employed. The research design of this study was guided by its context, the research questions used, and was underpinned by the philosophy of critical ethnography. Therefore, it not only evaluates the belief of objectivity, but it also “critique[s] the notion of subjectivity” (Madison, 2012, p. 9) and makes “value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity” (Thomas & O’Maolchatha, 1989, p. 147). During this study, I utilize qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. I begin by positioning myself within the study, and follow this with philosophical considerations and paradigms. I then explain the rationale for and give a description of the critical ethnography and case study. The research questions are framed, ethical considerations and a description of the participants are followed by the data collection process, data analysis procedures, data quality, limitations and delimitations of the study.

#### **Being a Chinese Immigrant Studying Chinese Immigrant Youth in Southern Alberta: Reflections on Identity From a Critical Perspective**

Before I came to Canada, I never thought about the relationship between ideas such as the marginalization and suffering of people of colour and my identity. By the time I started my doctoral studies, I had been exposed to intercultural experiences for several years. At the initial stage of my research design, the people around me felt that the barriers to intercultural communication were not a racial problem, but rather a cultural difference. My topic concerning intercultural friendships from a critical anti-colonial perspective seemed to “have a deleterious effect on morale” (Carr & Thésée, 2008, p. 26). By using this quotation, I am elucidating that, after describing my topic to those around me, I found that they became less interested in

discussing the topic with me due to its perceived ‘sensitive’ nature. Stereotypes and discrimination regarding racism are sensitive or subtle topics, which many people believe might lead to uncomfortable feelings, resistance, fear, feeling threatened, being offended, or being hurt.

Despite culture factors as visible obstacles of intercultural friendship building, a critical anti-colonial perspective is also needed to reveal the hidden barriers of intercultural friendships. I therefore needed to “interrupt these common practices” (Pillow, 2003, p. 187) through “reflexivities of discomfort” (p. 188) and ask questions such as, “How does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis?” (p. 176). However, this “reflexivity that pushes toward an unfamiliar, towards the uncomfortable, cannot be a simple story of subjects, subjectivity, and transcendence or self-indulgent tellings” (Pillow, 2003, p. 192). Based on this, I needed to intensify the association between my identity and my study from a critical perspective. Thus, I needed to address the degree to which I felt that Chinese immigrant youth’s identity negotiation and my multiple identities impacted knowledge construction, and further, I needed to make explicit the ways that I interpreted what I had found. Through such reflection I may seek “emancipator transformation against a modernist, objectivist representation of the social phenomenon” (Lim, 2012, p. 3). In other words, group divisions between Chinese immigrant youth and mainstream Canadian peers in school contexts can be represented by the subjective lived experiences of Chinese immigrant youth.

Furthermore, this introspection led me to analyze myself and show “the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher” (England, 1994, p. 82), which implies a dynamic and ongoing negotiation of identity. When I recalled my life as an immigrant, I realized that I was often labelled and categorized as a foreign woman, a Chinese person, an Asian student, a Chinese immigrant youth’s mother, or a Chinese instructor in a private senior high school—along with all

the stereotypes that came with those labels. By having these descriptors or classifications imposed upon myself, I started to ponder where I fit within the power spectrum from an anti-colonial perspective, and considered the arguments of Dei, Karumanchery-Luik, and Karumanchery (2004) in doing so:

Where colonial images of the other were steeped in an intrinsic inferiority and an overt racism that could not and would not be contested in the mainstream, contemporary discourse, relative to the hegemony of today's political and social climate, makes allowances that always work to ambivalently support/condemn racism. The construction of the oppressed in contemporary discourse is an exercise in balancing these same fixed notions with flexible allowances for variation and anomaly. (pp. 45–46)

My lived experiences are not isolated from the social, cultural, economic, political, and historical contexts that shape my complex identity and subjectivity. Identity also plays a significant role in an ethnographic approach because the “researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1988, pp. 33-34). Carrand Thésée (2008) further stated that lived experience often refers to “the personal and subjective implication of the researcher in the research process” (p. 22). Madden (2010) highlighted that an ethnographer acts as a research tool to collect data and “is both within and outside of the research process” (p. 7). Denzin (1997) wrote that a researcher might to some extent become a research participant if he or she has a similar cultural background to the study participants, and if he or she possesses the empathy to stand in the shoes of participants while in the critical-thinking role of a researcher. This concern for the researcher's own positionality is sometimes comprehended as reflexive ethnography (Davis, 1999). To date, much has been written about identity, but less is known about intercultural friendships and the relevance of the complex identities of an immigrant researcher who is studying identity, and his or her positionality in education. This could be especially relevant when an educator or researcher studies his or her own ethnic group and writes in a

second language, taking on multiple roles, including insider, outsider, in-between status, speaker, listener, mediator, and audience, as each of these roles is established through the medium of a diverse identity.

**Multiplicity of researcher identities and reflexivity.** Currently, researchers have a variety of understandings regarding identity. For instance, Gee (2001) believed that identity is being recognized as a certain “kind of person . . . in a given context” (p. 99). As well, identity is about one’s relation to others. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) defined identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (p. 586). Each society has its “own way of legitimizing the social norms” (Zaretsky, 1994, p. 204); thus, identity can be defined as “the product of interaction between self and society” (Zaretsky, 1994, p. 204). Toohey, Day, and Manyak (2007) further noted that identity is how the interaction between the individual and the societal world is interconnected. Thus, no one can survive without others, outside of society, or free from cultural, political, and social impacts. K. H. Chen (1996) summarized that “identity is not just anything. . . . Each of those identity-stories is inscribed in the positions we take up and identify with, and we have to live this ensemble of identity-positions in all its specificities” (p. 502). Therefore, the diversity of the definitions regarding identity led me to reflect deeply on my multiple identities within this study on intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youth and their local peers.

In addition, bell hooks’ (2000) conception of margin and centre helped me think about how one positions oneself, and what relations exist between the marginalized population and the dominant group. Generally speaking, people define themselves in relation to features such as others’ ethnicity, gender, age, and social class, as categorized by the majority community. Accordingly, those who occupy the centre often marginalize others. Madison (2012) wrote that

“identity is performed, and to perform outside these inherited constructions is to break through these taken-for-granted and common-sense notions of what a specific identity is or should be” (p.180). Awareness of ‘breaking through’ makes me question my own research role and positionality in terms of power and privilege dynamics.

Reflexivity can help me to understand the complex negotiation of the multiple identities of an immigrant researcher and the blurred boundaries between them all, because reflexivity is not only “a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself” (Macbeth, 2001, p. 35), but also an exercise that “can make us more aware of asymmetrical or exploitative relationships” (England, 1994, p. 86) between researchers and participants. The multiple researcher identities pertaining to insider and outsider status, and relationships between the researcher and participants, have been broadly discussed in qualitative research (Coffey, 1999; Griffith, 1998; Lim, 2012; Mercer, 2007; Mullings, 1999). Lim (2012) posited that this ongoing dynamic of status shifting, combined with the relationship between an immigrant researcher and research participants, may to some extent influence knowledge production in different ways.

However, little is known about the process by which immigrant researchers negotiate their in-between position within their own multiple identities. As an immigrant researcher, it is important to be aware of my multiple identities and my subjective selves and the role they each play in the process of research, because it is impossible to completely remove my compound identities and assume a neutral standpoint. This realization enhanced my research by allowing me to know, be, understand, and avoid skewing my interpretation of the data. However, the method of accounting for diverse identities cannot ignore the nuanced role of trust, power, and privilege in the relationship between researcher and the researched. Hence, I need to look inward

to identify my own ideological and pedagogical positions and biases that may affect my study and seek meaning in the ever-changing construction of myself, just as “the power, privilege, and stereotypes surrounding the research participants are interrogated” (Madison, 2012, p. 8).

Carr and Thésée (2008) further emphasized that “when researching identity or race, the transformative nature of what is found through the process of questioning people and connecting within their visceral lived racial experience must be appropriately contextualized” (p. 23). So, I needed to direct my attention beyond my “subjective self” (Madison, 2012, p. 10) and link with social contexts because “the self and society mutually presuppose each other and subjects manage their actions within contexts as a function of their personal as well as shared interpretations or representations of their social environment” (Dei et al., 2004, p. 52). Also, when I study people from my country of origin, I have to question my identity. What is my role as an immigrant researcher? What advantages or disadvantages are attached to that identity? Further, I may need to ask, “What issues are unresolved for me in relation to that identity?” (Dilg, 2003, p. 80). These issues were prevalent in my mind and thought processes while conducting my research and analysis.

**My positionality.** Personally, I am defined as an immigrant woman by socially constructed standards. However, by positioning myself in various contexts as a Chinese immigrant youth’s mother who is doing a PhD in Canada, I feel these attributes are not enough to describe my construction of self. Such a simple categorization of self does not offer a deep understanding of how and why I have conducted this critical research inquiry. In a critical ethnographic case study, positionality is interpreted in a much more complicated sense. My experiences, practices, and reflections have a fundamental impact on my research project. My task throughout this study was to be critically conscious of my own complex identity within the

role of a researcher studying issues of power and privilege.

To summarize, by positioning myself as a critically conscious agent in the research relationship, I take a critical look at where barriers are within historical and cultural frameworks, and how parental socialization and the history of Chinese national immigration influences the formation and development of intercultural friendships.

**My role as the researcher.** As Tinker and Armstrong (2008) noted, it is impossible to classify one's position as either an insider or an outsider. Rather, "researchers are always both insiders and outsiders in every research setting, and are likely to oscillate between these positions as they move in and out of similarity and difference, both within and between interviews" (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008, p. 54). Madison (2012) also commented about research roles:

In the space of the performance, I am outsider; in the space of the world, these positions are more likely switched: I am insider, and the subject is the outsider. While I see that I am an outsider to the subject's experience, the performance ironically pulls me inside. (p. 194)

As a Chinese immigrant and the mother of a Chinese immigrant daughter, I am an insider. It is easy for me to establish rapport with Chinese parents and students, because I feel a sense of intimacy and belonging. Accordingly, I can acquire a deep understanding of their perceptions and experiences. In addition, the advantages of this involvement include first-hand knowledge of many of the problems and joys inherent in intercultural friendships. As a Chinese immigrant studying Chinese immigrant youth in an anti-colonial context, I can gain a special awareness of the relationship between complex identities and the historical impact of social inequalities. This includes cultural hegemony and linguistic dominance, as well as social marginalization in harsh school environments. The multiplicity of my identity may also enhance my ability to gather and understand this particular data by taking advantage of my own cultural and compound

positioning, and the way I can understand or interpret the data provided by Chinese immigrant youth, through the lens of empathy. It also helps me to understand the challenges immigrant youth face as they attempt to form a new hybrid identity that fits in neither with their local peers nor with their own more traditional parents.

Moreover, my native language strength might contribute to a greater sense of ease and openness among participants when it comes to sharing negative experiences. In these respects, I am a participant of this research as an insider (Lu, 2001). Finally, being an insider in the study benefited my data collection and analysis, because I could take advantage of my immigrant status to make the research participants feel more comfortable and thus share more openly. As Maria Lugones (1994) wrote, “Only when we have traveled to each other’s ‘worlds’ are we fully subjects to each other” (p. 637).

However, one weakness of being an insider is that it would be easy for me to overlook the obvious. Namely, I may have been inclined to take some things for granted because I am familiar with certain issues. My insider status may also have led to a possible loss of perspective—specifically, I may not have seen various phenomena from other perspectives and may have been likely to integrate my preconceptions into my reflections. However, by acknowledging and addressing these issues directly, I hope to aid the reader and myself in assessing my findings and analyses. By reflecting on this topic from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant and mother, I believe this study has helped me to develop a deeper understanding of how cultural socialization and immigrant status influence my child’s identity formation and development of intercultural friendships.

On the other hand, as a researcher pursuing my PhD at a Canadian university, I am an outsider, who is still struggling to learn more about the cultural practices within Canadian



educational systems. One benefit of being an outsider is that my learning experiences can assist me in transcending my biases, to some extent. However, a potential disadvantage is that I lack a local or host researcher's perceptions, to some extent, and during the research I sometimes found it challenging to delve beyond the surface of my interpretations due to personal or emotional reasons.

More accurately, in terms of an intercultural researcher, a binary approach is a deficient model. I am both an insider and an outsider. Meanwhile, I am neither, but often experience feelings of being in-between. For example, when I interviewed Chinese immigrant youth in the process of my study, I found that I was in an in-between position without clear-cut divisions or boundaries. As a listener who has had similar experiences and sufferings, I could understand their painful feelings with sensitivity and empathy. However, I may have lacked the degree of familiarity necessary to effectively relate to Generation 2 and Generation 1.5's struggles to grow up amongst strangers as a result of the generation gap. This in-between position or perspective may bring about a new way to explore the identity of the research participants.

In summary, my compound identities cause me to view the world from a number of perspectives when researching marginalized immigrant youth in postcolonial society, through the lens of social justice and from an anti-colonial standpoint. Given that the children of immigrants are a key component of a linguistically, ethnically, and culturally pluralistic society, my own shifting identities has created a multilayered and deeper discussion regarding the relationships between immigrant and non-immigrant youth.

### **Philosophical Considerations and Paradigms**

The philosophical underpinning of my project was critical inquiry. Critical inquiry emphasizes "power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and

injustice” (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). As argued in Foucault’s (1980) theory of knowledge, knowledge is closely interwoven with the dominant culture. This knowledge is inseparable from the dominant power and serves it. A critical examination contributes to new ways of understanding oppression so that people can eradicate the oppression and take actions to make change. Critical inquiry also illuminates the association “between power and culture” (Crotty, 1998, p. 158). Such a spiraling process of inquiry and reflection seeks to “reveal society for what it is, to unmask its essence and mode of operation and to lay the foundations for human emancipation through deep-seated social change” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 284).

Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) wrote that, from the past to the present, all beliefs are negotiated by power. They have also written that some groups in society are advantaged over others, and that this oppression “is most forceful when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 140). During this study, I considered carefully the phenomenon of ethnic friendship patterns in a few high schools in Calgary. I used critical inquiry to address processes of intercultural communication between Chinese immigrant youths and their host peers in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of participants, including the influences of their teachers and parents. I also recognized that my personal cultural and historical experiences and backgrounds have inevitably shaped my interpretation. My intent was to make sense of the feelings that Chinese immigrant youths have about barriers to building intercultural friendships with their host peers.

The paradigm of my research is a radical humanist paradigm, which highlights the significance of “transcending the limitations of existing social arrangements” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). Ontologically, radical humanists “view the world as the product of individual consciousness; consciousness is seen as being projected onto the external through acts of

intentionality, thereby creating it” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 280). Many philosophers share a similar view on individual consciousness. Fichte, a German philosopher, declared “individual consciousness as a focal point for the understanding of the nature of the social world” (as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 281), and considered reflection on reality as giving human beings insight into themselves and their actions. Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, argued that supremacy is “within men’s consciousness [through] . . . ideological hegemony” (as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 289), and stated further that “every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship” (as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 350).

Said (1978a) wrote that one must know one’s location in history and society before one can begin critical inquiry into this subject. These philosophers’ views, entangled with history, culture, privilege, and pedagogy, can encourage educators to think critically about the challenges of intercultural education and how they are addressed in ethnically and culturally diverse Canadian classrooms, especially in high schools. Additionally, this notion of hegemony makes some teachers ponder “culture as both tradition and practice” (Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 7) and consequently makes them “conceptualize it as much more than a superstructure” (Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 7).

Gramsci (1975) noted that culture is more than just facts to be memorized:

[People] must break the habit of thinking that culture is encyclopedic knowledge whereby man [*sic*] is viewed as a mere container in which to pour and conserve empirical data or brute disconnected facts, which he will have to subsequently pigeonhole in his brain as in the columns of a dictionary so as to be able to eventually respond to the varied stimuli of the external world. This form of culture is truly harmful, especially to the proletariat. It only serves to create misfits, people who believe themselves superior to the rest of humanity because they have accumulated in their memory a certain quantity of facts and dates which they cough up at every opportunity to almost raise a barrier between themselves and others. (pp. 20–21)

In terms of mainstream education systems, schools “transmit the dominant culture, habits

of mind, and perhaps most important of all, they inculcate in a large portion of the society's population, the knowledge and values that are deemed appropriate for citizenship within a given social formation" (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 113). Giroux (2002) suggested that culture tries to legitimize the dominant group's way of life. This is transmitted in subtle and overt ways in schools and thus marginalizes smaller groups. More specifically, for high-school youths, such a transmission of dominant culture may be identified as a guiding ideology to determine the formation of their worldview as well as their philosophy of life, cultural outlook, values, and understanding of diversity.

To sum up, critical theorists have sought to set the basis for societal change through "a revolution of consciousness" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 291). The next section outlines the rationale for the critical ethnographic case study that has guided this research.

### **Selecting Qualitative Critical Ethnographic Case Study as Methodological Approach**

Critical ethnographic case study is an ethnographic approach through which researchers draw on critical notions of power, privilege, and historical forms of oppression, and situate these as the contextual framework for a case study. This is a mixed qualitative approach using multiple forms of data for a rich, descriptive study. In my research, I used mixed methods—autoethnography, critical ethnography, and case study (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004)—to "expand insight via historical contextualization" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 120) and to reflect "an evolving criticality" (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2012, p. 20).

**The rationale.** There were various reasons behind my plan to make use of a mixed qualitative approach. On the one hand, use of various techniques is necessary to attain a comprehensive view of the invisible barriers faced by Chinese immigrant youths in forming intercultural friendships, because important aspects of the research problem may be ignored or

overlooked by relying on a single approach. Mixed methods, data sources, and theoretical perspectives are also used in research to strengthen the quality of the findings and triangulate data and research results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consequently, I could gain multiple perspectives through different approaches to the same topic (Morse & Richards, 2002). Additionally, critical lenses that cross the disciplines of postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and acculturation have been built up within social and psychological theories I discussed in the previous section.

Finally, using multiple methods in a critical ethnographic case study may facilitate the researcher's capacity to "transcend reductionistic modes of fragmented knowledge building" (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 19), and address the "complexities of the social, cultural, and educational domains" (p. 77). This avoids "monological knowledge [through] . . . reductionistic" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 326) research findings. Therefore, the methodological framework that best served my research inquiry was critical ethnographic case study, "a multi-methodological form of research that uses a variety of research methods and theoretical constructs to examine a phenomenon" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 323).

**Critical ethnography.** For the critical ethnographic case study, I drew on some methods from critical ethnography in order to move beyond cultural descriptions (Carspecken, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Simon & Dippo, 1986; Thomas, 1993), because, as Thomas (1993) argued, "Cultural forces may shape both the conditions and social responses that disadvantage some groups more than others" (p. 33).

There are sound reasons for my choosing critical ethnography as a component of my approach. To begin with, one of my theoretical frameworks was critical pedagogy, which emerges from critical theory. As well, critical ethnography applies a critical theory-based

technique to ethnography (Madison, 2012). Thus, critical ethnography turns out to be the practice of critical theory (Thomas, 1993). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) also added that critical ethnography contains the most compelling methods to carry out critical theories. Besides, critical ethnography construes the world as constituted by division, stratum, and social hierarchy (Marshall & Rossman, 2014), and it seeks not merely to “study and understand society but rather to critique and change society” (Patton, 2002, p. 131). Patton (2002) further asserted, “Critical ethnography approaches fieldwork and analysis with an explicit agenda of elucidating power, economic and social inequalities” (p. 548). This closely matched my own intentions with this research project.

Madison (2012) discussed the use of theory as part of the analysis process:

We [researchers] employ theory at several levels in our analysis: to articulate and identify hidden forces and ambiguities that operate beneath appearances; to guide judgments and evaluations emanating from our discontent; to direct our attention to the critical expressions within different interpretive communities relative to their unique symbol systems, customs, and codes; to demystify the ubiquity and magnitude of power; to provide insight and inspire acts of justice; and to name and analyze what is intuitively felt. (p. 15)

I connected postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and acculturation “through analysis in the field,” (Gunzenhauser, 2004, p. 77), and I hoped to contribute in some way to their “emancipation” (p. 77) by providing more freedom to disrupt and eliminate the hidden barriers to intercultural interaction. My research reveals the unseen barriers that prevent the development of intercultural friendships. The participants explored the invisible challenges of developing intercultural friendships within the historical background of national Chinese immigration and gave a voice to agents within society to make change.

Critical ethnography takes people “beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying

and obscure operations of power and control” (Madison, 2012, p. 6), to uncover the hidden experiences of the oppressed. This is a good match with the articulation of postcolonial theories. It can also be utilized to “reveal and disperse privilege and privileging processes” (Madison, 2012, p. 6). In critical ethnography, the “critical” means a “primary orientation to social justice, a primary concern for those marginalized and dispossessed, and a relationship of entering solidarity, authenticity and action towards progressive social change” (Madison, 2012, p. 7). Moreover, critical ethnography provides a thick description for understanding the relationship between power and belief (Carspecken, 1996), and the embedded values that may generate the hidden forms of biases (Madison, 2012).

My research questions explored deeper layers of understanding and reflection because critical ethnography is always “a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among others, one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others’ worlds” (Madison, 2012, p. 10). I could also keep “the meanings between [and] . . . the conversations constituted by others’ voices, bodies, histories, and yearnings with others open and ongoing” (Madison, 2012, p. 11). Critical ethnography applies “a subversive worldview to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry” (Thomas, 1993, p. vii). People often believe in the phrase “knowledge is power” (Madison, 2012, p. 6); they suppose that knowledge is reliable, and that objective information does not require critical thinking. However, they often overlook how knowledge is shaped and what counts as knowledge. As a result, such a limited understanding exerts powerful negative influences on the production of common sense (Strine, 1991). As Freire (as cited in Kincheloe et al., 2011) argued, “Because all data are shaped by the context and by the individuals that produced them, we need to ask questions of all knowledge . . . [and] knowledge does not transcend culture or history” (p.

165). A critical ethnographic study, which is a “type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge, and action” (Thomas, 1993, p. 2), gives the “emancipator knowledge and discourses of social justice” (Thomas, 1993, p. 6).

Moreover, upon giving Chinese immigrant youths’ voices a place to be heard, one of my research goals was to use them to encourage change in schools “by transforming perception or appealing to a call to action” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). Critical ethnographers speak “on behalf of their subjects as a means of empowering them” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In other words, critical ethnographers may “speak to an audience by giving the subjects’ voice more authority because their voices might carry forward experiences against dominant practices” (Madison, 2012, p. 7). Hence, the cognition and behaviour of research subjects might be understood within historical, cultural, and social frameworks.

Last, I used a critical lens rather than a conventional one, because critical ethnography asks, “What could be, rather than what is, in conventional ethnography” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). Thomas (1993) further noted, “The norms that distribute power in language use, shape deference or courtesy rituals, are but a few ways that some people are able to dominate others in culturally acceptable ways” (p. 5). Also, it is a “style of analysis and discourse embedded within conventional ethnography” (Thomas, 1993, p. 3). It combines “the focus of the investigation with a promise to use the findings for change, and this type of analysis launches ethical obligations and influences a move toward social change” (S. G. Brown & Dobrin, 2004, p. 245). In my study, educational reform was the goal of critical ethnography. Furthermore, critical ethnography offers a profound view in understanding social inequality to a certain extent, and it “open[s] to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain” (Thomas 1993, p. 2). Such restrictions to cultural and social life may



support social inequality and provide social supremacy within the existing social environment (Schroyer, 1975).

To summarize, as a researcher, I needed to think about my work critically through “reflexivity and its implications in repeated versions of the research process” (Thomas, 1993, p. 22). Such a reflection helped to bring about a detailed understanding of the marginalized participants’ helplessness, confusion, and pain so as to offer them a positive step forward towards intercultural communication, social equality, understanding, and respect. Because human experience is an interpreted reality, cultural practices that flow within society might produce people who lack critical consciousness of new potential challenges (Strine, 1991). Therefore, critical ethnography was the best fit for this study owing to its data collection requirements and its acknowledgement of power structures and social justice. These characteristics most effectively matched my conceptual framework, met my research objectives, and answered the research questions I posed.

**Case study.** Case study is “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465) in accordance with wide-ranging data collection (Creswell, 2007). I chose case study as another component of my approach because my focus was on a “contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 2), especially when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). My study was a critical inquiry and “largely an investigation of a social phenomenon, undertaken by intensively comparing, contrasting, and classifying participants’ experiences and perceptions” (Yon, Nesbitt, & Algozzine, 1998, p. 78). As well, a case study is an important type of ethnography (Creswell, 2012, p. 465).

Case study can be supportive of “understanding complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2009,

p. 4), because studying a phenomenon within its real-world context favours data collection in natural settings and does not rely solely on derived data such as survey responses (Yin, 2012). Specifically, fieldwork may play a significant role. Additionally, “as a by-product, and as a final feature in appreciating case study research, the relevant case study data are likely to come from multiple not singular sources of evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). To be more precise, I have explicitly documented the use of multiple data sources, a case study database, a clear “chain of evidence” (p. 3), and “clear cross-referencing to methodological procedures and to resulting evidence” (pp. 123–124) in this study.

Case studies are best applied when research addresses descriptive or explanatory questions and aims to produce a first-hand understanding of people and events (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). Yin (2009) described how case studies can be used to either “(a) predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 47). For the purpose of my study, I visited two senior high schools. The teacher respondents cited in this study are from these two schools. The Chinese immigrant parents and students presented in my study are mainly from four senior high schools because they were recruited both through a website and the two schools.

Although the first two schools, located respectively in the northwest and southwest of Calgary, have two different missions and school cultures, my findings regarding intercultural friendships within these schools were similar. My intent was to report a single instrumental case study. Specifically, I identified the case—Chinese immigrant youth, their parents, and school teachers in an urban community within a single Canadian city—for the study and its response to the barriers of intercultural friendships. This case was a bounded system, bounded by time (approximately one and a half years) and place (situated on two senior high school campuses in

Calgary). My bounded case included 74 participants made up of students, teachers, and parents. The case I was interested in exploring was the issue of racial division on campus, and I used the single case of two school institutions to illustrate the barriers of intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youth and mainstream Canadian peers.

Through the case study I sought to understand the similarities and differences among my participants, which helped to avoid the common criticism that a single case study is “somewhat unique and distinctive” (Green et al., 2006, p. 115). Between the two-divergent senior high schools I used for my study, there were differences in geography, size, and other related distinctions, which help “reduce suspicion” (p. 115) of findings because I “have a modest amount of comparative data” (p. 115) to help me to analyze my findings and provide the authenticity via rich data. Although this is a single case study, its value is “beyond the circumstances of the single case” (p. 115). In addition, case study as a research approach means that it can be combined with other methods (Merriam, 2001). Such flexibility in the fieldwork for my research can complement critical ethnography to form a critical ethnographic case study approach.

To date, no critical ethnographic case study research has been carried out concerning the hidden challenges affecting newcomers, Generation 1.5, and Generation 2 Chinese immigrant students’ intercultural friendships, and in particular research that is situated within Chinese national immigration history. I envisioned this research as an introductory exploration of the issues, and in this important context, it lays the groundwork for possible future research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Given that my doctoral study involved students, parents and teachers, the ethical guidelines and implications of the research process were explored before conducting the

investigation. After obtaining ethical approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and the Calgary Board of Education, I began to send emails to contact the principals of senior high schools. Subsequently, I got responses from two school principals. I made appointments with them, discussed my research proposal, and obtained their consent to access their schools. Later, I sent out parental and child consent forms, parent-only consent forms, student consent forms, and teacher consent forms to the main offices of schools for potential participants.

From the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [Tri-Council], 2010), two principles emerged to guide my research. One was the principle of free and informed consent, which had two implications for my research. First, it meant that students, parents, and teachers in these two senior high schools must voluntarily choose to participate in the research. This was particularly so for students under the age of 18, who lacked required their parents consent to participate. For example, if students wished to be interviewed but their parents refused, I would not be able to interview them. Second, all participants were informed of the research purpose, recorded interviews, and the data collection procedures. Participants were provided opportunities to pose questions and make their own decisions.

A couple of participants decided to withdraw from my research before their interviews were conducted. In those cases, I immediately stopped all activities with these participants and thanked them for their interest.

The second principle relates to privacy and confidentiality (Tri-Council, 2010). As the researcher, I had the responsibility of keeping participants' personal information, such as age,

culture, educational background, immigration and employment history, life experiences, social status, and other matters confidential. Ethical approval from the University of Calgary and the Calgary Board of Education was obtained before the research took place. Seventy-four participants volunteered to participate in the study. The consent forms were sent to students' parents, and I recruited those students whose parents agreed their children could participate. Each of the parents and teachers signed the consent forms for themselves. Parents signed the forms for their own children and children signed the forms as well before I conducted an interview.

### **Entering the Field and Generating the Data**

**Initial scan.** “Where and from whom we [as researchers] obtain data ultimately provides the meanings that shape the analysis” (Thomas, 1993, p. 37). Participants were newcomers, Generation 1.5, and Generation 2 Chinese immigrant youth who could speak Mandarin or Cantonese and English; Chinese parents with various educational backgrounds; and teachers who teach different subjects. They were selected from two senior high schools in Calgary through purposeful sampling and snowball sampling.

My task was to identify the best sources that bear most directly on the topic. It was crucial to identify participants who were most likely to possess “an insider’s knowledge” (Thomas, 1993, p. 37) of the research domain. Thus, two main criteria influenced my final decision regarding student participants: (a) their overt expressions of interest in my study and their willingness to participate in lengthy, qualitative interviews that could be time-consuming and inconvenient; and (b) the commonality of their characteristics, such as their newcomer status (1 to 5 years residence in Canada), Generation 1.5 (6 to 11 years residence in Canada), and Generation 2 (Canadian-born or immigrated at the age of 1–5, 12+); shared family cultural

background; shared linguistic background (Mandarin or Cantonese); place of residence prior to migrating to Canada (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan); and their lived experiences as immigrant students in senior high school in Calgary. For immigrant parents and teacher participants, I did not have any restrictions to participate in my investigation.

**Process of seeking schools and participants.** After receiving approval from the ethics review, as previously mentioned, I began to contact the principals of senior high schools. Although I contacted many schools, most principals declined to allow me access to their schools. As a result, I had to change my recruitment strategy to recruitment through a website so as to get more participants through the process of snowball sampling. I am convinced that my adaptations were appropriate, and that I was still able to gather a rich and important data set for this research. From May 2013 to December 2014, I posted an advertisement on Calgary's Chinese and China Smile website and updated it to recruit students and their parents. As a result, some parents and students, mainly from another two senior high schools which I did not get approval from their principals, were willing to participate in my study. After an initial meeting, they agreed to be interviewed at their homes, with the exception of six participants who suggested having their interviews at a public library. Instead of performing the interviews at a library, I changed the setting to my office in order to guarantee their privacy and to ensure a sense of security and confidentiality for them. This was particularly important for parents who had considered my research for a long period before finally deciding to accommodate an unknown researcher wanting to hear their stories face to face.

In September of 2013, I got approval from one senior high school located in northwest Calgary. My previous research design aimed to select 12 to 18 participants to observe their classroom interaction, but this became difficult. Owing to the declining number of my classroom

observations, I changed my research design to some extent rather than following up on different student respondents with more targeted classroom observations. The principal of the northwest school was supportive and forward thinking, and he allowed me access to the school starting in November of 2013. I created recruitment advertisements using posters in the school. The secretary of the school suggested that I include my research recruitment request on an electronic bulletin board, and she also assisted me in uploading my advertisement through the school monitor installed in the school cafeteria. A paper copy of the time schedule was posted outside of the school's main office to allow students to easily contact me. The principal allowed me to interview students in the school libraries during recess, lunch breaks, and school time. After that, I spent time in the school and met with participants, explained the purpose of the study, and gave them the parental consent forms. I then gave them time to read the form and encouraged them to ask questions, giving me the opportunity to provide additional details, clarify the purpose of the study, and build a sense of rapport. In June of 2014, another principal gave me access to her school twice a week. This high school was located in the southwest of the city.

In total, 39 Chinese immigrant youths from four senior high schools in Calgary, 17 teachers of different subjects at two senior high schools, and 18 parents were recruited to participate in my research (see Appendix A). For teacher recruitment, the school principal sent an email to every staff member and gave all teachers a notice regarding my research for their voluntary participation. When interviewing teachers, I used their classrooms, a conference room, the staff room, or the school library.

Before interviews began, each student participant was asked to sign two copies of a consent letter (Parental Consent Forms and Child Consent Forms) which introduced the research project, outlined what they were expected to do in the research, guaranteed their confidentiality,

acknowledged their right as a research participant to withdraw, and identified a contact person if they had any complaints. At the initial stage of each interview, I always asked for the parent and student participants' demographic information through verbal responses to provide general information, including, name, place of birth, arrival age (if he/she was not born in Canada) or length of stay in Canada, grade, language, and parents' occupations (see Appendix A, Tables A1, A2, and A3 for details). This information was entered into a database immediately after each interview. The names used in this study are pseudonyms.

**Data collection.** My data collection lasted from May 2013 to December 2014. The multiple data sources for my research projects were (a) interviews (including individual, in-depth interviews, and small focus groups) with students, parents, and teachers (see Appendix B for the interview guide); (b) observations (school visits including in-class, recess, lunch break, club, and home visits); (c) documents (program of study of the social studies curriculum, researcher reflection journals, field notes); and (d) autoethnography. The degree and extent of my use of each of these methods of data collection depended on my “purposes, the guiding questions, [the] theoretical framework, and the scene itself” (Murillo, 2004, p. 157). The interviews provided most of my data, and the observation data in schools, which were moderate, have been added as a supplement. I did not focus on autoethnography, but rather drew from auto-ethnographic techniques to be woven through the dissertation.

All individual interviews of students, parents, and teachers were conducted once. I had to cancel my original plan to conduct follow-up interviews because students told me they were very busy with their academic learning. I also conducted one focus group consisting of three parents in the house of one of the parent respondents. Three parents requested to be interviewed together with their children because they wanted to hear what their children were saying. For students,



some of them requested to be interviewed with their close friends. Hence, there were two student focus groups. I conducted them in a quiet room in their school library. In regard to teacher respondents, only two female social studies teachers wanted to be interviewed together to save time.

Focus groups are considered “the most distinctive” (Chambliss & Schutt, 2006, p. 166) qualitative method. A focus group involves unstructured group interviews in which “discussion on the questions among participants will be actively encouraged” (p. 166), and “the interactive quality is the key feature of focus group research” (Seale, 2004, p. 194). Byrne (as cited in Seale, 2004) suggested that “interactions between participants can generate dissimilar data with that in a one-on-one interview” (p. 181). Tonkiss (as cited in Seale, 2004) also pointed out that focus groups in this sense are not simply a way of interviewing several people at the same time; instead, they are concerned with “explor[ing] the formation and negotiation of accounts within a group context” (p. 194). As for my study, small group participation was an efficient data collection procedure, which assisted me in gathering much richer information in less time.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim with the insertion of pseudonyms to protect research participants’ privacy. The interview sessions were conducted either in English or Mandarin according to participants’ requests and were later transcribed into English or Chinese and translated into English, and the emerging themes were identified and categorized. The interviews with open-ended questions were interactive and aimed to explore an individual participant’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Chirban, 1996) through the process of “collaborative communication” (C. Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997, p. 121) between the participants and me. In terms of my examination, transcripts from long, in-depth interviews with each participant were the primary source of data.

I used interviews to gather information related to individuals' experiences, perceptions, views, and reactions (Merriam, 2001). Gordon (2003) demonstrated that critical ethnography includes in-depth interviews with participants as an intervention to bring about change. By focusing on conversations with interviewees about their life experiences, I was able to describe the world from their perspective (Weiss, 1994). Through interviewing, the nature of intercultural friendships was revealed in the participants' descriptions of their inner experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of such perceptions. Overall, through the conversations in these interviews, I gained a better understanding of my participants' intercultural friendship barriers. Simultaneously, interviewees were offered an opportunity to review their lived world during the interview process.

My fieldwork observations involved school visits, including morning tutoring time, before class, recess, lunch break, and after school programs, one day or two days per week, and home visits (home interviews and parent–children interaction observations). A researcher can address various observational issues through triangulation in terms of case studies (Merriam, 1998). My observations took place from October to December 2013 and from February to March 2014 at one senior high school located in northwest Calgary, and continued into April, May, and October 2014 at another school located in a southwest area of Calgary. My observations mainly focused on the interactions of Chinese students during their lunch breaks and after-school programs.

Due to the familiarity and rapport I built with some teachers and students, I received permission to make some classroom observations during chemistry labs, and physics, social studies, and physical education classes, in order to observe the interactions of students in the semesters of 2014. As Creswell (2012) noted,

Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site. Its advantages include the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behaviour, and to study individuals that have difficulty verbalizing their ideas. (pp. 213–214)

During lunchtime, the school cafeteria and dining hall were noisy, and it was inconvenient and tough to participate in student chats or conversations due to unfamiliarity. However, I took the chance to have informal chats with participants to gather information. During my observations, I took field notes, including detailed descriptions of the setting of the cafeteria, students' use of hybrid language during their chats, their personal insights, and the observed emotional changes, behaviours, communication skills, environmental conditions, and other points I thought were important (such as participant students' facial expressions and gestures).

I also kept a reflective journal to “chronicle my own thinking, feeling, experiences, and perceptions throughout the research process” (Creswell, 2003, p. 202). Reflection refers to “the act of rigorously examining how this involvement affects our data gathering, analysis, and subsequent display of the data to an audience” (Thomas, 1993, p. 46). Through reflection, “an act of repeated thinking about our project, we attempt to become self-aware of the process and consequences of knowledge production by bringing the original act of knowledge back into consciousness” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 45). These reflective journals were helpful in my later data analysis. My proposed plan of using student journals had to be altered because students in senior high schools were reluctant to have extra pieces to write besides their school assignments.

### **Data Analysis**

I used thematic analysis with my data to represent hidden meaning while remaining “systematic” (Joffe, 2012, p. 210), and to attempt to improve the quality of my results

(Fetterman, 1989). Themes are defined as “a limited range of interpretations used to conceive of and constitute relationships” (Owen, 1984, p. 274). The thematic analysis I employed in the current research included three steps (Joffe, 2012). During the first step, I identified broad themes. The ideas that were repeated, recurrent, and powerful in a great part of the data were counted as a theme. In the second step, I located more specific subthemes when more than one related pattern was present. This allowed me to distinguish between those related, but different, thoughts and to categorize themes that were more complex. The final step was to choose a label for each theme emerging from the participants’ interview transcripts, which would then be sorted out into various categories of main themes, offering a clearer understanding of those participants’ lived experiences and perceptions.

Data analysis of observations, interviews, field notes, and document entries was ongoing throughout the whole data collection process. I expanded upon my field notes after each observation with the addition of my reflections, ideas, impressions, critical analysis, and details about the observations. I then developed these extensive field notes into a more detailed account of my experience. I read and reread transcripts of interviews and field notes to identify patterns. Key patterns were coded according to the topics. Also, I unitized interview transcripts into the smallest meaningful units with initial coding, and then organized the units into categories that captured repeated elements in the data. From these data, I established categories and developed themes. In addition, I compared parents’ answers to their children’s answers to ascertain any distinctions. After that, I requested the children provide feedback on their parents’ responses. I present themes in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 with participant quotations that emerged from the study data. I have translated and edited the quotes somewhat for grammar but have made every effort to preserve the participants’ wording and intention. As mentioned earlier, participants were

assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

### **Quality of Data**

The reliability and credibility of the data can be enhanced by transparency. I demonstrated adequate original evidence to illustrate the connection between the interpretation of the data and the evidence in the written account (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). When patterns emerge, it is best to obtain feedback from the participants about them. This was done as the interviews were taking place by providing informed consent to show respect for my respondents and by asking the participants to offer feedback on the transcribed conversations in order to add credibility and trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In the former approach, I could sometimes use the participants' feedback to establish the next questions in the interview. In the latter approach, during interview transcription, I sometimes asked the participants to provide feedback that would then be incorporated into the thematic analysis. For internal validity, the use of my reflexivity, triangulation, rich and saturated data, repeated observations, field notes, questions, clarifications, member checking, and peer debriefing was applied into the study to confirm accuracy and value (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Also, my primary participants, some Chinese immigrant youth, provided feedback on both their teachers' and parents' comments. Recognizability is also a vital part of trustworthiness because my participants and I could recognize our personal experience from the research.

Another issue of data demonstration- translation- needs to be addressed by qualitative researchers (Edwards, 1998; Esposito, 2001; Temple & Young, 2004) because, in regard to my doctoral study, only the transcript of some qualitative interviews with Chinese parents and some students included acts of Chinese-English translation during the process of data collection. Because we were able to communicate through a common mother tongue (Mandarin), I

understood them thoroughly both during and after the interviews. Furthermore, due to the limited English of some parent participants and their differing comfort levels, I believed that using their mother tongue might be a better way for them to represent themselves and their lived experiences. As Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1996) claimed, the mother tongue may be better to embody self and other.

Therefore, some interviews or parts of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and English, such as those with Chinese immigrant parents and some student respondents. In terms of these interviews, their recordings were transcribed in Mandarin and then I translated them into English. After that, I translated back and checked with my research respondents to ensure an accurate meaning expression and true intent (Edwards, 1998). The transcripts and translation were used mostly to disclose my respondents' perceptions and insights on cultural differences, integration, parenting, and challenges of ideologies and values. Therefore, when translation is used, researchers have to consider some interpretation issues of translation between researchers and the participants. As Temple and Young (2004) argued, "There is no single correct translation of a text" (p. 165). Member checking was a good way to avoid mistakes or inaccuracy to some degree.

### **The Limitations of the Study**

This study had three main limitations. First, the participants (students, teachers, and parents) volunteered. The sample may not be representative of the views and experiences of most immigrant youths, high school teachers, and parents in Canada. Hence, the results from this study are not intended to be transferred to a broader population. However, I expect that the insights I have gained from the participants and from parts of the results will be relevant to other newcomers, Generation 1.5s, and Generation 2s, who face similar circumstances.

The sampling techniques I adopted presented a second another limitation. Even though I intended voluntary, purposeful selection of participants, self-selection may have led to students volunteering who have had, in their perceptions, experiences to report. Even so, they may have hidden some of the negative aspects of their experiences due to the Chinese cultural practice of saving face. A third another limitation was, in terms of data collection, that I had my initial plan regarding following 12 student respondents to observe changed due to the limited access to targeted classroom observations. This limitation led to a slight change of my research design.

### **Research Study Delimitations**

As a qualitative research study using a critical case study as the methodological approach, the respondents (students, parents, and teachers) were associated with senior high schools. The research is a case study. Accordingly, the study cannot make grand claims about changing policy and practice.

I did not collect quantitative questionnaire data in different cities to compare responses of Chinese immigrant youth in different Canadian cities. Instead, as qualitative research, the interviews with each interviewee were thorough. They included questions about students' perceptions and experiences, and insights from parents and teachers, in order to understand and interpret the major challenges of building intercultural friendships. How the participants responded may reflect only their own lived experiences, taking into consideration their individual insights and feelings.

#### **Chapter 4: Cross-Cultural Distance and Exclusion**

Social institutions such as schools should be safe, warm, and caring communities that support the coexistence of multiple cultures. The school should also be a place that encourages students to develop harmonious multicultural relationships while supporting the behaviours favoured by society and giving students a pleasant education and life experience. As Hoerder, Hébert, and Schmitt (2005) noted, “For youth, schools as discursive spaces have the potential for multiplicity of action, structures, and practices” (p. 15). In regard to school-based intercultural friendships, the building process is analogous to a dance, which can be achieved only through the cooperation of partners.

However, based on my observations in two senior high schools in Calgary, the dance between partners is far from being achieved. Instead, there is a clear division between racialized groups, with obvious isolation happening in the school cafeteria. Even if diverse groups sit at the same table, they rarely interact with each other. Each student stays in his or her own circle of friends, and most of the students in the classroom, during lunch, and after school associate with peers they are familiar with or to whom they feel close. What types of dances and what patterns are there?

Because of opposing demands and values of the two sides in the dances, conflicts between immigrants and local teenagers may occur at any time. Sotosek (2016) disclosed the findings from a study of peer exclusion in a physical education class and pointed out that excluded subjects are “more difficult to be motivated to work, [are] . . . not sufficiently informed about how to handle situations of exclusion, [and are] . . . not interested in new things since all these new situations create new exclusion possibilities” (p. 292). Furthermore, there still exists some discrimination or bullying in some schools, especially implicit or hidden discrimination.



Fighting against social exclusion and other types of invisible discrimination is becoming an increasingly significant issue in education (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). As Sotosek (2016) noted, “We often face multiple challenges coming from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds which are becoming more and more diverse” (p. 290). Are these dances of exclusion?

In this chapter, my purpose is to explore the peer exclusion of and discrimination against Chinese immigrants and their children in the postcolonial era and the potential obstacles to their ability to form cross-cultural solidarities. Specifically, I discuss the various forms of exclusion that exist and rethink the root causes of discrimination to shed light on the barriers to intercultural friendships caused by hidden and explicit discrimination toward Chinese immigrant youth. My goal is to encourage school administrators to focus on eliminating exclusion.

I have identified four key themes based on my research question: (a) Chinese immigrant youths’ school-based experiences of discrimination and exclusion; (b) Chinese immigrant parents’ experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and changes in parental attitudes towards cross-cultural interaction regarding their children’s education; (c) Chinese immigrants’ internalized oppression; and (d) discrimination through local cultural superiority.

### **Chinese Immigrant Youths’ School-Based Experiences of Discrimination and Exclusion**

Experiences of being discriminated against or excluded “because of youths’ origin [could be a factor hindering intercultural friendship building] as this is a direct expression of the openness (or non-openness) of a society towards immigrants” (Hoerder et al., 2005, p. 55). When immigrating to a new country, immigrant youth long to make new friends, forge new connections, and learn new things, although this also means they start with no experience or friends to help them adjust. At the same time, they appear weak and helpless compared to those

who have already established their own network of friends, support groups, and a complex understanding of the social expectations.

A sense of vulnerability and fear usually transpires from being stuck in a state of confusion and hopeless inexperience. This will often motivate the immigrant youth to seek out answers about this new place, especially from fellow students at school. However, some research participants said they “wanted to invite local peers to drink coffee or watch movies, but were rejected.” This makes some Chinese immigrant youth easy targets for bullies. After some challenging experiences with bullying from local peers, they become desperate. Thus, they build a wall against discrimination by making intracultural friends.

Desperation to forge this wall often leads to joining in with a group of Chinese immigrant youth such as themselves. After suffering rejection by the first locals they encounter, this reduces the future potential for these young students to connect with local counterparts and attempt to integrate or learn about the local culture. When I asked the high school student participants to describe their emotions, some said they are lonely and bored. Furthermore, the fathers of participants gave some examples:

My son has been living in Canada since he was two years old, and I have found that he has only played with two Chinese boys in the class, and there are hardly any other friends. [His elementary school peers are mostly local White children.] Through careful observation, my son was found every time to look nicely at them [local peers] with a smiling face, and they all gave an appearance of ignoring, and I came back to ask my son, and my son felt aggrieved, almost with tears saying, “I try to make friends with them, but they said, don’t play with them anymore. They don’t like to play with me. I don’t know why.” The first year, my son lived in such a lonely environment, and this reality touched a very raw nerve indeed. I have been wondering why he did not play with local peers, and it was not because of a language problem; my son can speak fluent English. (Victor)

My daughter just came here three months ago as an immigrant, and [she] participated in community centre activities and met her classmate. My daughter is very excited to greet her at the front, and her classmate almost shows no expression. (Terry)

One mother of a participant added: “When chatting with other parents, they also feel that some children who grow up here drew back and [became] frozen [indifferent]” (Lina). In each case, these students tried to interact positively with their classmates but were ignored or looked down upon. To work around this, Victor’s son made two intracultural friends; however, this is in no way a permanent solution.

Many immigrant Chinese high school students with high self-esteem are sensitive. To them, I am a Chinese researcher with whom they are not familiar. To save face, they may not be willing to expose what they perceive as their “weakness” (i.e., that they have been bullied), especially male students. During the interview process, at the initial stage, most participants were reluctant to share their experience of being discriminated against and bullied and may have suppressed the memories of the feeling of shame, and wanted to forget those painful experiences. After my clarification, at the final stage, and after hesitation, some of them spoke up. Some participants described the situation as being comparable to the law of the jungle: the survival of the fittest, and the weak at the mercy of the strong. This results in seclusion from intercultural contact.

As Cui (2013) commented, “[it is not that all] Chinese youth will experience racial discrimination or that all have had unhappy experiences through their contact with white students” (p. 104). However, some challenge themselves to try to fit in. For instance, Suzan, an immigrant mother, talked about how after her son was bullied, he insisted on trying to break the ice with his local peers:

In elementary school, my son’s young classmates said that the Chinese people were pigs and commented on how dirty they were. I really did not realize the problem for many years and just in the past two years, I have kept asking myself why I did not stand up at that time. I failed to help my child. . . . He cried miserably, and I just mentioned the problem once to the teacher. I suppose the locals had the stereotype image of Chinese

long time ago and they gossiped in their own social circles. The widespread gossiping about Chinese people gradually has formed the deep-rooted stereotype. . . . That is the time of Grade 4. I did not know what the reason was; anyway, those local girls always bullied him for a long time, and finally one day, his father and I could not tolerate this situation again, and told him, whether it was language bullying, or they pinched him or whatever, I said, “[Name], you must be rebellious if you are bullied again.” He said, “No, the teacher said. . .” However, one day, this group’s physical bullying action broke out in physical education class: a group of children were surrounding him and kicked him heavily in the playground . . . but he hit back that day. . . . From then on, the White girl never hit him again. . . . I think this thing has a special impact on my son. And then in his heart he felt that you look down on me, I will teach you a lesson, I went into your circle or how, because he did not have another effective way, he has not walked into the social circles. . . . If I said that he did not have intercultural friends or did not go into mainstream society or whatever, he will try hard to go to that direction to challenge himself. However, this thing is, friendship should be built in a natural state. Saying intercultural friendships should not cause them to rack their brains to think about it. This intercultural goodwill is a natural social combination. (Suzan)

In Suzan’s son’s case, he was making a huge effort to make friends with the locals; however, he was not doing it in the relaxed way that friends are normally made. He approached it as a challenge instead, which is a result of a state of nonacceptance and the division between groups that had been perpetuated by the local students.

Interviews led to the identification of seven hidden barriers to intercultural friendships due to exclusion and bullying, based on experiences shared with me by participants, including Chinese immigrant youth in senior high schools and their parents. The seven hidden barriers include (a) polite exclusion, (b) fear of not being accepted, (c) ignorance due to lack of contact, (d) jokes and teasing to hurt, (e) language barriers, (f) gossiping and judging, and (g) academic bullying. As an aside, as the chapter develops, the reader may note that the language of my participants becomes quite strident. The interviews often revealed the complexity of the issues and the pain and suffering encountered by the students and parents.

**Polite exclusion.** Among the participants I interviewed, many students referred to polite exclusion as having played a significant role in hindering the process of forming intercultural

friendships. For example, Cason, 17 years old, from Shanghai, is a short and thin boy. He took the initiative to contact me. When we met each other at his home, he smiled shyly and gave me the impression of being optimistic. However, when he talked about his experience of being excluded by local peers in his senior high school in southern Calgary, he choked up with red eyes, appearing to feel hurt:

My host peers pretend to welcome me, but in fact, they are not. For example, in lab, they are reluctant to work together with me. I feel “shabby” when I have to do the project by myself. . . . My first physics class, sitting next to a White girl. I think she was very helpful to her friend, but she did not care for me. For example, I asked her name, and only after three times did she give me a response. The classroom teacher asked us to communicate with each other or discuss some questions, and she always ignored me. . . . It is more like friendly discrimination in public places; they will not give you too much embarrassment to save face. (Cason)

This behaviour might be a kind of racism disguised as polite rejection. Even if the exclusion is not so obvious or harsh, it is not because the other students’ attitudes about Asians have changed; it seems they are only protecting their own image. In reality, they may still not accept Asians as equals.

Stereotyping still exists at schools. Many participants mentioned common stereotypes associated with Asians. Shiruan participated in the international baccalaureate (IB) program, and she gave me an example: “A common stereotype is the ‘You must be smart, and play piano and badminton’ generalization. It’s a positive remark so I don’t really mind, but I can see how not conforming to these ideals can reduce one’s confidence.”

Lisha, one of participants from mainland China, 17 years old, shared her thoughts and ideas:

The Asian stereotypes commonly known in the Western society often portray a nerdy character with minimal social skills; this is especially familiar in the film industry. However, what many Westerners fail to notice is that the generalization they have made of the Asian population only represents the part of independent technology immigrants.

Because of the strict immigration policies in Canada, they only take in immigrants with occupations that Canada lacks, which is mainly in the engineering and IT industry. These industries have high technical requirements resulting in workers with advantages in IQ and book smarts but inadequacies in social aspects.

One of the participant's mothers, Lina, mentioned her son's experience of being ignored concerning a party invitation:

His local peers often hold parties at home, such as birthday parties and weekend parties [without inviting him]. To that, my child is not comfortable inside, but he does not show that. He once said, "They all like to party, and I am not a kind of party person. I do not like it. What is the point? They are just hanging out or drinking. They may even cause some trouble, or someone would be drunk." He told me that a few times. In his view, a party should be a place where a few good friends talk about something meaningful. But from my side, in fact, the local kids may not invite him [my son] and it is just his placebo of self-comfort that "I am not a party person" and "I do not like to attend a party." He had participated in several local kids' parties. . . . But every time he came back, he just said that there was no point in attending the party, someone was drunk, and did something bad, and he did not like that. But from my point, he was not invited many times, because I think he did not have close intercultural friends or he is not good at this kind of in-depth interaction. (Lina)

By excluding Asian immigrants in this way, it becomes much more difficult for them to be able to integrate enough to make friends. Although some of the stereotypes are complimentary, they still serve to distance immigrants from locals, and to push them to fit a predetermined mould.

Based on my specific observation as an investigator in this study, polite exclusion often takes place in classrooms in two layers. One is that newcomers lack the knowledge in terms of new school community culture or social rules. There exist possible different demeanours that cause the lack of trust, or indifferent attitudes, from local peers who have their own social circles and are reluctant to establish intercultural relationships with immigrant youth. The other layer is that immigrant youth with high self-esteem are especially sensitive, but do not want to risk their self-confidence to interact with local peers due to communication barriers.

Hence, it is likely that these youths may lose the self-assurance and desire to try again to make intercultural contact after polite rejection in their several efforts to communicate with their local counterparts; immigrant youth might feel frustrated, depressed, isolated, or even hurt if their accent is being imitated or they are being laughed at by associates. Subconsciously, they feel excluded, so they are unwilling to take the initiative to build intercultural connections.

In this type of discrimination, the local students do not actively do anything to isolate the immigrants; they simply limit their interaction to what is required to be polite. This can take many forms but is mostly limited to not engaging in conversations or not inviting immigrants to social events. Nevertheless, such local students' polite rejections show their attitude to exclude newcomers.

**Fear of not being accepted.** Local youths' lack of acceptance and understanding in the face of cultural differences are major challenges prohibiting Chinese settler youth from building intercultural friendships. "If the attitude of the dominant group is averse to difference, it is difficult for nondominant groups to maintain their cultural traits and be accepted by the mainstream culture" (Banks, 2012, p. 15). For example, Cason, Grade 11, shared his experiences:

When I ask teachers questions, they [my classmates] often laugh at me, probably because I spoke too attentively. . . . I hear that one of my peers is making comments that "I do not know what the [expletive] is going on in their poor countries" when I pass by the lounge in my school. . . . In classes, grouping for group activities is [often by choice] according to teachers' instruction, so I sometimes encounter awkward situations: no one is willing to be my partner to form a group and work together. (Cason)

Lily and Steven, Grade 11, talked about how she does not understand the logic for some of the comments: "In social classes, some of them [local buddies] are saying, 'No, no more immigrants. They are too smart. They should have their own schools'" (Lily).

In my school lobby, sometimes some White guys bumped into me deliberately and yelled, “Go back to their own countries.” I don’t know why they are saying like that. Canada is much better than where I come from; however, it is not particularly welcoming towards newcomers. (Steven)

One of the mother participants, Suzan, said,

My son feels his identity as unstable as flowing water. He is eager to integrate himself into the local children’s social circle, but the White children’s circle doesn’t accept him, even often bullies him. For example, he is the only Chinese youth on his senior high school basketball team. As you know, basketball players often speak and joke in a rough way. If he has an inferior performance in a basketball game, local peers who don’t readily accept Chinese counterparts will say something very rude to him, but he can only tolerate that. At the same time, others constantly remind him that he is yellow. He wants to feel equal to them despite colour difference, and he will feel very sad, “Why am I different from them, I would like to be the same!” At this point, he has a painful struggle deep in his heart. He grew up with this psychological struggle. I think what he wants most is that he can be accepted by local peers, but they do not accept him. Although there are some nice classmates, it is not a group, just nice individuals. So sometimes it feels painful that his immigrant parents have brought him here. (Suzan)

This kind of isolation keeps immigrants at such a distance that it becomes nearly impossible to make friends across this divide. To overcome this is not a straightforward task, as there is no way to change one’s appearance and it is only slightly easier to absorb another’s culture; even with these responses, the underlying racist beliefs will remain.

Sherry was, at first sight, an introverted and shy girl who was often alone in the hall and walking with her head down. Later, when we met in her school library, she was working on her group project, painting and drawing, but to my surprise, she never worked with her group members. I was curious about why she was always alone. When we began talking, she asked me with a big smile if I needed any help. Her smile was sweet and made me feel comfortable. I found that she was an easygoing, agreeable girl. She explained her aloneness to me:

I wasn’t really included into activities and . . . if we had group work, I would always be the one left out, and then no one will ask, “Will you be my partner?” I had to be the one to ask people if they wanted to be my partner. And in my old school, it used to be better because there used to be a smaller group of students, so everyone knew each other. So, I



had people to look after that stuff. Like the teachers always looked after the students well, um, the teachers really included all the students, and made the students feel really welcome at my old school. But here the teacher and the students aren't really interconnected and more distant. . . . Here I found that their school culture and they always exclude the newcomer or immigrant students. (Sherry)

This quotation highlights the differences that it makes when a community makes an effort or is small enough to make everyone feel included, as compared to a larger community that can be broken up into more isolated groups. It also demonstrates the hardships involved with entering one of those more isolated groups, especially in the context of a group assignment.

Although multiculturalism is valued in Canada as part of a national identity, diverse cultures and beliefs can be hard to accept by certain local residents. A lack of acceptance is an invisible impediment to intercultural harmony. A mother of a participant said:

I believe that everyone should be accepted by the people around regardless of their skin colour differences. I want to be respected as an individual in my surroundings and environment, not that the local people must understand and accept me. In this country of diversity, it is my hope that you are accepted and respected by others in your surroundings, such as your social circle and your working field. It is not easy for immigrant children of this generation to be identified by the Western world. I can understand them and their worries. I just want a certain group to help these children to identify themselves correctly, and then correctly face their surroundings. . . . They want to be accepted and integrate themselves in local peers' circle. They want their education and all the other assets to be accepted. They just want to be themselves. They feel if they exhibit their own points of view, personality, and personal charm, people may take the initiative to make friends with them. (Suzan)

Suzan's perspective directly aligns with the standpoint of multiculturalism that Canada tries to promote. She wants people to be accepted regardless of their culture or views, and be able to make friends through their personality alone. Lack of mutual understanding of life changes, and the pressures and challenges of a new culture and language transition are, then, fundamental reasons why there is a lack of acceptance. Arendt (1994) wrote that "an understanding heart [is] the greatest gift we could receive or desire" (p. 190). Divergent

perceptions on life values and as well as parenting style and schooling beliefs give rise to various life choices. In every case, dialogue can be helpful, since “it is through dialogue that one visits the perspectives of others and begins to see things through one’s eyes but from where others stand” (Lund, Panayotidis, Smits, & Towers, 2012, p. 18).

Wesley, Grade 12, described how Western students do not understand the family pressures and expectations on Eastern students:

Because I think that racial separation [during lunch break] at there [schools] is not only with the groups as in the sense that they are sped up because of their diverse cultures. . . . For example, Chinese people have a good time getting along with other Asian people because they are from the same culture, and they understand the same thing, so their parents want the same thing from them as well. . . . So maybe they [Chinese peers] all understand each other because they all want to become a better school. Because in Eastern cultures, schools are very important. And White kids, most White kids, I am not gonna say all because there are exceptions, although few. But when they get, when they come to the point of that, it’s just the fact that they will never understand what the Eastern kids go through. I have a friend who’s a Canadian, but there are some things that he doesn’t understand about my culture. For example, he’ll ask why my parents are introverts, why I can’t hang out sometimes or consecutively for a few days. . . . I’m friends with a lot of Westerners, but the connection with them isn’t as deep, and we don’t have a strong closeness because they do not understand me at all. . . . Because a lot of White kids in schools . . . they focus on hanging out, having the fun time while the Asian kids focus on school and getting good grades and getting into universities. . . . They plan ahead. . . . While as the Western culture more, I am enjoying my time in high school. . . . It doesn’t matter where I will go as long as I have no regrets of what I am doing today. (Wesley)

Wang’s comment supported Wesley’s thought:

[Most Western youth] find it hard to understand our pressures. Our parents have high expectations on their children. Sometimes we transfer that pressure on ourselves. Western peers can’t really understand our stress. When we meet our downfall, we have no one to talk to. (Wang)

These two quotations share the same interpretations of the challenges respecting making intercultural friends. Despite their best intentions, it is not possible for White people to relate to the challenges their Asian friends face from their parents and culture. Although it is not stated,

the same issues arise in the other direction: Asians cannot necessarily identify with particular aspects of White cultures either. This creates a barrier that could be overcome by a more open and accepting attitude; however, many are not willing to try given that there are so many others from the same culture who understand better.

Zihao, one of the youth participants who came from mainland China to Canada more than 10 years ago, enjoys playing sports and socializing with friends. His personality is outgoing and enthusiastic. He has established some intercultural companionships and considers common interests and hobbies as a way to break through. Meanwhile, he has many Chinese friends. He illustrated that Chinese youths' tendency to be shy can have a negative impact on forming intercultural friendships. "Judging from the surface, the personality may be a factor regarding intercultural friendships. . . . I subconsciously see my non-Asian friends to be more vocal and outgoing and thus less 'understanding' of people who prefer to be quiet at times" (Zihao).

To sum up, the complex nature of the theme of lack of understanding and acceptance in the face of the cultural differences needs to be analyzed in three layers. First, some young people evaluate things using their own criteria based on their own cultural standard. Some local youths' perceptions and thinking are solidified; they could not go beyond the dominant modes of knowledge production. Their views are rigid and not easily transformed. As a result, it is exhausting for them to adapt to an uncertain innovative world, which is "de-centralising the dominance of Western ways of knowing and doing, and bringing to the foreground indigenous and other marginalized knowledges" (Cruz & Sonn, 2011, p. 211) to understand culture within an awareness of a broader set of social/political/historical/economic arrangements.

Second, a lack of empathy to understand or accept something new is another barrier. Some youth have established certain ideologies within the framework of their culture, and

“culture is a product of human action as well as a determinant of future action, a composite of meanings and associated traditions, which define, inform, and constitute the range of our understandings and investments” (Misra & Gergen, 1993, p. 226). Third, recognizing migrant youths as “strangers” or “outsiders” takes ethnic minorities out of their comfort zone, since alien otherness would become a stumbling block to welcome intercultural exchange. This type of discrimination is more active and could be comparable to conventional racism. It can involve directly excluding immigrants based on their skin colour or culture, but it could also be as simple as not understanding parts of another’s culture. It is largely characterised as shouted racist comments, exclusion from various groups, and a lack of understanding of aspects of someone else’s history and culture.

**Ignorance due to lack of contact.** Intercultural communication requires immigrant youth and local students to respect each other on an equal footing. However, ignorance on the part of local peers is a hidden barrier keeping immigrant youth at bay from social circles and implicitly prevents young immigrants from contacting local peers. The participants shared some of their experiences: “There is nothing to say; sometimes someone else is reluctant to answer you even if you would like to start a conversation by asking something” (Ningyu).

We sit together, but she never has a talk with me even if I ask her some simple questions. I have no idea if her ignorance is racial discrimination. . . . I would like to have a chat with her, but she pretends she does not understand with indifference. (Guo)

Although these quotations do not provide an explanation for the exclusion, it is likely that the young immigrants were ignored because of lack of contact and the locals turned down interacting with visible minorities.

Lack of common activities and communication opportunities influences intercultural friendship-making. Ziwen, Shiruan, and Lily, all 17 years old, are attending IB programs and

regular programs. Because immigrant youth comprise many of the IB programs, they can be further isolated from White students with fewer opportunities to interact with one another. They talked about the reasons why they did not have Canadian White friends:

The school has also unconsciously separated us from local students because of the IB program. In terms of IB courses, I think it automatically segregates us from the locals here. You can hardly see local students in my IB class. In addition, our course [selection] is also different; there are no common activities to attend and communicate [in]. As a result, the relationship is not so close. (Ziwen)

I find that most of my friends (especially close ones) tend to be Asian, whether it's Chinese, Vietnamese, or Indian people. I think that's partially because my school population is mostly formed by people of this ethnicity but also that I feel a bit more connected to them because of similarities in interests and ideologies. I don't often spend a lot of time with my "White peers," mostly because there are few to none within my classes. (Shiruan)

We don't usually hang out, you know. . . . We don't usually, yeah, see each other, because of our different schedules, they are busy, or I'm busy. . . . We were acquaintances, not really friends, so talk about life, or talk about assignments. We communicated after school or we do not usually have the time, so during school or after school. (Lily)

Some teachers are also ignorant about the social isolation that new immigrant youth are facing. "My teachers always asked us to freely choose our partners to work together. So, it is very tough to have opportunities to communicate with them [local peers]" (Zihao). One of the mothers of the participants said:

Those White children do not want to communicate with them, do not want to be with them. After long time, if you do not want to talk to local students, so they [local peers] are more reluctant to care about you, they couldn't hit it off in their conversation . . . naturally, no more talking, and if there is an initiative, this time I take the initiative to talk to him, because you are the locals. I take the initiative, but he ignored you. . . . Also, you feel like you did not know what you should chat [about], so no talking any more. (Chenjie)

The concerns voiced in the quotations focus mainly on the segregation that happens as a result of the IB program, and the differing interests between the locals and the immigrant students. Shared interests and frequent contact are both integral to the process of becoming

friends.

On the other hand, Chinese students think they may over-emphasize grades and academic achievement. These ideas may cause local peers not to understand them, as they may not share these same priorities or value the same things. Salina, 1.5G, and Anna, G2, both Grade 10, shared their thoughts:

I would like to talk about the topic regarding marks; in fact, there is a lot of controversies that the views of the Asian people are very extreme. When I read my report card, I will feel so silly [unsatisfied]. Seventy points are probably regarded as an average score for local students, while the 80 or 90 points is normal marks for Chinese youth. This is also a probable threat to them there, after all, the expectation for the report card is much higher than they are. This may be the probable reason is that they feel uncomfortable to stay with them [Asians]. . . . They [some local peers] focus on famous singers, sport stars, clothes. . . . We seem to pay little attention to the quality of life. The main task is to study hard and learn knowledge well, [so] they lack common grounds with priority of life and understandable communication. (Salina)

Some students, like some White students, they just enjoy themselves. They do not worry about the future, right? For Asian students they always like to worry about their future, or the job, or the salary, right? For me, personally, when I was younger, I also like that I think about it [future]. . . . If you don't or you won't do well in school, you will not get to a university, and you will not get a good job. You may live on the street. (Anna)

Another mother participant contributed her speculation:

But the Chinese students treat local peers in another way. As a newcomer, there's nothing you can demand the local peers to do. Some kids may try to make intercultural friends. What Chinese children need to do is to make changes and fit into the local peers' social circle if they want to make intercultural friends. However, some of them [Chinese youth] get frustrated and then come back to their original circles. So, Chinese youth would feel they are willing to talk to them, but they do not think local peers like them. . . . But now, we can see some Western children laughing at them while Chinese children seem to be very quiet. (Qiong)

To reiterate, then, there is an overall picture framed by certain circumstances such as a lack of opportunities to interact with one another, a lack of courage to challenge the sense of frustration with the unfamiliar, and a lack of commonalities, including different values on school life. It is important to recognize that ignorance about others due to a lack of contact is a

particularly unnecessary cause for discrimination, but it exists nonetheless. It happens when locals have such limited exposure to people from other places that they do not know how to react accordingly, and therefore decide that the easiest course of action is to avoid interactions. It is exacerbated by things like the IB program, which to some extent puts all of the immigrants together, and a widely contrasting set of priorities which takes away common ground.

**Jokes and teasing to hurt.** Jokes and teasing to hurt also undermine the possibilities of constructing intercultural alliances. Some young participants acknowledged that what mattered was how they treated jokes or teasing. If they handled the jokes and teasing seriously, their self-esteem would be affected, and they would move away from those making jokes and unkind remarks.

Three participants, Weike, Lisha, and Shiruan, told me stories of when they were hurt and embarrassed, or offended. Weike said, “In my school, most local kids have no fear of the stereotypes, and many people openly joke about them, but around other cultures which creates a small barrier.” Lisha said,

Growing up I have heard many peers warning me of potential humiliation if I brought traditional Chinese foods to school. But after years of bringing all kinds of exotic and foreign foods to school with no judgement, I thought that it can't happen to me. But it did. It was a rather very shocking experience. That day I simply brought fish with bones (a 4/10 for exotic in my opinion) instead of a common fillet, but I didn't find time to eat until the period after lunch. A few students from behind my desk first wrinkled their nose in disgust but proceeded to ask so they can inspect and smell it. I was told that they had never seen or eaten fish with all the bones attached. When I complied—and you may have guessed—they were absolutely grossed out by the smell and they make that known very clearly to the students around them as well. I felt quite alone and vulnerable in a place as familiar as my own class and school. . . . This made me wary once again of the foreign behaviours I may display. I did not wish to feel out of place or marginalized in the class. Ultimately, I did end up exposing less of myself to my classmates and closing off to them so they cannot judge me for who I am. I don't think this will help them learn the differences between us. But it made my life easier. (Lisha)

There is really only one incident that I can recall relating to any of this: I was beginning

animation as a hobby and a large majority of animators I was friends with online were African American. I never thought much of it because, frankly, it doesn't matter if I like them as people, but one of my Canadian friends was shocked by it. She didn't think I was the type to be so social with people of that culture, and I guess I was offended by it. Long story short, we aren't really friends anymore. (Shiruan)

The challenges of learning to accept something new without resorting to mean jokes or teasing but practicing respect and understanding suggests the need for greater awareness through intercultural education. Similarly, Kitty, 16 years old, expressed some fear, though she is willing to participate in social activities. She conveyed her experience of being bullied and teased:

A lot of times at school I think I suffer[ed] from slight bullying. There was a time at my old school where my name is quite weird. It is Kitty. Especially because I'm an Asian, it's not even that English and Asian Kitty is not. . . . When I was really small, I used to be really small, like I didn't start growing at all. So, during that time there were always really stupid guys in my class who thinks they're so strong or whatever and they would always pick on everyone else, and I got straight A's back then too. I was not even a nerd or a teacher's pet; I was just small and my name was, there are a lot of things to pick on about me. So they would just pick on me like they would push me, call me some names, but it wasn't something that I couldn't take, and there was one day where he [a student] shut the door in my face and I got a really bad nose bleed. (Kitty)

Other participants suffered similar experiences. Lily and Eva talked about the locals who joked to cover up their contempt, a disguised form of discrimination; although there was no serious conflict, less obvious bullying constantly happened.

[They teased you] "Oh! You look nice today. Just kidding!" So, it's sarcastic manner. And sometimes, they will say, "Oh, you look fat. Just kidding." They put a bit of truth into it, but they try to hide it by saying "just kidding." . . . [For me], they always pull[ed] my hair every single day. Or they just tease. But it seems [to] occur every day. (Lily)

I began to get fat in the seventh grade. And then some people will say, "Ah, you are fat" and then there is a local boy calls me "cow." . . . It may be that I am not very confident in the physical appearance. At that time, I was certainly not very confident. . . . If people want to bully a person, they must bully a vulnerable student who looks easier to bully, maybe that is the kind of people "I am stupid" or "I cannot." (Eva)

Further, Maxiui recalled his experience of being bullied in a small private elementary school, where he was the only Asian boy in the class. During recess one day, he was held down



by several classmates. They released air from balloons and pretended it was his farting noises, and the other children laughed at him, but for Maxiu, it felt humiliating. His mother went to school to find a teacher to talk to about the issue, but the school administrator's reply is that this was just a joke among students, not bullying. Eventually, his mother transferred him to a public school. The first step to dealing with the problem of campus bullying is for the school's administration to stop regarding students' bad behaviour as just joking. Another student respondent, Ningyu, felt it mattered most how Chinese students perceived the jokes: "The problem is actually how you look at these jokes. If you are serious [take the jokes seriously], your pride and self-esteem will be hurt; you will leave them" (Ningyu).

Teasing and joking are less obvious ways to hurt people. Some teachers did not act as positive role models, but were sarcastic when dealing with students. One student participant told me his experience:

There is one memory that I would go as far as saying it had scarred me. One day when I arrived late for band class—and just as I entered—I was “greeted” by my band teacher. He preceded to make a sarcastic comment and it brought the attention of [the] whole class. Everyone was staring. I have to say, I was wrong for being late and that I am fully willing to take responsibility for it. But I don't believe that I deserved to be made a public laughing matter. It was incredibly embarrassing and degrading. (Wesley)

A good school community is a living entity requiring ongoing and thoughtful deliberation about what matters for youth. Conversely, the negative role model can cause sensitive youths to feel deeply hurt. Thus far, of all the ways that youth are isolated at school, teasing and bullying are the most mean-spirited. It encompasses situations ranging from drawing attention to differences, to making fun of names, to all the normal types of bullying. It can also be difficult to contain, as it might be misinterpreted by teachers as harmless mischief.

**Language barriers.** Language barriers are major obstacles to cultural exchange and may

lead to discrimination. Some new immigrant youth experience and suffer language discrimination “through the realities of exclusion in their school lives” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 95). Research respondents’ reports, when they first came to a primary school in Canada, some local teachers directly pointed out they were stupid or even had low IQs without considering the fact that they had just arrived in a totally strange nation and environment. Due to language problems, a child would say, “I don’t know” when asked simple math questions. Such incidents, mentioned by several interviewed new immigrant parents, negatively impact children’s young minds as well as the minds of new immigrant parents.

As Dei et al. (2003) argued, “English culture and language are privileged in schooling while others are excluded, . . . [and] we can see the politics of the moment, and we know whose knowledge and culture are meant to be perceived” (pp. 95–96). Although my investigation was specific to Generation 1.5 immigrants, that is, children who grew up in non-native English environments who now speak fluent English after studying in schools, it emerged that the effect of a previous language barrier and experiences of discrimination at the beginning of English learning continue to impact them. Guo was one participant who expressed this:

So, I think when I was younger, like discrimination I saw, it seemed from often times a language barrier, because your mother tongue is not English and your immigration here, it’s very difficult to express yourself so sometimes you would get a little bit made fun of because of that. So, for example if you are like a newly immigrated student, there are more common practice of teasing. For example, certain English native students always imitate English pronunciation of young newcomers and make fun of the newcomer.  
(Guo)

Helen’s mother, Zhijun, recalled her daughter’s unhappy experience:

Helen was teased and bullied in her elementary school. The local White girls pretended to teach her to learn English. But when Helen tried to imitate their pronunciation and words, they laughed at her because they had taught her to insult herself in English. Helen was very ignorant of the situation. That is why Helen does not know what they meant in English, so she blindly followed their lead. Those girls had plenty of fun, laughing at her.

She became reluctant to go to school. Eventually she transferred to another school.  
(Zhijun)

Guo's and Helen's experiences show how difficult it is to overcome the language barriers, and how much more difficult it can become when the locals actively make it worse by making fun of immigrants because of the vulnerability that their ignorance causes.

On the other hand, Tracy was an 18-year-old high school student who was born in Canada. Her view of language discrimination focused on the length of time immigrant youth have spent in the new country with the new culture:

I think that [discrimination] would depend on the age of the child. If you came here at a very early age, you would integrate quickly. . . . So, when you are around 10, so that's probably where most of the discrimination comes. That means if you were an immigrant coming here at Grade 3 or 4, you will probably face this [discrimination] more because you have the experience of going to school in China for a longer amount of time. You have experience of being with peers that share common interests with, who you're very similar with; they speak the same language. (Tracy)

Tracy's assessment is accurate; language discrimination can be circumvented by coming at an earlier age, as can several other forms of discrimination. Most bullying focuses on the differences that someone has, and growing up in China causes more differences as time goes on. As Anzaldua (as cited in Dei et al., 2003) described,

I have to accommodate English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence. (p. 95)

Language barriers are in many cases inevitable but will be less severe as the recent immigrants learn the language or if they come to the new country sooner. Being unable to speak a national language makes one extremely vulnerable, and there are many who will take advantage of that to make fun of or belittle people in such a situation. It also makes parental support much less impactful, because the parents cannot communicate with the teachers well

either.

**Gossiping and judging.** There is an old Chinese proverb, “Once bitten, twice shy” (一朝被蛇咬，十年怕井绳). Some participants, such as Salina, Lujie, are Generation 1.5, and Lily, G2; they consider gossiping and judging to be hidden barriers that have a negative impact on forming intercultural friendships with certain local peers. They were particularly disappointed in some peers who gossiped about others. After being hurt by gossiping and judging, they decided not to trust or remain friends with those peers.

In my Chinese experience, people more often kept rumours to themselves and are less expressive of other people and events. We were disciplined by our parents and teachers on such topics often. In my experience, here were certain local girls that loved rumours and the drama of other people. Being friends with these people made me insecure about what I am saying because there were times when they gossiped about me. The thing that stood out most to me was that some of these people I got along [with] really well, but even then, I was hurt by our friendship. (Salina)

Lujie supported Salina’s statement:

Back in Grade 7, friends are everything and it was important to me that I start to make friends on the very first day. I would occasionally make some local friends and occasionally make some Chinese friends, so I was not friends with a cultural group in particular. With any friendships, there will be some whispers between the good friends. But some of my local peers spread my words everywhere. Grade 7 was a time when my local peers cared a lot about how others perceived them. So, in order for themselves to stand out, they would sometimes talk about negative things about me. There were a lot of these kinds of situations. I did not particularly like it. So, in the eighth grade I was reluctant to make friends with them. (Lujie)

Lily went on to say,

The classmates always talk about you. Like such you feel judged, being judged and sometimes they were talking about me, in front of you and behind your back. But you are still at a distance, and you can hear them, right? They will be covered their mouth, despite you still hear that. They will be working without you and you become sure that you know that they are talking about you. (Lily)

Steven recalled being judged because of his language:

I was judged based on my parents in the school. . . . I spoke more Chinese with my

family and I early had fine English, but I was still bullied. I only knew the basic language Mandarin so it is easy for me to adjust the weight but the main language of my parents is Mandarin. That is why I got bullied. (Steven)

Often these kinds of gossips or rumors endeavour to hide cultural superiority over immigrants that those people with prejudice feel. Rather, the noble idea of multiculturalism need[s] to be a reality not only for those who happen to be embodied in the “right” skin, who speak the “right” English language with the “right” accent, and belong to the dominant class, but also for those who may not fit these labels. (Orelus, 2011, p. 25)

Gossiping and being judgemental are problems that affect everyone; however, immigrants can be seriously affected. They do not expect it because it is not a part of their home culture, and immigrants are generally more susceptible to being judged because they are trying hard to immerse into a brand-new culture and learn a new way of life. This gossiping, judging, and teasing can cause much pain. As the Chinese famous writer Qian (1979) said in his book *Fortress Besieged*, “The vicious from the honest people is like the gravel in the rice or bone fish fillet with thorn [钱钟书：忠厚老实人的恶毒，像饭里的砂砾或者出骨鱼片里未净的刺，会给人一种不期待的伤痛]” (p. 3). It makes it much more difficult for immigrants to make friends because they do not know whom to trust, and that makes their transition significantly more threatening.

**Academic bullying.** Some of my participants talked about bullying that resulted because of an immigrant youth’s good marks on a report card. For example, in the process of interviewing Rena’s parents, they described with sadness their daughter’s experience with academic bullying. They said Rena was a sweet girl when she was in junior high school. She was bullied by a White boy whose academic performance was also good. Due to jealousy, the boy always played tricks to make Rena feel embarrassed. Rena’s parents had no idea how to help.

They were reluctant to report this to the teachers for two reasons. First, they worried that their lack of language abilities would not accurately and effectively express the issue. Second, they were unsure whether the teachers would take action even if the problem were reported.

Additionally, they were concerned that reporting this problem would bring harm to Rena in the form of revenge.

Rena impressed me most as a timid girl. She was reluctant to recall the unpleasant experience of junior high school, but later, she shared a little:

When I was in junior high school, my grades were considered as quite good. There is also a guy in my class with good grades, but maybe not as good as mine. During breaks—I'm the only Chinese student in the class—I often get harassed by that guy and his friends would watch and laugh aside. It made no sense, we had no previous confrontations or problems. Then I started to really think it has to do with my grades being better than his. The hostile behaviour usually occurred after an exam, when he will ask for my grade and make a horrible face afterwards. I think he may have held a grudge towards my scores overshadowing his. (Rena)

Another newcomer, Panson, gave his explanation of why there is academic bullying:

There are three popular Chinese sayings, “One who sticks his neck out gets hit first” (枪打出头鸟); “Fame is fatal to men as fatness to pigs” (人怕出名猪怕壮), [and] “Tall trees catch much wind” (树大招风). [These sayings] strongly reflect the social attitude of the Chinese towards collectivism. To some extent, it is a marrow of our Chinese literature. Confucianism and Taoism are in the leading position. And Chinese are always remaining modest and prudent. However, here, the situation will be different, although there is no public notice to show who won the first place, but the students can feel who learn the best. Certain peers are jealous. (Panson)

Lily added her thoughts:

Some immigrant students have language barriers, but they are really good at math, physics, or other subjects. Other students might be jealous of them. That's where bullying starts to happen. Some peers would pick on you because they [may be] jealous of you. . . . Another reason is that sometimes Caucasians feel like Asian students, like immigrants, are taking over in universities. And their grades are really high up there. . . . Caucasians might believe that we are their enemies. . . . They are good at math not because they are Asians but because they actually work hard to learn math. (Lily)

Yani's mother told me angrily about one bullying event:

Yani had a course “construction work” in a junior high middle school which need to do a handicraft item as a project, after she finished the work, she did not write her name before the trip to the bathroom. Then a White girl took her work and write down her own name and submit it. Because my child is a relatively shy and humble girl, and she did not argue with the White classmate, had to re-do a handicraft to hand in her project to the teacher. Yani is not very strong that kind of child.

Yani’s reaction was to say, “In fact, they are seeing you as a very timid inferior [person], specifically to bully you; that is how you can only ignore them.” Local students who bully immigrant youths with exceptional marks might do so partly because they subconsciously do not think that outsiders or strangers should have better academic performance than they do with their strong local culture and identity.

Academic bullying is in some ways a part of the other categories, but it focuses specifically on the discrimination faced by those who have much higher marks than those around them. Academics are an aspect that separates some of the immigrants interviewed from the locals by a significant margin. It is difficult for the locals to accept that they are being undermined by the people who do not even know how they are supposed to act in their new country. As a result, immigrants are excluded because of jealousy and/or a lack of common ground.

As alluded to above, the participants’ experiences suggest that the core reason underlying Chinese immigrant youths’ unhappy experiences at schools was that expressed by Cruz and Sonn (2011):

Western thought has been characterized by a longstanding tendency to partition reality and build knowledge on such multiple separations [and] power/privilege/oppression are reproduced and contested through racialized and ethnicized practices and discourses; that is, how social inequality is maintained and challenged through culture. (p. 204)

Thus, it is necessary for schools to address multicultural education. Multicultural education and

policy needs to guide students to learn multicultural knowledge, strengthen intercultural competences, and give young learners the power to grow and recognize the benefits of diverse cultures through deep intercultural interaction.

Schools can be platforms to provide students and educators with opportunities to shed light on multicultural knowledge and intercultural competences to develop intercultural friendships and form a warm community and family. Undoubtedly, not only immigrant youth but also local youth should learn to make changes, tolerate, and understand one another. Multicultural residents also need to transform outmoded logic and perceptions to realize that the world has changed dramatically; as the Chinese idiom says, we should “take in the fresh and get rid of the stale (纳新吐故)” and “one should be as tolerant/encompassing as the vast ocean, which admits hundreds of rivers (海纳百川, 有容乃大).”

As described in the introduction, schools do not ignore the significance of intercultural knowledge in classrooms. What is central to peer acceptance in systems for educating is the recognition that such knowledge is incomplete without practical intercultural communication in classrooms, schools, and communities to assist immigrant youth in building self-confidence and help all learners obtain advanced wisdom, critically thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of different ideologies. Hence, intercultural competences would emerge as an important skill to distinguish the complex relationship between assimilating cultures and cultures coexisting or learning from each other.

As Dei et al. (2003) wrote, “When oppression in any form, is not named for what it is, the reality of the experience can always be called into question” (p. 96). Immigrant youth face many challenges when trying to conform to a schooling situation. Should the teacher stop these discriminatory events, it would be likely to reduce the occurrence of bullying events. It is the



responsibility of educators and schools to treat local and immigrant children fairly and equally. However, it would be in the best interests of everyone, including the locals, if an effort were made to make the transition easier, and to be more accepting of alternative ways of thinking. There is a lot to be learned from people of diverse cultures, and it is everyone's loss when such sharing of culture is made impossible by discrimination and marginalization.

### **Chinese Immigrant Parents' Experiences of Exclusion and Cross-Cultural Interaction**

It is not only students but their parents who encounter challenges when immigrating. Bad experiences can affect parents and how they guide their children. Friendship is a two-way choice and can be established only with endeavours on both sides. However, if one side views the other side with prejudice, it is highly unlikely an intercultural friendship can be built. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) eloquently wrote, prejudice:

informs how we view others, it necessarily informs how we act toward others. This action may be subtle—as subtle as avoidance and disinterest. But this lack of interest is not accidental or benign; it is socialized and results in not developing relationships. (p. 34)

Without inclusion, constructive responses, and mutual understanding when interacting with local residents, immigrants could encounter exclusion in society, in their workplace and communities, or from families of their children's local friends. Some immigrant parents experienced discrimination, which may be due to contempt, infringement of benefits, or perhaps competing views because of differences in cultures or ideologies. John shared an experience of being treated unfairly:

When I had just moved to Calgary from China, I went to an auto repair shop. There I was told to go home because I did not make an appointment before. Then, I called in to make an appointment when I got home. After that, I came to the shop again. I arrived there right on the clock of my appointment. Nevertheless, I was told to wait for some time. A White customer, who arrived a few minutes later after me, beat me to it immediately upon his arrival. So I inquired about this unfair treatment. However, the manager did not provide any explanations. He simply said, "You can do whatever you like" in an irritable

manner. (John)

As Orelus (2011) put it, “From the other world to the world, it is uncertain way, . . . many have confronted the hideous and ugly teeth of monsters, such as White supremacy and individual racism” (p. 108). “A key aspect to challenging our prejudices is challenging the social segregation that is built into the culture” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 35) and breaking through the ice of prejudicial awareness and ideologies. As described by Maria, she had an unhappy experience where she was ignored:

During my son’s parent–teacher interview, we were told to make appointments with the teachers ahead of time through the online system. I arrived on the scheduled time, and the parents in the library classroom had not finished talking. Eventually, they walked out of the classroom while they continued talking. The teacher saw me waiting and nodded to me as to notify that he had noticed my presence, and I stood there quietly a distance away from them. They were preparing for saying good-bye but continued chatting. I was worried about the time as I had another following interview shortly after this scheduled one. Finally, they finished talking, what impressed me most is that another Whitecouple popped up and immediately initiated a new conversation with the teacher without lining up. It was rather disappointing that the teacher should know I was waiting for him. However, the teacher ignored me, and they started an interview in front of me. (Maria)

Qiong also had an unpleasant experience being treated rudely:

I have an unpleasant experience with a Whitefemale high school teacher. She is my classmate when I am taking one course for master degree. One day our instructor asked us to do a group discussion on a topic. After the discussion was over, I said, “Thank you for your presentation.” She said, “Sarcastic.” In fact, I did not really mind her dominating role in group discussions and tried my best to clarify her misunderstanding. However, the worst thing was that after the class was over, I asked another student one English idiom our teacher mentioned, and said English is my second language in which I had poor listening. She jumped in our talk, cursing, “Are you deaf?” When another Asian boy explained that was not listening problem but listening in a second language, she said, “I am teasing.” At the end of the semester, we had a class potluck. Only two of us are ready to take food. It was my turn to take the food, while she was after me. I would like to show my friendliness, so I asked her to take food first. What impressed me most is that she glanced at me with pride and priority, and got some food without showing any appreciation. It was a terrible and unexpected response. I realized that she was looking down upon me. It hurts me so much. I have no idea how to forget it.

Here, we can see a picture of being belittled by certain locals. The question I have been

grappling with is how multicultural values matter. For Chinese immigrants who lived in China for a long time and then immigrated to Canada, customs, culture, work philosophy, and human exchanges are very different; these changes, coupled with less communication with other ethnic groups, may cause misunderstanding, resistance, and discrimination. As Kincheloe (2008) has written:

Critical pedagogy is dedicated to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power. Advocates of critical pedagogy work to expose and to contest oppressive forms of power as expressed in socioeconomic class elitism, Eurocentric ways of viewing the world, patriarchal oppression, and imperialism around the world. In this context, white people must learn to listen to nonwhites' and indigenous people's criticism of them and of the cultural norms they have established and imposed on people of a lower socioeconomic class and non-European peoples at home and abroad. (p. 34)

For example, Chinese people think that humility is a virtue; in contrast, Western countries regard humility as not being confident. If the immigrant said that he was "not good enough" in front of the Western employer, the employer may think the immigrant lacks the capability to do the job well.

In addition, customs and rules in workplaces are distinct between the East and the West. For instance, in China, leaders take the initiative to ask about the employee's work schedule and conditions as the basis to evaluate job performance, whereas in the West, the employee is expected to report his or her work performance. Such differences in working customs would result in misunderstanding between two sides. Immigrants need to learn about the new culture and adapt to it while the local people should try to understand that immigrants need time to adapt. As Maria pointed out:

It is really confusing for me that my leader or colleagues seldom ask me anything. Normally I would ask them some questions since I'm new in this company and am not familiar with a lot of things. . . . I don't know if it is an isolated or universal phenomenon. If it is universal, I should come to report my work to them every now and then instead of otherwise. When I was in China, I rarely came to talk to my leader, while they often talk

to me. . . . So, my problem is, first, I don't have local working experience; second, I still don't know much about the local culture. For example, when I do something, it is not recognized until I report it to the leader. If there is no report, the leader would not owe it to me, but to someone who reports it. Therefore, no leaders have asked about my feelings or my work here after working here several months. (Maria)

Moreover, people may comprehend discrimination dissimilarly; in the current study, Sensoy and DiAngelo's definition (2012) is used for reference here: "action based on prejudices toward social others" (p. 32). Because of the presence of multiculturalism, much of the existing discrimination in Canada has become obscured, coded, or hidden. When discrimination is not blatant, fewer people believe that it occurs, especially in a multi-ethnic homeland with inclusive policies such as Canada. Those being discriminated against will find comfort in others who are also experiencing it. Some immigrant parents might share their experience of discrimination and exclusion with their children; such unhappy recollections would subconsciously impede their offspring's progress in decision making on cross-cultural connections and may exert a negative influence upon their children's mindset. For instance, Matthew commented: "My mother's boss is a person who likes to bully the Chinese employees, but my mother can't do anything about it, after all, he is my mother's boss. I feel uncomfortable about it."

Zhang, a father respondent, supported this idea:

I think some Chinese parents may exert their own psychological impact on their own children. Our first generation are relatively self-inferior than the local people, resulting in our less self-confident. Traumatizing a child with an abnormal worry of intercultural contact probably won't do much good.

Maria, a mother who works for a small company, added:

Although I am willing to make friends with them, they may not treat me as a true friend. So it is a double-sided question involving the society, other people and yourself. This issue can't be resolved with the effort from only one side. Integration is not about one part's will, which is why I say they are not inclusive. They view you from their own perspectives: whether you are a threat to them or whether they like you, which are very subjective. If they don't like you or think you are not up to their standards, you are

excluded. Sometimes I speak English with my native-speaker colleagues to communicate with each other. Even if my pronunciation is clear, certain colleague sometimes deliberately said, “Are you speaking Chinese?” Or “I cannot understand what you are saying.” That means that they did ignore you.

Maria and Chenjie (another mother) are newcomers who have been in Canada for over two years. Chenjie stated:

Difference in cultural backgrounds makes it difficult for people to communicate. The key is to understand each other. One needs to understand the other person’s meaning without harm. Let me give you one example. We asked one White colleague if he could help me with something such as taking something we weren’t able to take. And then he just turns his face. He had been eating my cooking and talking and just turn his face instantly. It’s very strange. I was very curious about the reason why he turns his face “Why are you not happy?” . . . It might come from cultural difference. Later, I guess the sentence should say, “Could you help me?” instead of other commanding expressions. (Chenjie)

When “culture is simply used as a euphemism, a proxy signaling dimensions of social inequality and oppression by way of race, ethnicity and/or class” (Cruz & Sonn, 2011, p. 203), it is challenging for immigrants to have faith that society can include and accept their different ways of thinking in the workplace, or understand the culture they bring. Maria explained in considerable detail:

When I was seeking a job, the requirement was two years’ working experience in Canada. I had worked in this career for 20 years in China, but I think they didn’t accept that. Otherwise they would not have the requirement. Chinese are industrious and hard-working, which would sometimes be misinterpreted by others. My friend knows a person who used to keep his working habits in China and worked overtime when others were off duty. He didn’t do it for money but to leave a good impression for his colleagues and leaders that he was working hard. But what he was doing made others suspicious his ability. After that, he stopped working overtime because it was not the result he was expecting. . . . Zhiqiang Zeng from Taiwan said, knowledge is the same, while ways of thinking are different in culture. I agree with that. But some local residents are not so inclusive. In terms of job, the results are the same but through different ways of thinking. It is rather rigid for them to deny these flexible ways. To me, I was working for a European company instead of a state-owned company for 10 years when I was in China. [Even if I have rich experience in foreign company] they still don’t accept my way of working. I think it’s a cultural shock for both sides. They are not that inclusive because there are many ways to figure out some problems apart from their methods. . . . I once got the idea that once you work hard here, that means everything will be pretty well, and

working relationship with colleagues and leaders is relatively simple, or the same with that in China at least. But after I arrived here, I found it was not that simple. Actually, this working relationship also includes subtle things. Take me as one example. I lived in China for half of my life. The education I received is totally Chinese. China is in my bones and my blood. It would be very difficult for me to be Westernized. But from my perspective, I have been trying to do that all the time. But I seem not to clearly feel my efforts are received by this society. (Maria)

Tianyi, another father participant, echoed Maria's sentiments:

We can't do anything about it. This is one kind of cultural discrimination due to historical reasons. Because China was originally poorer and weaker than other developed countries in history. Hence, you have nothing to do if others look down upon you. Our mother land needs to be strong. They [local residents] may still think immigrants are robbing their jobs due to poverty from developing countries.

The longer quotation, based on work experiences, voiced local nonacceptance of the ways in which immigrants work and communicate. As Cruz and Sonn (2011) aptly argued:

From the relationship between self and others, how the cultures of "others" are typically treated as static and antiquated was central so as to reveal how understandings of self and others are produced through historically situated discourses, taken for granted knowledge and everyday practices within social and political contexts. (p. 207)

Additionally, another mother of a participant, Qiong, contributed her idea that Western local parents who are prejudiced toward China could affect how their children interact with Chinese children.

I think the local parents' view on Chinese would affect their children. Many Westerners, for example, the one in my company to be more specific, she said China or living in China was pretty horrible and terrible. But who knows what horrible things there are made her have such ideas. Actually, there are no such things because they just don't understand the true China. (Qiong)

As well, some parent participants talked about their unpleasant experiences of being discriminated against. Shan, a respondent mother, recalled a troubling incident:

There was this experience that was extra impressive to me. At that time, I worked as a volunteer at an immigration agency. It was during a special event to show thanks to volunteers. There was an empty position at the reception desk, which I filled in because I thought no one was there so I can help the other volunteers out. After 20 minutes or so, a young White girl, who was a staff in the agency, suddenly rushed towards me with a

hostile attitude. She demanded that it was her seat. Her face was red with eyes staring at me. I quickly removed myself from the chair, but I felt extremely uncomfortable from her rude demeanour. I apologized while it was never confirmed whether it was her seat. Such rude attitude made my self-esteem wearing down.

For some immigrant parents, experiences of exclusion and discrimination have led them to two extremes when advising their children about how to be successful in Canada: they recommend associating only with Chinese friends, or fully immersing themselves in the Western culture in the hopes of fitting in. As the first generation of immigrants, parents would experience more inequality and discrimination, resulting in some psychological feelings of inferiority negatively affected by rejection. And these feelings, to some extent, would affect their children's ability and likelihood of forming intercultural friendships. Some immigrant parents would check on, interfere in, or restrict their children's social life and put too much pressure on the children's development in order to avoid their offspring experiencing similar discrimination or exclusion.

Ancy clarified how her parents' view affected her thinking:

I believe parents play a significant role in the lives of immigrant youth. As the parents grew up in their home country with traditional values and ideologies, it is difficult for them [to] accept the liberal values and thinking of Canadian society. This is very evident in my parents' conspicuous distaste for the LGBT community, abortion, and Syrian refugees. Although I try to be open minded and accepting of the culture and values in Canada, it is difficult when parents are continuously reminding me of the differences between me and local Canadians. (Ancy)

Chinese immigrant parents' experiences with being excluded in turn strengthened their desire for their children to integrate fully into the mainstream culture:

In fact, I am very clear on why the child has so many psychological problems, why his parents must take their children to the White church, why his parents must put their children in White children dominated school, why they do not allow his children in a school with more immigrant culture. They themselves created a cage for the child, while experiencing exclusion and marginalization from their more assimilated colleagues at workplaces. This experience and comparison drove him to make more White friends and identify himself as Canadian in relation to his friends such as "I must put my children in an environment with pure Whites. I must let my child integrate into the mainstream

society.” “You must have White friends.” (Yingyong)

In the course of acculturation, it is indispensable for local colleagues and employers to offer immigrants some patience, understanding, and training on the process of gradual change making in workplaces to support the progress of social integration and acculturation of minority ethnic groups into Canada. Given the dramatic changes in the world today, ethnic and cultural ideological lines may hamper the progress towards integration. Two-way interactivity and understanding are effective means of intercultural friendship building to help locals and immigrants conduct thinking in another’s shoes and prevent any stereotypes, assumptions, and value judgements.

### **Chinese Immigrants’ Internalized Oppression**

Internalized oppression refers to when immigrant youth deprecate their own culture or reject it; this normally results mostly from convenience and how much easier it makes fitting in to a dissimilar culture. According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012), it is “internalizing and acting out (often unintentionally), the constant messages circulating in the culture that you and your group are inferior to the dominant group and that you are deserving of your lower position” (p. 186). Specifically, internalized oppression is self-inferiority and contempt for one’s own culture and submission to unfair treatment or evasion of one’s culture or racialized group. In my investigation, three types of Chinese immigrants and their children internalized and demonstrated oppression.

The first type comprises mainly Generation 2 Chinese immigrant youth. Many of them are entirely immersed in Western culture and know little about China. Some of their parents are proud of their children abandoning Chinese culture in order to assimilate into the mainstream society and for successfully being accepted. As one mother participant, Suzan, told me,



I used to have a colleague whose son was very close with the local peers. He said his son had no Chinese children friends, and he was very proud of that. He wanted his son to be with local children. He was particularly proud when the son stayed with local peers. His son had a local friend whose parents were also particularly friendly with the son. The parents took the son along with the family for playing or visiting America and their country villa. My colleague felt particularly proud his son's staying with rich local family. I think my colleague's child had great self-confidence and independent points of view, so he can get along with local peers because of these characteristics. If you always appear weak and always follow others, people will find you boring, no personality. But I don't think my colleague's child had a strong sense of national self-esteem. (Suzan)

Shan reiterated this point:

Some Generation 2 youths dislike or disdain to be their ethnic Chinese identity, feel bitter about the variety of China and Canada, and try to have made the assertion of the White culture, and deliberately alienate the first-generation immigrant youth or other Chinese peers. (Shan)

Internalized oppression causes immigrant youth to feel humble and exhibit a lack of self-confidence due to cruel realities and their social challenges. For example, the newcomer Cason echoed, "I really wish I were born here so that I would not have so much difference from them."

Additionally, some participants do not really want to be the kind of students their parents have expected due to internalized oppression. Instead, they would prefer to be in the same position as the local peers in order to fit in because they are not accepted and are teased by local peers:

And you know that you were supposed to work hard in school, but all your local friends make fun of you if you're working hard because you are not really geeky or something like that, right? . . . You want them [local peers] to realize that you are not the one, maybe you are not the one that's portion ordered by your parents; maybe you are not the one that wants you to play badminton which your parents want you to play; maybe you are not the one that gets 100% on the test, you just want 90, right? (Warren)

According to the findings of this study, the second type of internalized oppression is the sense of inferiority when Generation 1.5 immigrant youth and newcomer groups are treated unfairly due to differences in ideologies. Newcomers who came after the age of 10 years old are

sensitive to the differences between themselves and local peers. These differences resulted in obvious or hidden obstacles to building intercultural friendships. Some immigrants yearn to integrate into the civilized society but are always regarded as second-class citizens, which results in frustration, shame, and a sense of unworthiness. This kind of rejection can make the vulnerable immigrant population withdraw from trying to build intercultural friendships and return to only focusing on their intracultural relationships.

Some participants mentioned their fear for not knowing the boundary between self-confidence and being offensive. They are afraid of being looked down upon for their language expression. For example, Hetty was probably afraid to connect with local peers due to a lack of self-confidence because of her poor English. Hetty, from Hong Kong, was born in Canada but grew up in Hong Kong. She told me:

I have questions in classrooms to ask. For example, I have a White classmate in front, also there is a brown skin of the student, I will ask the brown skin peer a question. I will not ask the White peer question, because I think their English is born that kind of good, may also be a sense of inferiority, is afraid to be looked down upon by them, fear of being rejected or ridiculed. (Hetty)

One girl from Macau, Sherry, mentioned that she hoped that her parents could participate in some volunteer activities together with her, but her parents' English is poor. She felt lonely and inferior to her local peers. She shared her own thoughts on the internalized oppression barriers of contact with host peers:

One time I was involved with the cheerleading team, like one time in elementary it wasn't really cheerleading, it was just for fun after school, and then I am waiting; I was always involved. I remember when I was in school because I am in elementary school, most people were Caucasian. And I always felt left out because I wasn't Caucasian, so I was just like not one of those popular people because all the popular people were Caucasian, so I was like, "I wish I was Caucasian." . . . For me personally, I didn't really understand why they did call that person Black, this kid is not Black, he is brownish, why do they call themselves White? Their skin is not white; it is pinkish. Like, I don't get it why they call me yellow, like my skin is not yellow, so I didn't really understand so. I

didn't really care. I just continued normally, I didn't really care. For me, I didn't care. (Sherry)

Although Sherry repeatedly said she did not care, I think she still did care about this matter. Her caring was articulated in her interview. She said that in school she did not experience bullying except for during a dispute with local peers because she insisted that disabled students could participate in a school election. But from the last part of the interview, in fact, it was clear she did care. She can still feel inferior to local peers, such as when she noted her White peers are always more popular cheerleaders. Sherry later also said that she transferred from the charter school into a regular high school, and she felt isolated and excluded, and no one was willing to form a group and work together with her. Sherry also admitted that there is always a popular group in the school, and the group always has a White leader, but she said she did not care. I think it may be because she is not well integrated and pretends she does not care in order to maintain her psychological balance.

Some Chinese immigrant parents and youth develop a significant inferiority complex, feeling insecure to survive in a developed country because of painful encounters that result in a sense of helplessness and despair, fear, worry, and frustration. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) wrote that

when a person of color, consciously and subconsciously, accepts the negative representation or invisibility of people of Color in media, education and all other aspects of society. Over time, the person comes to believe that (s)he is less valuable and may act this out through self-defeating behaviors and sometimes by distancing him/herself from others of his/her own or other non-white racial groups. (p. 113)

Matthew, one of the participants, shared examples of internalized oppression due to feelings of inferiority about language and appearance:

For example, you see how small his eyes today, just like that. But if you were bullied, he did not mean to bully you, you see, they mean you were stupid, or are you saying the

phrase you see how much of how silly. He is discriminating you from the language. But this is the fact that your language performance is not good. (Matthew)

One participant, Irene, made comments regarding fear and self-abasement due to certain differences:

Because the local communities or medias have formed a stereotype about Chinese or an inherent prejudice on Chinese which is not easy to change [the reality]. Certain local peers would be easy to gossip behind Chinese children's backs and there would be an obstacle in the communication between two sides. Besides, obvious differences in appearance between races, Chinese children are pretty special in schools and communities of local children. Significant difference would impose great pressure on Chinese children's mind. Confident or adaptive children may be accepted into a circle of Western children while less enduring children may hesitate in communication and not be easy to be included. (Irene)

Based on my observation in classrooms, local youth rarely take the initiative to communicate with the Chinese immigrant youth, even when they are in the same groups. Meanwhile, Chinese immigrant youth seldom talk with locals, especially once they have been hurt or marginalized, as they shared with me in the interviews. For example, newcomers have tried to take the initiative to positively communicate with locals but did not get a reciprocal response. Once that rejection happens, it is possible that they might not try again.

One of participants, Lily, 16 years old, was born in Canada, and her parents immigrated to Canada from the south of China. She thinks the relationship with White peers can only be that of a companion rather than a true friend because there are no equal relationships and common norms such as ideologies, image, and manners, as well as interests. For example, Lily and her Asian friends prefer to watch particular TV series, while Caucasians would watch others. As she described,

Your dress and your behaviour, if you act so weird, like, you like to smile a lot. Or you just laugh about something that is not so funny but you think it's funny. So people always look down upon you, thinking, "Are you stupid?" And also, quiet people would also tend to be picked on or to be bullied and discriminated against sometimes. (Lily)

The reason for the formation of this psychological state of self-inferiority is quite complex. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) proposed that those in the vulnerable group believe that “dominant group members are deserving of their positions” (p. 50). One mother of a participant offered her point of view on internalized discrimination:

Not belonging to the mainstream part of the society, Chinese immigrant parents have a sense of humility, so they choose tolerance and distance when their children are bullied or excluded by local peers. They don't want to waste their time and make trouble to claim something. . . . Language barriers and great life pressures to meet essential life needs make them choose to remain silent when their children suffer from peer exclusion. (Lianna)

The third type of internalized oppression is regarding resilience. It occurs in situations when, after some Chinese immigrant youth are bullied or excluded by local peers, their response is not to give up the intercultural friendships but instead to make a great effort to make changes and try hard in different ways to be accepted by their local counterparts. Those in the vulnerable group

behave in ways of the model minority discourse that please the dominant group and do not challenge the legitimacy of its position [and] silently enduring micro-aggressions (everyday slights, insults, and insensitivities) from the dominant group in order to avoid penalty. (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 50)

Due to reasons such as being harmed, treated unfairly, or shocked, some immigrants may begin to think everything in their mother land is inferior, including lifestyle, systems, culture, or even ethnicity. One mother, Suzan, shared her son's thought process:

After the child was bullied, he realized that he was Chinese and different from his peers. Take my son, for example. He first felt frustrated, and then he believed he could integrate into his peers or even can make greater effort to make change and try harder to conquer them. He did not withdraw, but he might not find an appropriate way to integrate into his peers, so there was no good effect and it was not necessary. But in his deep heart, the bullying he suffered in his childhood stirred his desire to pursue the establishment of cross-cultural friendship. Perhaps because of my femininity or my character, if you ignore me once, I will never interact with you unless you are aware of your mistakes, and apologize for your behaviour, or I will not accept you. Otherwise, I will never interact

with you if you ignore and exclude me. But my son has different reaction to the same kind of rejection. He believes that if you ignore me, I still want to communicate with you and try to show you I am an excellent boy. For example, he likes playing basketball with his high school local peers. He is the only one Asian basketball player. Some local peers do play basketball very skillfully, while my son is not very capable, despite his slow and steady progress. He always wishes to play basketball with those local peers. I have read their text messages communication and found the peers' language is particularly disrespectful. I can't understand why my son still wants to communicate with them who do not respect him?

This quotation shows a Chinese youth trying to be accepted, but it does not show that he rejects his culture. These types of stories from the participants made me believe that Chinese immigrant youth are self-contradictory to some extent and in a dilemma about the reality of the differences they are facing. The findings revealed that Chinese immigrant youth find it hard to believe multiculturalism really exists when they regularly face discrimination. Although immigrant youth accept the value and the policy of multiculturalism, in reality they are discriminated against unless they conform to Western value-centered society.

Few of the participants were accepted as equals by their native peers. As a result of being rejected by local peers, most of them searched for comfort and support from other students with an Asian cultural background. Also, consistent with my interview data, after those participants talked about their experiences being bullied and hurt, they would often say, "I do not care"; in fact, it is not that they do not care. Rather, they feel that they as well as their parents are unable to protect them, and they cannot care. This is the behaviour of self-protection. In order to comfort worrying parents, they say "I do not care." This is "spiritual victory" (Lu, 1977, p. 1), a placebo, the spirit of victory that lies in almost every human being, which aims to alleviate pain by acting as an anesthetic so that a person cannot think too much or care too much. But for youth, peers matter. If a youth was excluded in school, there might not be anything that can make up for the psychological trauma.

Concerning what provoked Chinese immigrant youth to experience internalized oppression, it may be constructed as a sense of lack of national dignity and self-confidence. As such, “for people who want to live in an immigrant country for a long time, their national self-confidence and image is particularly important. As a face saving ethnicity, people should keep self-esteem and help themselves out” (Terry). In addition to this, reshaping cultures to reconstruct self-confidence in a polity that “adheres to the value of equality of all its members” (Hoerder et al., 2005, p. 15) means to take up an evocative challenge to negotiate identities of the in-between space and avoid getting lost themselves.

### **Discrimination Through Local Cultural Superiority**

As perceived by the Chinese immigrant youth in my study, cultural superiority and discrimination happen when the local culture is used as a standard to evaluate if the other culture and its ideologies are acceptable. White supremacy “capture[s] the all-encompassing dimensions of white privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority in society” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 188). It has a strong effect on society “because we all share the same socialization through the wider culture” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 112).

Although Canada is a multicultural society, certain local teenagers may look down upon newcomers expressing cultural superiority and treating them with prejudice. Dei et al. (2003) asserted that “they are considered as other by Anglo-Canadian cultural hegemony, dichotomy under the guise of multiculturalism” (p. 173). For example, Panson is a newcomer from Tianjin, and he has been in Canada for one year. He discussed his impression of local peers based on his experience in a senior high school in Calgary:

For us [new immigrant students], local peers certainly are more arrogant based on interpersonal or social skills. Of course, I was sure that in their minds they are the definite masters of this country, we are only guests. I had migrated here, and I am not going back

to China. But I feel that I do not have the sense of belonging. They [local students] just do not realize how arrogant they are. . . . We are less confident, while they are over-confident; this makes them feel superior. But I still feel I am not confident inherently to be a master of this country because I did not grow up here; language and culture are also different. These are definitely different.

Some feel superior with no justification or are unconsciously caught up in the superficial pleasure and superiority that comes from social position (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For example, laughing at newcomers and judging them because of their accents, manners, and appearance rather than helping them fit in demonstrates a cultural superiority of unequal power and privilege.

In my study, I found that a sense of cultural superiority acts as a barrier against intercultural friendships, as it makes people unsure in how much they expect in return for what they are willing to give. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) have pointed out, a sense of cultural superiority may reflect in these dimensions including “historical, ideological, cultural, institutional, social, political, and interpersonal” (p. 188).

To begin with, in terms of historical dimensions, there also exists the natural and self-righteous discrimination of the Western world against the East due to colonial history. Orientalism is “not derogatory [as it refers to] the specific study of how racism was institutionalized by Western European colonial powers toward people of the orient and how those representations have impacted historical and current relations” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 186). If people live in a world of their ego, they may lack awareness that the so-called objectivity is being replaced by their subjectivity. As Ancy, one of my respondents, pointed out,

Some White people think that they are superior to everyone else, probably because of the past and how Europeans were the superpower of the world. They were extremely ethnocentric, which that gets passed on through the generations and it's probably getting taught to some children right now, but that should not be the way of thinking since we should be past that stage. Everyone should try to accept everyone who are from diverse



cultures, no matter their heritage.

In addition, cultural supremacy results in exclusive evaluation criteria to measure the other culture's performance in ideological dimensions. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) noted, "A key dynamic of the relationship between dominant and minoritized groups is to name the minoritized group as different, while the dominant group remains unnamed" (p. 112). For example, Tracy, who was born in Canada, recognized that the cultural superiority based on mainstream criteria happened in schools because of immigrants' difference in dress and food:

And just because the dresses are different, and the food perhaps is also different. Then they see people [immigrants] just going that's a little odd. I think that's one source [of cultural superiority]. And people kind of flock to what's generally accepted by society as a whole. This is how you should dress and eat. Or this is something they would accept more often. . . . And many of them do not understand Chinese history and culture at all.

Also, cultural superiority can lead to psychological distance when interacting with one another interpersonally. I take Julia as an example. She came to Calgary in junior high school from China. Her parents were relatively open without restricting her, and encouraged her to make local friends. Instead, she did not make cross-cultural friends. She shared her thoughts that cultural superiority caused psychological distance between immigrant youth and their local counterparts.

They had never been to China before. They [my local peers] believe that the immigrants are from developing countries, so some [local students] think immigrant youth are relatively backward. Or that immigrants cannot find a job in their home country, so they come here [Canada]. . . . Actually, they [local residents] have a lot of stereotypes, prejudice and biases because they may be negatively affected by some media. There is a psychological gulf. (Julia)

In terms of the behaviours of White peers, some participants described White peers' sense of cultural superiority, looking down upon people of colour. It might be a way of ethnic exclusion. Some participants shared their embarrassing school experiences. Yani, who is 18 years

old, immigrated to Calgary at the age of seven. She was bullied by peers in an elementary school. After that, her parents sent her to China to live with her aunt. She came back to Canada in Junior high. She shared an experience which happened in high school that she felt reflected cultural superiority:

If there is a group project, one of my local White peers may stand up, and say that you do this, you do that. . . . Then you do not have any opportunity to make a choice, and this makes you feel mad and annoy[ed]. . . . They [local White peers] think they are strong. (Yani)

Hao and Kong recalled,

In physical education class, my teacher asked each boy to invite one girl to be a partner to dance. I was refused directly. . . . When I took regular chemistry course one semester, I am the only “foreigner” in the class, nobody is willing to accept me to be part of their group for the lab project. (Kong)

On the first day of one of my classes, I said hello to my desk mate. She did not respond at all. One guy who sat in front turned around to say hi to the peers who sat behind him except for me. I thought they have already known one another. In fact, they are also new to each other. (Hao)

Wesley had a similar feeling encountering cultural superiority and exclusion:

Many local people believe that an Asian child, whether a boy or a girl, looks ugly. That is, for example, you see how your eyes so small . . . you see, how stupid you are, or how silly are you saying the phrase. . . . But even if you are bullied, he did not mean to bully you, this may be the Asian racial discrimination. Especially after World War II, they will despise other races, just because they do not like. Because they think you look ugly, a lot of local youth do not want to be your friend. Therefore, they will not make the first step. . . . But if it is White child that they see the White kid, no matter how . . . they may think they are better than the other races.

These kinds of behaviours showing the sense of cultural superiority easily generate psychological issues by distancing intercultural contact between local students and immigrant youth. It is a vicious cycle amongst people in society where without intercultural social interactions, there is no improvement in social relations.

Correspondingly, in social and political dimensions, some media outlets have reported

cultural superiority, which thwarts positive intercultural interaction. For example, *Maclean's* magazine, a widespread Canadian news publication, published "Too Asian," an article that exemplified the latest and most controversial media racism against Chinese students in the Canadian context (as cited in Cui, 2013). It is also worthwhile to note that during the period of my data collection, the *Globe and Mail* published a news article that said,

In September 2014, during the raucous mayoral debate . . . an audience member who told the *National Post* he was a Doug Ford supporter shouted at Ms. Chow, who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong when she was 13, to "Go home, Olivia! Back to China!" (Hui, 2014, para. 2)

Two Generation 2 respondents, Shiruan and Ancy, gave me their feedback on this news.

I think that some people are just racist, and they were raised that way and they just think that their race is the best and better than everyone else, and I think it's because of old prejudices that some people are racist and don't think of everyone as equal because we're all equal. (Ancy)

Personally, I feel like this person should crawl back into the cold dense soil from which they came because immigrants no matter their ethnicity have just as much right to be here as locals do. This is not how people should be treated in Canada, and it's not how they should be treated anywhere. . . . I think people of different cultures act slightly differently just because they were brought up with different teachings and that is really what holds me back a bit from making these intercultural friendships. (Shiruan)

Maria and Lily shared their experiences in the workplace and on campus concerning cultural superiority:

Some of the local people in the workplace are arrogant and always show off in their way of walking, talking and attitude; you can feel they are talking about their advantages which makes me reluctant to communicate with them. Immigrants surrounding them are not willing to be close to them either. Some know their knowledge is limited. But they would say they learn 120% if they know only about 30%. . . . They would show off they know a lot by all kinds of means. (Maria)

Certain White[peers] look down upon animations and dramas, saying that they [animations and dramas] are useless. My local peer said, "What you are doing with your life are wasting time." So, they don't like it. It's really hurt to communicate with them because they don't have the similar interest with you, right? (Lily)

Each culture has its own advantages and disadvantages, but without the standard of being right or wrong. The superiority of Western culture in school social life, especially in White-student-dominated schools, makes it hard to accept the intangibly diverse culture of immigrants. Young immigrants find it difficult to be accepted by Western culture even if they abandon their own culture; this is the cruel reality that comes with trying to better integrate into a new society. Some participants also believe that even if they are accepting of the new Western culture, imitating and approaching their local peers to build intercultural friendships, they may not be accepted by their local peers; even trying to assimilate can result in rejection. This could be coupled with a loss of traditional Chinese culture. As Hao, a student, said,

Canada respects multiculturalism but not cultural coexistence. We need to adapt into them. In large bodies of government, it is still the local people that are making decisions which are mainly in accordance with their way of thinking. The proposals according to our way of thinking cannot simply be passed.

Tianyi, a father, talked about how culture superiority existed in the workplace:

Our company in 2010 was purchased by South Korea. At that time, a lot of local people's first reaction is to ask why I want to work with them [Asians] and whether I was going to leave the company. This is their response, but they did not say that clearly. They chat together considering that as a problem if they should leave the company. Why should people consider leaving the company? My interpretation is that they are thinking that they are White people and they are the North American local people. Why should they work for Asians?

Matthew talks about how prejudices affect even choices of sports:

Because of cultural superiority, local peers may judge us based on their own experience and criteria, whatever is right or wrong. They have not been to China and do not know our culture and characteristics, they just follow other local adults to go and look down upon us. In fact, some of them are from the online platform to obtain information about China, such as Facebook or Twitter. They say that Chinese people are wearing glasses, and call us nerds. Sometimes they will say that Chinese students are very short, with our appearance to satirize us. These sometimes make Chinese peers are very unhappy. I think it is because they are jealous of the Chinese children's good grades. . . . For example, I sometimes ask them if they would like to play table tennis or badminton, they will say it is Chinese's sports. . . . They cannot see us as a whole. They play basketball, ice hockey,

they think that Chinese are not good at these sport activities in the Olympic game. I think they can play these sports, but they should not look down on us to play these sports [badminton, table tennis]. They also believe that sport such as table tennis and badminton are low-level sport item, which does not require much physical energy. So they think those sport activities are inferior. Some of them [local peers] connect some sport with racial group: Black is basketball, badminton and table tennis is the Chinese people, Canadians are hockey. (Matthew)

While cultural superiority was a crucial barrier in the formation of intercultural friendships between immigrant youth and local counterparts, I began to notice that postcolonial thinking is oriented towards barriers, with students experiencing the barriers against intercultural understanding between Western culture and Eastern culture rather than engaging in multiculturalism. A decolonizing standpoint is proposed for understanding culture for “deepening emancipatory practices in intercultural contact” (Cruz & Sonn, 2011, p. 207).

In Canada, because most locals still do not have the opportunity to visit China, any understanding of China is gained primarily through watching overseas films and learning some fragmented things. This may cause local people’s prejudices against and stereotypes about China. “Social inequalities are based on ascribed characteristics such as an ethnic background” (Windzio, 2013, p. 4). This mentality easily brings about misunderstandings and communication gaps. Human beings are all the same, and different skin colour does not matter. A racialized group should use its own positive actions to shape its own image, to win the admiration and recognition of other people, by contributing to the progress of human civilization. In winning the respect of others, attitude determines everything to some extent; therefore, people should respect themselves. To overcome discrimination, it is important for the host community to see the commonalities and to convey friendliness, information, public opinion, and patience to newcomers. In a multiracial and multicultural country, people should gradually change the traditional consciousness and ideas. All should strive to respect and care about others.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described some unpleasant experiences at workplaces, communities, and schools suffered by Chinese immigrant parents and young people from immigrant backgrounds. Additionally, I have examined how immigrants view exclusion and discrimination, and negotiate the challenges of intercultural friendship building. I discussed two sources of exclusions: namely, exclusion experienced by Chinese immigrant youth at schools and by their immigrant parents in the workplace. One reason for this exclusion might be partly owing to the locals' sense of culture superiority. Consequently, immigrants experience an inner sense of inferiority.

Additionally, peer exclusion can be experienced and negotiated differently depending on the interaction in social domains, and these different experiences can influence each other. At least some of the respondents, including Chinese immigrant youth and parents, feel socially excluded from the social circle of their local peers at schools or at workplaces. This can lead to worries about young immigrants' attachment with the school as being a consequence of social exclusion from the rest of the school community.

This negotiation process was conceptualized as a dynamic dialectic of seeking intercultural friendships or feeling rejected or not welcomed. A frustrating negotiating process had a negative impact on immigrant students' efforts to form intercultural friendships at schools. In other words, the Chinese immigrant youth faced many challenges in making intercultural friends. They need to deal with "being othered" by European Canadian peers simply because they are non-White. To sum up, immigrant students often experience racial name calling, discrimination, bullying, joking and teasing, oppression, and other forms of social exclusion.

Even participants who are permanent residents or Canadian citizens still feel that that citizenship is just a legal certificate; they feel that they are not treated as citizens. They referred to experiences of exclusion in which they are still perceived by mainstream society as Chinese immigrants, Asians, strangers, or outsiders who have different social circles. My findings further illustrate that Canada's multicultural policy of celebrating diversity is not always experienced as such by immigrants. Building intercultural friendships with local residents often involves a one-way process of adaptation. In other words, people of colour are expected to conform to the European ways of life, values, and ideologies. This chapter demonstrates dances of different types of exclusion, rejection, and discrimination.

## **Chapter 5: Family Cultural Influence and Beyond Cultural Difference: Through the Eyes of Chinese Immigrant Parents and Youth**

Chinese immigrant parents should forge connections not only with the past and the future, but also between the East and the West. They are internally affected by their family's culture, which "many Confucian values have become embedded in" (Zhao, 2013, p. 43), and externally affected by the mainstream culture. Both have a significant impact on their offspring's competence in developing intercultural friendships. The impact of family culture on children's thoughts and behaviours cannot be overstated. Zhao (2013) illustrated that in Chinese culture, "what they do is much more than just turning off the TV when their children are studying. They take an active role in every step of their children's education" (p. 90). The influence parents have on their children is deeply rooted, at times subtle, at other times overt, and the role of parents' words and deeds in the child's life is essential. Parents are their children's first teachers and exert the greatest socialization influence, which affects the individual's life-long thoughts and behaviours. Through their intimate nurturing exchanges, the parents' values, ideals, and beliefs are integrated into the child's personality and internalized, becoming their ideals, values, attitudes, and so forth. A parent's ideology, values, or moral socialization cannot be entirely replaced by school, mass media, or any other institution.

The process of socialization refers to the process from the birth of the biological self into society (social self). Extensive developmental research has found that parents play a significant role in youth social cognition and attitudes (Smetana, 1989, 2006). Parents share their ethnic history, the native language, and ethnic pride in their culture (T. Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007) and the inheritance of social and cultural values. The main unit of socialization is the family, because the family is not only the earliest social environment of children, but also the social unit



with which they are the most closely related and interacting. Individuals' basic attitudes, values, beliefs, ideals, habits, morality, and so forth will be affected by parents and the other role models in the children's lives.

In the process of socialization of family culture, Chinese parents teach children a lot of Asian culture in subtle ways, and some worry that their children cannot integrate properly into the mainstream culture and be accepted by the locals without losing either themselves or their national self-confidence. However, most of the parents interviewed were open to intercultural interaction, and they wanted their children to be integrated into this new mainstream society and also retain their own traditional cultural essence. Successful integration is achieved in part through the creation of cross-cultural friendships with local children, learning each other's strengths and weaknesses, and deepening each other's understanding. Lianna, a mother respondent, said about her daughter:

I prefer her to be integrated into the Canadian culture and to make friends with the local children, instead of always being in the ivory tower [isolated from society because of school]. She should also be concerned with society, especially inequality, and working hard to participate in the establishment of the community, to participate in a variety of activities to express these ideas. She will not always be able to work with Chinese children in the future, and she may become very confined. It is a pity that we first-generation immigrants fail to be well integrated into the mainstream culture. I want my daughter to make some local friends. While she did so in primary school, I found her shopping with all Chinese friends in junior and senior high schools. She said that her hobbies were different from those of her local classmates. I think the reason is that their basic ideas and values are not the same. For the same concept, different people have different views. Some people say that this is acceptable while others believe that it is not. (Lianna)

While speaking with Tianyi, a father respondent, he mentioned that his son had few friends. Therefore, he stated that he told his son,

I want you to participate in some social activities, make more friends, and by learning from them you can become more capable. It is impossible for one to succeed without a friend's help. [Do you know] why it is difficult for immigrants to find a job? It is because

they have no connections. Locals can leave their jobs at will, and have friends from primary school, high school, and university. A single phone call can bring calls for a dozen friends to help them, and just one trustworthy friend can help them find a job. However, new immigrants can't find such ready help. Some institutions of the government can give a newcomer some limited help. Nevertheless, a job depends on oneself, and the friends they have within their social network. (Tianyi)

Tianyi offered insight to his son on how to cope in society. Not all parents may understand ways to manage in a new society. Due to barriers of cross-cultural communication, many Chinese parents have limited understanding of how to pass on the different values and methods of Western parenting. They do not have the opportunity to understand the values of the mainstream culture, so, based on hearsay, they reach their conclusions based on what they think the values of Westerners are and their perception of Western culture. For the same reason, Canadian teachers and principals have limited understanding of the methods employed by parents in China. Due to this, the schooling system and the Chinese parents lack mutual understanding and communication. To resolve this problem, we should not allow the Chinese culture and the Canadian mainstream culture to oppose each other, but rather encourage them to communicate. To deal with the daily adjustment between ourselves and others is to give our life new possibilities.

Barriers to intercultural friendships hinder new immigrants from adapting to new cultural and social norms successfully, which will likely lead to marginalization instead of a sense of belonging, although the newest quantitative investigation has claimed that the majority of immigrants have a strong sense of belonging to Canada (Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2016). Marginalization may also lead to an inability to be part of one's new home country, as well as isolation in a narrow regional social circle. It may even result in exclusion in the workplace.

I have observed the low frequency with which Chinese immigrant youth form and

develop intercultural friendships in and out of school. Okagaki (2001) and J. Li (2009) also mentioned their limited social activities with friends. My conversations with parents brought to light the obstacles of intercultural friendships and experiences that Chinese immigrant parents and youths encounter. From these conversations, I am now able to share the opinions of the participants in order to aid future immigrants, giving them hope and understanding of how to integrate into Canadian social, economic, and educational systems. My hope is that these interviews will also be beneficial and greatly aid educators and local communities, giving them a deeper level of appreciation, understanding, and communication with all levels of Chinese immigrants. With this research, I am striving to break the visible and invisible barriers of local and immigrant exchanges. I now discuss the data regarding these barriers in six main categories: (a) Chinese immigrant youths' identity and family culture, (b) Chinese immigrant parental influence, (c) challenges in school settings, (d) parenting challenges, (e) lack of role models for intercultural communication, and (f) parents' expectations for the role of teachers.

### **Chinese Immigrant Youths' Identity and Family Culture**

Chinese immigrant youths' identity and family culture are acknowledged as attributes that create barriers to intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youth and local peers. In this section, I discuss the association between intercultural friendship, identity, and family culture. In describing identity, Hall (1990, as cited in Mirzoeff, 2014) wrote:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think. Instead, of identity as a "production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term "cultural identity" lays claim. (p. 222)

Identity is not fixed and unchanging, but can change. That is, it is an ongoing process.

Hoerder et al. (2005) shared the idea that process and change are part of culture, which is

an ongoing, ambivalent, and often contradictory process, critically involving interweaving of familial, popular, consumer, national, ancestral, transnational, and diasporic elements. Such complex systems include spoken and body language, and arts and beliefs created by human beings who must provide for their material, emotional, and intellectual needs in order to survive. (p. 13)

It is evident that we are all built on family culture as human beings, and that family cultural practice creates a deep sense of identity. However, identity alters and grows in life. Birds of a feather flock together, as the saying goes, and people of like mind fall into the same group. Additionally, for Chinese immigrant youth, they are also immersed in the Western culture in schools. Namely, the circles of Chinese immigrant youths' culture and identity will intersect in two places: immigrant family culture and local mainstream school community culture. Dei et al. (2003) proposed that "ethnic identity may be understood to extend beyond the mere existence of a joint history and culture, it also extends to one's sense of belonging and place within that ethnic framework" (p. 108), as "outsiders have to retain to some degree ethnic continuity and identity are to survive" (Isajiw, 1974, p. 115). Thus, Chinese immigrant youth form their unique identity in the interstitial space between the Canadian education system and the traditional Chinese parenting ideologies. They do this on the basis of the initial values that they learn from their parents and move beyond that to include some aspects of what they encounter from their surroundings.

Culture forges a basic platform to meet provocations such as cultural fluidity, innovation, and change of identity. Concerning identity, Cui (2013) has categorized Chinese immigrant youth into four identity types: an academically based Chinese identity, a resistant Chinese identity, a culturally based Chinese identity, and a racialized Canadian identity (p. 78). Clearly, these identities could be invisible obstacles in the process of building intercultural friendships. As well,

these four types of identities are not separated, and could be interwoven and identified simultaneously in one Chinese immigrant youth. Helen commented, “With such a feeling of half Chinese and half Canadian, when I go back to China I also cannot integrate with local Chinese. In Canada, I feel the same way, and I feel helpless about my own situation.” Other participants noted similar feelings:

I am only Canadian by passport. I think I am a Canadian, but not like the locals. Am I Chinese? Chinese students who studying abroad are very different from me. I do not know how to say who I am. I should be an independent individual. (Ningyu)

It is hard to say. I feel like I’m both. Sometimes, when I am in Canada, I feel more Chinese, and when I am in China, I feel more Canadian. I feel like I am too Western when I go home . . . when I do English homework, but . . . not when Mom and Dad speak with idioms which I do not understand very well, and would not be understood by my Chinese friends. I feel like I do not fit into my school because I have different life experiences and have experienced so many different things in China. (Matthew)

These Generation 1.5 participants represented their identities as complex, problematic, and fluid flowing rather than a simple production or fixed representation. On the basis of the four types of identity, a new kaleidoscopic identity and culture are formed as a combination of pre-existing ones. Clearly, in the case of young immigrant youth, their definition of Chinese Canadian or Canadian Chinese is unique in terms of their growing understanding of identity. For example, Steven and Kitty, newcomers with five years’ experience of residence in Canada, noted:

There is more in-between rather than either side. It is not really possible to merge them. I tend to balance it, but it is a hard decision for me to choose this or that, because people here are more Canadian than you. And once you go back to China, people are more Chinese than you because of the parental influences, and because of family connections. I’m the first generation of family moving from Xin Jiang, China. As we are the only family members here, I don’t feel that our heritage is deeply rooted in Canadian culture. I think I have stronger Chinese roots than Canadian. (Steven)

There are people more White than us, and there are people more Chinese than us, so we are in-between right now. . . .For me, the most important thing in my life is probably, my

family. I think that I could make friends wherever I go, but I only have one family, right? My family has always been raised in a Chinese culture and the Chinese way, so I like to think that I need to be a part of that. So, Chinese for me comes first and Canadian for me comes second. Because I was born here, I speak that language, I do the education, I'm really impressed by Canada for its education and safety. But, when it comes to culture, I would say Chinese comes first. For sure. (Kitty)

Kaleidoscopic identity and culture refers to the processes and hybridized mixture of identities and cultures in different ways. In the process of its formation, kaleidoscopic identity is diversified with multi-level cultural knowledge as well as cultural clashes. The way most immigrant youth formed their unique identity was by selecting and accepting actively and passively different pieces of Chinese and Canadian culture. The transformation originates from family environment, school education, living environment, and the existence of prejudice in their social setting. Mary, who has Canadian citizenship and came to Canada from the central plains of mainland China at the young age, clarified her thoughts on having a kaleidoscopic culture and identity:

I immigrated to Canada at an early age; however, I was able to experience schooling in China. This allowed me to develop an identity as a Chinese person without completely using my parents as my sole source, as children born here may have done. Now, at 18 years of age, I have lived in Canada for a decade. Having been exposed to both cultures and having experienced education from two different countries, I felt my sense of identity could not be adequately described as bicultural or a mixture. I took pieces from each culture that I resonated with the most and clicked them all together. (Mary)

Wesley left northeastern China with immigrant parents working as engineers at the age of three. As Generation 2, he echoed this new creation regarding his identity:

I feel like my identity in the world is Chinese Canadian, where I represent sides from both cultures. I am creating a new identity where I take pieces from both cultures and express myself in that way. In fact, I believe every Chinese Canadian has a different creation and meaning of identity because they take different pieces from each culture and they try to use the pieces that they feel represent themselves the most. Unlike the conception that when you are involved in both cultures, you simply fuse them together and create your own culture. I believe in both cultures, just different parts of both. This is evident when I am in China. I don't feel like I am Chinese at all, or at least what I feel it

means to be Chinese. This is because I am Chinese Canadian. I am unconsciously making judgements based on the ideology I have taken from both cultures and that makes me different from the kids born and raised in China, and the kids born and raised in Canada. (Wesley)

Michael, a Canadian-born boy, added,

I believe in individualism. Especially in Canada, there's no rules saying that I have to be Canadian or have to be Chinese. I can take whichever traits or beliefs that I value and incorporate them as my own. I think that it's best to make my own identity. I think that there will always be people who are racist in any culture, but if you just don't make friends with them, then they won't bother you. I try and make friends with people who are accepting and friendly. I believe that you have to be outgoing and try to start conversation with a lot of people to determine who you want to keep in your social circle. (Michael)

Salina, G1.5, emphasized the considerable influence of her family and the confusion and loss in interactions with two cultures:

As a Chinese person living in Canada as a Canadian citizen, I have no sense of belonging and have no sense of being a Canadian citizen even though I have received a Canadian education, grown up, and lived here. I still identify with my mother culture in my inner mind because of family reasons. . . . I have spent half of my life here. As I grew up, my values kind of shifted more towards Western influences, but my Chinese culture is still a big part of me. Canadians can tell when I speak Chinese that I didn't grow up in China. And I still try to adjust to the Canadian fashions, which I still find very different from my family [culture].(Salina)

To sum up, Chinese immigrant youth struggle as they attempt to adapt, in their own way, to two very different cultures, trying to seek out their own sense of belonging and identity.

Appreciating this struggle may help locals, parents, and newcomers to support the development of intercultural friendships.

Olsen (2012) pointed out that social cultural theory of identity considers the following:

People are products of their social histories, and—through things like hope, desperation, imagining, and mindfulness—they move themselves from one subjectivity to the next and from one facet of their identity to another. In some limited sense, they can choose to act in certain ways considered by them to be coherent with their own self-understandings. In this way, identity offers an ontological bridge between the opposing shores of structural determinism and free will—between acknowledgement of the many social, historical, and

contextual constraints on any person on the one side, and unfettered individual agency on the other. (p. 1123)

It is common for young Chinese immigrants to face the challenges of kaleidoscopic identity in a new immigrant country. According to the data I have gathered by interviewing different immigrant youth, I have found that they may have new and different creations of their own identity and culture. These participants do share a common frustration, though. For example, Wesley commented on the word “integration” in terms of his understanding of his own culture and identity:

Integration does not need full acceptance. Although you are always trying to [be accepted], you always have a little [only feel slightly accepted]. That’s what integration means. Integration means [that] you change yourself to fit something, right? You are gonna cut a little small [take bits and pieces] and try to make it fit. But there is always [something] that doesn’t fit into picture. I think the best way to deal with the whole situation is not by integrating into the culture. It’s by creating a new culture. When I was writing an essay a few weeks ago, I said something where I said Chinese people shouldn’t be Chinese. And they shouldn’t view themselves as Chinese immigrants. They should view themselves as Chinese Canadians, both as citizens and culturally. You are not Chinese, yet you are not Canadian. You are not integrating yourselves into a Canadian culture. And you are definitely not trying to assimilate yourself into a Canadian culture. . . . It’s never going to happen no matter what. It’s a creation of a new culture. So, you are being Chinese and being Canadian at the same time. You are part of that, right? And based on the two cultures, you choose to make something new. ...But you cannot become a Canadian person fully because you never will be. You are not White, although Canada is an immigrant country anyway. It’s not just White people. Anyway, you are not Canadian. ...Yet you are not Chinese anymore because you have been exposed to Western culture. . . . Am I Canadian? No, it is a place where I live. It’s not who I am. There is no sense of belonging. My understanding of Canada is just Canadian citizenship. (Wesley)

To some extent, Wesley created his innovative understanding of his own identity based on his acculturation. Participants stated that they feel more Chinese in Canada, and more Canadian in China. The way these children live in this society is the situation of their embarrassment, because they feel they do not belong anywhere. Feeling helpless and confused in identity and culture might influence a lack of drive, enthusiasm, and self-confidence regarding potential



intercultural friendships. This appears to be the case for most Chinese Canadians. They are lost and have suffered because they are neither accepted by the immigrant society nor the mainstream society. In terms of the relationship between identity and intercultural friendship building, my participants' identity and social circles are fluid with two conflicting identities.

Bhabha's (1994) third space theory illustrates that differences in identity and culture have a significant impact on intercultural friendship building. Complex dynamics of identities add challenges in forging and developing intercultural friendships. Cui (2013) wrote that

the impact of racism and peer pressures on youths' identification varies among individuals. For some, it pushes them to try to fit in with the dominant group and develop a racialized Canadian identity. . . . For others, it strengthens their ethnic identification as Chinese. For others still, they construct a resistant Chinese identity. (p. 107)

James (2010, as cited by Cui, 2013) shared that

as a member of a minority group, I was forced to conform to the existing cultural norms of the white majority group. It wasn't that they forced me directly; it was all the things they said to me and the teasing that I couldn't stand. I dissociated myself from India and any links I might have had with it. (p. 106)

However, although participants did not talk about racialized identity directly, they showed that they are portrayed and labelled and identify as "Asian" rather than "Canadian," although they are Canadian citizens. Racial group division in senior high schools and the great difficulty to create intercultural friendships have strengthened their resistant Chinese identity and racialized identity. These are invisible barriers dividing them from contact with local peers. Intercultural friendships and greater acceptance can play a critical role in bridging the gap of immigrant youth adapting and integrating in the receiving school community, so that students begin to feel part of a big family and have a sense of belonging.

After interviewing the Chinese immigrant youth, I began to have a new understanding of mosaic culture, which does not simply mean that different ethnic cultures are interconnected. The

idea of multiculturalism is a process of learning from and about each other, refining the essence of different cultures, and smelting the best parts to allow each citizen to constantly grow and connect our multicultural society more closely. This would lead to more strength and diversity within our country.

The two cultures can sometimes be intermixed without conflict. Participants have been able to build on each, but, unavoidably, occasionally there is clash. According to a Chinese proverb, “Since this is so, it’s better to accept it and enjoy it” (既来之则安之) and “to sing different songs on different mountains, is to adapt oneself to an occasion” (到什么山上唱什么歌). People need to be flexible in their environment. We should learn something new and good, and respect the new multicultural environment when considering the cultural clash with regard to the change of circumstances. In conversations with these young immigrants, they showed their desire to change their perspectives and rethink their struggles with their kaleidoscopic identity in a more optimistic way. Generation 2 participants Warren, Shiruan, and Wesley shared their viewpoints as follows:

A new perspective leads to a new identity, and our identity serves as a codex to which we view and interpret our world in a more positive and compassionate eye. The disadvantages of not changing your perspective every once in a while would be detrimental to furthering yourself as not only an individual but your understanding on the human experience that we call life. (Warren)

For multiculturalism, I think it’s very encouraging and reassuring to many if not all students that are immigrants to this country. It is nice to know that most people here are accepting of my culture and differences and that I have the chance to also appreciate theirs. (Shiruan)

I originate from China and immigrated to Canada at a very young age. I can’t remember a lot of the experiences and memories that I had in my home country, so the long move here didn’t seem like a change to me at all. However, I can only imagine the perspective change for my parents and what they must have experienced when they first moved here. Coming from a huge town of 8.5 million Chinese people to a town of 800,000, full of people speaking a completely different language, must have been a cold splash of water

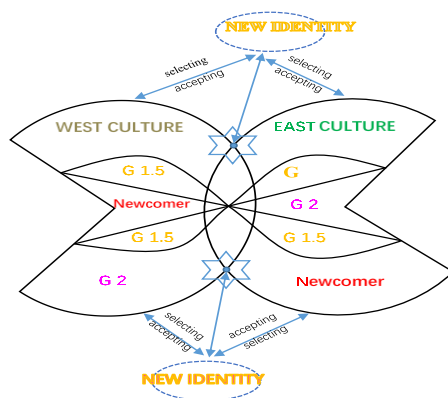
to the face. At first, my parents struggled to maintain the portions of their identities that related to raising children, as Chinese beliefs were much different than that of Canadians.' This in turn led my parents to viewing Canadians as being "irresponsible" and "giving no effort" to their kids. I began to see changes in their identity, however, after a while of being constantly surrounded by this incredulous difference in viewpoints, and after a long period of time, they began to change their perspectives and identities as well. They changed their identities from being purely Chinese living in a foreign country to being Chinese Canadian. It was at this point as well that they began to interpret Canada in a new light. They saw the positive aspects of the freedom that children had here, rather than the strict parenting beliefs of China. They saw positive aspects that they once had not seen before because they were so shaded by all the negative aspects that they had so much focused on before. In the present, they are incredibly happy to have made their decision to move here not only on my part but also for themselves. (Wesley)

The quotations above focus on how the barriers preventing intercultural friendships can be broken down by spending time and gaining experience with members of the other culture so that immigrants start to accept the validity of parts of the local culture instead of being unshakably attached to their native culture. This possibility is greater if the locals are supportive of spending time with the new immigrants, as isolation would otherwise occur and prevent any acceptance in either direction. Although these participants did not directly mention their intercultural friendships, it is evident that they have some contact with the mainstream but may have conflicting values and ideologies when negotiating their identity and interactions with their local peers. Yet, these facets of integration within the Chinese Canadian culture have not received the attention necessary for their early adaptation.

My data show that identity is a highly sensitive topic for immigrants and their children. Students are normally reluctant to answer such questions as, "Who are you? Are you Chinese, Canadian, Chinese Canadian, Canadian Chinese, or a hybrid identity somewhere in between?" One of the parents, Terry, commented that bringing up the topic of identity does nothing but diminish one's self-confidence. While many youths will try to ignore or avoid the question, I believe that they could survive school life better if they could maintain confidence in their

identity. Society may still be harsh and unforgiving when these youths identify as Canadian, and people around them may not necessarily be accepting.

Figure 2, showing kaleidoscopic identity and culture, mainly focuses on Generation 1.5. Although in my study there were several Generation 2 youths who could speak Mandarin, the identity and culture identification faced by Generation 2 Chinese youth are somewhat different because these children “experienced migration only indirectly through their parents’ struggles” (Wilson-Forsberg, 2012, p. 5).



*Figure 2.* Illustration of kaleidoscopic identity and culture.

The conceptualization of kaleidoscopic identity in Figure 2 illustrates the dynamic processes of fluid identity and multifaceted hybrid culture and states of mind, which make up a complex mix of elements within changing various contexts after immigration to a Western country. Generation 1.5 and Generation 2 Chinese immigrant youth are selecting adaptations they have recognized and absorbed in different degrees and levels; meanwhile, sometimes they may accept what they do not want due to cultural clashes such as stereotypes, bias, prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion. For newcomers, the large portion of cultural background is their

home culture. Their “true self” identity usually suffers a great deal as they have only been in a Western society for less than five years.

When Generation 1.5 members have been in a Western culture for more than 10 years, their acceptance of the new culture has become a part of themselves. However, it is still a tough process for Eastern culture youths to integrate with the traditions of their Western classmates. Conflicts may arise due to a lack of Western intercultural knowledge and understanding, but once the Eastern student has adequate knowledge of how to be accepted by peers, a commonality takes place and universal values take precedence, and a new mindset and new identity are formed.

Generation 2 have assimilated the Western life that surrounds them more easily. Although they have accepted the influence of Western culture, they are still looked upon as Chinese immigrants. They feel rejected by both Western peers and their Chinese community as many of them cannot speak Chinese fluently, and they lack sufficient knowledge of their Chinese culture. Comparatively speaking, Generation 1.5 may balance the cultural backgrounds between the West and the East while Generation 2 reflects more influence from Western culture.

### **Chinese Immigrant Parental Influence**

It is important to consider the influence of parents on their children, as their impact is in some way stronger than that of the schools. Whereas accepting teachers’ and peers’ views is not mandatory, parents might sometimes force their children to recognize some concepts and show filial devotion to their parents’ sacrifice and expectations. These factors often drive immigrant youths to follow their parents’ guidance. The following quotes illustrate a parent’s view and a child’s, acknowledging her parents:

It [intercultural friendships] is because of the parents. The child is certainly affected by

the parents as well as by the culture. I think so. There are both the Western and Eastern cultures in her [my daughter]. She is more influenced by me. When she is at school, hanging out with her teachers, classmates or friends, they would not impose something on her, although they do influence her. But when she is at home with me, I would impose Chinese traditional culture on her. If she shows her discontent, I would use my judgement and try to persuade her to accept my ideas since I am an adult. I think we exert greater impact on her than the school does. (Chenjie)

I would say they [my parents] did influence my decision on making friends, although they didn't say anything to me directly, and it was a side effect of it. They were just happy that I could find friends because my dad was a very social person and liked to talk with everyone and makes friends with everyone everywhere we went. But my mom was just the opposite. She kind of grew up not really trusting anyone. So when she found a friend that one person had to be her best friend. She couldn't find a lot of friends to speak to easily. So when it comes to me, I'm kind of stuck in between. I like to talk to a lot of different types of people, but it's hard for me to find an actual friend. (Kitty)

**Influence from the Chinese school system.** Barriers to cross-cultural friendships can relate to the educational background of Chinese immigrant youth. Beliefs and values are not taught; they are absorbed from one's surroundings. Some participants mentioned that when they first arrived in Canada, they had no sense of self-confidence, no sense of security. Rather, they felt timid in classroom communications. Several youth participants described similar feelings about the class environment:

China's traditional school education might be a teacher-centered passive education. In the class, as you know, students are not allowed to speak as a sign of respect for the teachers, and there is no active participation for those in classrooms. Students are supposed to take full notes of what teachers have taught and review the lessons at home. Chinese teachers also do not encourage students to speak in the same way Canadian teachers do. Hence, after we came here, we even dare not speak loudly in front of the class. Western peers are completely different . . . [in Canada]. We have little pronunciation practice and classroom interaction [with local students] mainly because of a fear of language errors and mistakes. As we seldom spoke in the classroom in China, we did not dare to raise our hands to speak in the class here. The classes in Canada have a lot of discussions and sometimes two students begin to debate while having the class. The teachers always motivate students to think in the class rather than sit quietly and copy notes. If the students have difficulty in understanding, they will immediately interrupt and ask for an explanation from their teachers, which in China such a thing never happens. Newcomers generally won't raise their hands in classes. By contrast, many local peers' ability of communication is strong. It is difficult to build close relationship without active

interaction between us. (Panson)

I have one lunch group, but there are no local Canadian peers [in my lunch group]. I'm kind of an introvert. So I'll wait for other people to approach me first. I make friends when we've already spent a lot of time together, for example, when we've already had a lot of classes together. (Ningyu)

When I first arrived here, there was a lack of understanding between me and them. Even when I spoke English, sometimes they didn't understand probably because of my accent. I think that maybe because we're so different and we don't understand each other, it caused them to become annoyed with me. (Salina)

The quotations above show that Chinese students are unaccustomed and afraid to answer a question incorrectly. In Chinese custom, there is the risk of losing face when discussing in the class. Therefore, they are too shy to establish an intercultural connection within a new classroom culture. In this aspect, it is clear that some education beliefs are different between China and Canada. Ziwen is a Chinese immigrant female participant who came to Canada in Grade 9. She highlighted the following:

Chinese traditional education emphasizes modesty, that is, do not show an act of sheer bravado, such as loudly presenting an unfounded point of view in front of the class. . . . At my school, I found that local children expressed what they had on mind directly. I thought that they had a strong self-confidence, and they must be sure about their answers. Later, I found it was not always the case. However, I won't express my opinions until I am sure the answer is right after careful consideration and thought. (Ziwen)

This comment shows that many Chinese immigrant youth participants are timid and cautious, lacking self-confidence, so they dare not express themselves without enough preparation and certainty. However, some Westerners may assume Chinese people are a little bit shy or introverted, and reluctant to share ideas with others. For example, Wen, Grade 12, illustrated this viewpoint:

My take on answering questions in class is one of mixed feelings. I am very self-conscious of my ability to pronounce certain words or fluently communicate my ideas. When a teacher asks a question, while I may want to answer or share my thoughts, I am limited by my own insecurities. Additionally, back in China the teachers are a lot stricter, so it is scary to answer questions. Even after coming here, these mentalities stay with me.

Steven talked about intercultural interactions with teachers in Canada:

Here, some students often chat with the teacher and the relationship between teachers and students is very good. However, Chinese students are very shy, not knowing how to communicate with teachers, and I feel some teachers treat Chinese students, and local students who have good social skills, in a different way. (Steven)

Lisha echoed Steven's point of view and this further explained the impact on his background as a result of his Chinese school background.

In China, the relationship of teachers with students is more based on a hierarchy. The teacher is an authority figure, kind of like a general, and the students simply need to follow instructions, like the soldiers. Students are careful with what they say or do in front of the teachers, so it is usually just a relationship of respect. However, in Canada, the teachers are more friendly and open to what the students want to say or do. The teachers also generally like students who have a similar approach, being very fun [having a sense of humor] and like to communicate. Chinese immigrant youth, being restricted early on, often feel awkward being friendly with the teachers because they struggle to view teachers as having less authority than they had in China.

Ziwen described the differences in school organization that impact intercultural friendship:

I feel there's a lack of communication platform in regard to having similar interests such as music or athletics. It's therefore harder for me to create deep connections with my Western peers. I spent elementary and junior high in China, where we spend all of our classes with the same group of people, in the same classroom, with the same teacher. Over here, I find that because classes are individually selected, there's less camaraderie and less of a sense of a collective goal in the classroom. I find that kids here are more caught up in their individual goals. We talk less about schoolwork, because we're all in different classes. Like I mentioned before, the basis of intercultural friendships is built on similar interests and hobbies. There seem to be cliques of students who like athletics, and we play different sports in China than here. There tends to be a gap in communication between us [Chinese immigrant youth and local friends]. For students who like English literature, for example, and they'll hang out with each other. It's hard for Chinese students like me to fit in to the English literature groups because there's a limited understanding of the literature topics that interest us. Canadian students are very familiar with those works. As a result, we are unlikely to have the same opportunities to speak in the group. Consequently, it's hard for us to initiate or have a normal conversation. (Ziwen)

These quotations above shed light on the influence of homeland school. Immigrant youth



are at the intersection and feel the impact of two cultures. In their minds, they should interact with new classmates and try to fit into the new class, yet they cannot get rid of the daily and hourly exercising of the invisible, formative influence of Chinese traditional school.

Acculturation is “the process of cultural adaptation that occurs when distinct ethnic groups come into direct and sustained contact with one another” (Schiro, 2012, p. 14). Acculturation has many challenges. Wendy, Grade 11, who came to Canada at the age of 10, was interviewed and mentioned that it was the cultural clash that gave her different ways to look at things or think of things.

Our understanding of popularity is different. . . . For us, we’re more concerned with the quality of character. Usually people who are popular here are physically good looking or good at sports. Popular people in Chinese culture are people who are nice and try to help others. We’re less concerned with beauty on the appearance outside.

“Groups that experience acculturation undergo changes in practices, values, and/or ways of life as a result of interaction with groups that are culturally different” (Schiro, 2012, p. 14).

Chinese immigrant youth are aware of some differences between the East and West in education, such as ways of thinking and ways of speaking. Other differences in living habits may enhance the sense of interpersonal distance.

**Family background and socialization of technology-minded immigrants.** The family “serves as the first, arguably the primary, socializing agent of children” (A. James & Fine, 2012, p. 880). The Chinese immigrant parents I interviewed are independent immigrants with professional science, engineering, and technological backgrounds. These technological immigrants have received higher education in China, and most have considerable professional and technical skills. Many immigrants of this kind are hard-working but incapable of communicating, and most of their social circles are confined to the Chinese community. The

following represents two respondents' descriptions of their situation:

Chinese immigrants, after times of selection, are mostly highly qualified. Most of them are technical immigrants with rich specialized knowledge and energy. We choose to pursue further education to reflect our own values and social values in our new society. We choose to go to school or work with a company. It shows that we are trying to integrate into the local culture, and we are different from the old immigrants, with regards to our quality of life. (Lina)

If the immigrants here are not 100% well-educated, I can say most of them are college graduates with standards that are similar to the standards of students living in China. One great characteristic for independent Chinese independent immigrants is that they are hard-working employees. However, due to the Chinese culture, they work a lot and speak very little. Frankly speaking from my own personal experience, the main problem is not their reluctance to communicate with locals, but because of their language barriers that they have a strong lack of confidence. They, therefore, have to stay in the lab or are obsessed with their computer, seldom communicating or expressing feelings with their children. They don't have the intercultural competencies either. (Terry)

Chinese parents' criticism-style education, which is aimed at pointing out mistakes and errors, stressing weakness, and correcting mistakes, is incompatible with Western-style education. Under the long-term influence of Chinese parents, some Chinese children might form a thinking and acting pattern consistent with their parents. Western children often form their own characteristics, including self-confidence and innovative thinking modes. In different educational environments, Chinese and Western children form different characteristics, thus causing communication obstacles between them.

I can safely tell you that a child is always blamed by parents, and the scene holds true for Chinese education. We have been blamed since our childhood. Our parents always said we couldn't do anything well and told us dos and don'ts, so we also treat our children this way. Chinese children need more encouragement, and less blame from their parents so as to develop their self-confidence. (Lao Chen)

Fortunately, many parent participants began to be aware of their criticism-style education belief and are now taking time to self-reflect and consider different perspectives on their parental influence.

The family itself is originally one culture. I think that although culture is neither visible nor concrete, it will exert a great influence on [one's ability to make friends]. Although we can do nothing to change the culture after one generation there is a good possibility that the same culture could be changed at after at least four generations. Although the friends my children have made are exchanging each other's cultures, they are still greatly influenced by their family culture. As they grow up, their distinct cultural identities become much clearer. (Lao Chen)

I think the most important thing is that our first generation of immigrants who have the deep-rooted Chinese characters cannot integrate into the community. In fact, some Chinese adults have great difficulty in immersing themselves into the community as they may feel their communication is not being understood. As a result, they lack confidence and would rather communicate with fellow Chinese . . . while there are so many difficulties in language when communicating with locals. But our children's integration into the local community is quite different. For children, I believe they just want to contact some of the local friends. But they have, so to speak, a sense of inferiority, which may not be correct in expression. They themselves know that they are different. (Terry)

Suzan ascribed much of the barrier to skin colour:

You see, immigrants, like Bosnians, Russians, Persians, and so forth do not have skin colour difference from locals. If their children have no obstacles to the language, then they can easily mix together with local peers. But we Chinese people look different in appearance and colour. Chinese children and local children are clearly aware of the differences between them, and that exerts pressures upon Chinese children. (Suzan)

Suzan's remarks coincide with those of Orelus (2011), who noted that in the West, immigrants who are "postcolonial subjects have been forcibly placed in a 'minoritized' and 'foreigner' box, despite the fact many have become citizens" (p. 107).

As Nieto (2002) argued,

Most Europeans, even relatively new immigrants, can be accommodated into the cultural mainstream almost immediately because of their white skin privilege, their status as more or less "voluntary immigrants," and also often because of their middle-class or professional backgrounds. Although they may face the pain and alienation of all new immigrants, they, and certainly their children and grandchildren, rarely have to contend with even making a choice; it is made for them. (p. 110)

Family environment subconsciously affects the child, especially the background culture, which will remain deep for a long time. Under the influence of parents who have a sense of inferiority, some children will also tend to lack self-confidence or initiative to actively exchange

different ideas with locals. Moreover, family socialization plays an important role in intercultural communication between local students and Chinese immigrant youth. For example, one student participant, Su, described how the influence of her parents on her living environment could be a factor that contributes to her challenges in communicating with local peers.

When I ask what my local friends will do on the weekend, they say that they will do some activities with their parents, like helping his or her dad renovate the basement. When I talked with my Chinese friends, they were concerned more about their parents work or what's going on in the Chinese government news. If our parents' English isn't that good, they'll talk more about things that are happening in China. So I can talk about my point of view regarding Chinese news. When I chat with local kids, I don't know as much about the news that happens in Canada, so it's harder for me to communicate with them. Even if I spend much time to surf the Internet to obtain the news, it is still limited. I do not have self-confidence to discuss it freely because I am afraid that what I am talking about, cannot form my viewpoint without enough information. Therefore, I do not think I should become Westernized. (Su)

According to *Di Zi Gui* ("Students' Rules"), in Chinese culture there are precepts, values, and norms, such as, "When your parents need to instruct you, respectfully do as you are told (父母呼应勿缓, 父母命行勿懒, 父母教须敬听, 父母责须顺承)" (Y. X. Li, n.d., line 7). Chinese immigrant youth are "socialized to revere their parents" (A. James & Fine, 2012, p. 881). According to A. James and Fine (2012), "Filial piety is one of the great virtues of Confucian thought" (p. 881). This worldview "places the well-being of the family above the needs and wants of the individual, which in Western societies are generally given greater weight" (A. James & Fine, 2012, p. 881).

For example, most Chinese families may attach excessive importance to education. As Zhao (2013) noted, "Pursuing an excellent education is the most reliable way to achieve a successful life" (p. 88). One father participant, Huang, echoed his position:

Oriental and Western parents may have significant differences between their beliefs. Most Chinese parents often stop their children from playing games too much. As far as I am concerned, parental education belief is very important. I would allow a child to play

games for an hour. Yet, I would not want them to watch too much TV, as I feel the continual indoctrination of TV affects their cognitive skills and learning. The White parents might be very open-minded. Most of them often allow their children to play games and watch TV freely, and they can also join in a lot of activities as long as they can maintain satisfactory grades. The Western family will not force children to attend various cram schools. They may attach much importance to playing sports and participating in social activities. Most Chinese families put more emphasis on learning.

The quotation above represents Chinese parents' reflection on the extra pressures that they put on their children. As Gopnik (2016) and Fass (2016) explained, it could be a waste of time for parents to serve as "snowblowers" for their children: helping them avoid all possible barriers to their academic success by arranging so many schedules that it completely controls their lives. Gopnik (2016) also pointed out that the underlying premise of parenting should be more about cultivating a safe, secure, varied, or rich environment (gardening) as opposed to a more tightly controlled and planned one in hopes of achieving a specific outcome (carpentry). This viewpoint recognizes the missed opportunities for social development that result from such a tightly packed schedule, and how poorly rounded and one-dimensional such a child may become.

Undoubtedly, for youth, learning is only one aspect of their intercultural life, and appearance and dress might also affect the children's circle of friends. Salina talked about how her parents' beliefs led to neglect of appearance or clothing for their children.

My parents say that learning is very important, and I should not care too much about clothing. They do not want me to dress up. My mother favours my dressing up a little, but she still believes that learning is the first and most important [thing], and then dressing up is the icing on the cake. I do not totally disregard my appearance or anything, however, learning is still my highest priority. My White friends' parents like to go shopping with their children. They are happy if their children look smart and feel happy. [Most] Western people love to be liked by others and they care much about others' opinions of them. If other people have a favourable opinion about them, they will also feel very happy, so they attach great importance to their dress. . . . This is what I mean about appearance. Some local people will not make friends with you if, you don't look good. Here, especially in this school, Chinese children are great in number, many of whom are

dressed beautifully. Those who dress up beautifully tend to stay and play together, whether they are Asian children, White children or Black children. For example, I usually have a few friends who love dressing up who like to stay together to discuss cosmetics, false eyelashes, clothes, how to lose weight and the like. (Salina)

As I discussed in this section, immigrant family socialization can be a dynamic bidirectional influence in intercultural connections. It is noteworthy that values from ethnic groups can be shared and adopted by other ethnic groups for mutual benefit (Zhao, 2013). However, it seems that creating proper parental influence means making the best use of the advantages and opportunities for children and bypass the disadvantages.

**Survival pressures in the workplace.** Chinese parents having experienced sufferings in the past, as first-generation immigrants, spending a large amount of their time on their livelihoods, highlighting perseverance and excellence. Social demands for entertainment or spirituality generally come last. Daily communication with children is rare, with little or no extra time or energy to support children in making local friends. Parents might be bound to ignore their children's social needs. Some parent participants shared their survival pressures to make a living.

Because of the need to make a living or being busy with their own job or business, some Chinese parents may not have so much time to care for the children. Indeed, children should take part in some of the social training, and participate more in different activities. I think the school really should focus more on things in this regard. (Huang)

Making intercultural friends is a higher level of social needs. But currently we, as parents, have neither the time nor the energy to support our children's social needs. Our children only get their needs of food and clothes satisfied and they have no social needs. Chinese parents are busy earning a living. Thus, we have no time and energy or the necessary competence to assist our children in making intercultural friends. And to do that, our children have to learn more about the new culture. However, it is a custom for Chinese to have little time for social entertainment. (Zhijun)

I think our first immigrant generation suffered survival pressures from various aspects. I have to devote myself to work and study so that I have little time for my communication with my son. . . . I do not have a good understanding of my son's situation in the school. I

can learn about my child's school performance from his marks, but it is not easy for me to learn how my child communicates with peers and teachers, how he deals with challenges at school. (Lina)

During my interview, another mother participant, Suzan, echoed her vulnerability and helplessness regarding unbalanced life between social time and learning schedule.

Parents often feel incapable and powerless about teaching their children to interact with local children. Many immigrant parents can do nothing without any advantage but attach great importance to education. They believe they make a living on abilities and professional skills instead of social assistances. The hard-working Chinese children have paid a great price because they sacrifice the time to play and the development of social skills. Many Chinese children care only about their studies while the local children care about both schoolwork and play. Some local peers fail to compete with the Chinese children and even treat the latter with jealousy. (Suzan).

Survival pressures in a new country to make a living have caused many Chinese immigrant parent participants to ignore their children's need for intercultural friendships and to acquire the ability and the consciousness of the ego development to integrate into a new culture. Suzan described:

Something that my son especially struggles with is that we can never understand how much pressure he is under. In junior high school many times when we, he gets emotional, and cries, he said, "You cannot understand, I do not know who to communicate with," for some time he is particularly stressed. But now he said that he is part of the Chinese people, we have a long history of China, he began to have a little pride, and now he has a little resolution, that is, he does not need to be like them [local White people], that pride in their identity is the most important. (Suzan)

In terms of intercultural friendships, many parent participants have reached an agreement on the pressure that Chinese immigrant youth experience, and also on ethnic cultural risks.

We hope that the Chinese children and local children can interact with each other without grudges or unpleasantness and pressures. That is, we hope that they can live together happily. But the most important thing is which side the pressure is on. It is on our side, and how much pressure do local children have? I think our focus is on how to release our pressures and let the children live more happily here, right? Our focus should be on how to guide, cultivate and educate our own children so that they have their own self-confidence and self-reliance. Our children should exhibit their own charm and be likeable in order that all people can accept them. The most important thing is the children's own

happiness. (Suzan)

Additionally, in the interviews, young people who totally accepted Western culture mentioned that they had only two options: conform to others' stereotypes, or assimilate to fit in with their White peers. But these immigrant youth participants admit that they are taking risks in losing their Chinese cultural identity when they behave more like locals.

We are always in a gray area in that the locals do not know what to do with us and they identify us through skin colour. In fact, our Chinese cultural elements are our identity. Although Canada is a multicultural society, local children won't accept us unless we are more similar to the locals. And the establishment of friendship with locals mainly relies on our participation in their activities, but in daily life we lack the communication with locals necessary to resonate. (Weike)

What should be noted here is the mixture of intercultural friendship barriers and parental influence within the Chinese immigrant family. It would be much easier for immigrant parents to help their children integrate into society if they were not burdened with the financial pressures and lack of intercultural knowledge and experience that often comes with immigration.

This section has mainly focused on the impact of Chinese educational beliefs and socialization, and on some Chinese parents' limited guidance on social skills resulting from their technological background and pressures from making a living. The outcome is a series of invisible limitations in social circles and intercultural competences; "a combination of knowledge and skills that enables individuals to react to other cultures with understanding, or at least tolerance, instead of incomprehension, irritation, inappropriate behavior, or violence" (Allemann-Ghionda, 2012, p. 1215). Due to the influence of family culture, Chinese immigrant youth encounter challenges in school settings.

### **Challenges in School Settings**

Social life in a senior high school setting can be the watershed of immigrant youths'



challenges in that adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 are making changes to adapt to new cultural surroundings, balancing contradictory expectations from their parents, and facing additional challenges in ideologies, social manners, cultural differences, beliefs, and values. As Wilson-Forsberg (2012) noted, the senior high school stage is a period of transition to meet evolving challenges (p. 5). The diversity of experience and ideologies that school communities have to offer should not be ignored; youths' values, worldviews, and ways of thinking might shift back and forth between Eastern and Western, to adjust or maintain the best balance in social skills, spiritual and psychological changes, and well-being and development.

Chinese immigrant family culture, which impacts children's intercultural friendship building and developing, has both internal causes (ideologies, social manners) and outer environment issues (social circles and language issues). This section explores the various challenges in schools, broken into five parts: (a) diverse ideologies, (b) dissimilar social circles, (c) comfort zones, (d) different interests, and (e) intangible psychological distance with local peers.

**Diverse ideologies.** Ideologies can be a dynamic and complex issue. Intercultural ideologies are inextricably interwoven with intercultural friendships. Friendship is closely related with ideological values, beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours. The contrast between Western and Chinese friendship is that Chinese ideology "carries obligations that it does not to a Westerner, [such as] . . . high levels of reciprocity and expectations of assistance" (Smart, 1999, p. 125). Conversely, the "Euro-American cultural definition focuses more on the expressive dimension, leading to instability in friendships that revolve around mutual (instrumental) gains more than close intimate expressive relations" (Smart, 1999, pp. 124–125).

In my investigation, I found that for Chinese immigrant parents and immigrant youth, the

barriers to intercultural friendships partly originate from the difference of their ideologies. In this context, pragmatism, which W. James, Bowers, and Skrupskelis (1975) discussed in the book *The Meaning of the Truth*, is the value structure which leads Chinese parents to pass along knowledge to their children based on its potential usefulness to them in the future. This is different from idealism in that the way people seek different life goals and fulfilment is seen as their family's responsibility. In some cases, this means that the family will provide financial support for their children's academic aspirations. Some locals, however, may highlight individual freedom and independence over pragmatic beliefs or values.

There are three developing stages in intercultural friendship-building regarding ideologies. First, in primary school, the immigrant child wants to conform to the local group; that is, do what the other children are doing. In this stage, there are not too many significant ideological differences. At the middle school stage, especially senior high school, the differences in ideologies and values between Chinese immigrant youth and Canadian peers can produce cognitive differences. Several participants noted their understanding of differences in ideologies at the high school level. Lisha talked about how ways of thinking affect views on individualism and collectivism differently.

Ideology is a set of shared beliefs within a group, such as a nation or social class. This body of beliefs influence the way individuals think, act, and view the world. Western culture promotes freedom of expression. When facing conflict, people are generally encouraged to speak clearly regarding their thoughts and stance. In Asian cultures, however, harmony with the masses is praised. As a result, people are more reserved regarding their actual thoughts in face of conflict or disagreements.

This quotation above illustrates “the bonding and harmonious side of secular Confucian values” (Zhao, 2013, p. 44). Zhao (2013) had a further explanation that “Confucianism advocates that people treat one another nicely, be trustful, respectable, and tolerant, and provide help to

friends” (p. 44). Yuqian, an 18-year-old Generation 1.5, highlighted that different life goals might be another factor to differentiate two groups’ social circles.

I still think the biggest barrier [to intercultural friendships] would be our ideological differences. Ideology can be explained as a system of ideas and ideals, such as my beliefs, attitudes, or values. It could be the ultimate goal of what I want to achieve. When I was in school, I believed in traditional Eastern culture values in which a child’s education is the responsibility of the whole family, and most Asians are very focused on studying and grades. . . . Chinese immigrant parents all want their kids to have a better life than their parents—which was the goal of them immigrating here; whereas most of my White peers believed that they are responsible for their own academic achievement. This difference results in situations where my Chinese peers would all receive financial support on a regular basis from their family, whereas most of my White peers need to get a part time job in order to have some income outside of their student loan disbursement.

Additionally, Michael emphasized how a difference in values generates a blockade in terms of intercultural skill and competition in the future workplace.

An example I like to use is humility in a work environment. Chinese culture values humility and in general, Chinese workers don’t like to boast about their skills and accomplishments. Humility is a virtue in China. In contrast, some westerners consider it as timidity. . . . Western culture emphasizes confidence in the workplace. For example, a lot of workers will say they’re good at doing a certain task, but may never have actually performed it before—but they know that it’s simple enough that they can just learn on the job. A Chinese worker who’s done this work before may be humble and say that he or she has had some limited experience in the area. This creates a problem in terms of skill and competition in the workplace. That job will be awarded to whoever seems like they know the most, even though the two workers’ level of skill differ a lot. The point is, immigrants may have to adopt certain ways of thinking, or at least have an understanding of it to be competitive. This doesn’t mean that they need to forfeit their own culture in return, but the Chinese immigrant in this example can’t reasonably expect everyone else in the workplace to be as humble as he or she is.

Michael recognized that some aspects of Chinese culture are not so applicable in Canadian society.

Another barrier of intercultural friendships between Chinese immigrant youth and local peers is the “Asian fail” ideology (Chiang, 2013; Smith, 2016). In Asian parents’ mind, doing well in school that means getting all A’s, entering a famous university after graduation, and

engaging as a doctor, lawyer, pharmacist, or engineer of some kind. For Asian students, the sense of failure if they do not achieve the best results has seemed inappropriate to some fellow citizens. Parental attitudes on academic scores and disregard of social skills creates the idea of Asian fail in schools and deepens the difficulties of intercultural understanding. Lily, Yahe, and Kitty mentioned how “Asian fails” may have a negative impact on intercultural connection.

It’s really hard [to make intercultural friendship], because in my school, there is “Asian fails.” Have you heard “Asian fails?” If you ask around, Asian fail would be below 80, even 90, so when we call fail, like in regular schools, is below 50 percent, that’s why there is the new term called “Asian fails.” (Lily)

[Because of “Asian fails”], the main topic of conversation for Chinese youth is to talk about our tests, marks, and how well we did. This kind of stuff annoys local students because they don’t like to discuss these kinds of things. (Yahe)

I think that it’s your parents who really decide what kind of culture you would want to be in. It has to do with morals because a lot of Chinese people tend to have a worldview where you need to get good marks, be good in school, and things like sports or volunteering are important but do not come first. It’s always the marks first. So when you try to find friends who are of the same level as you, so to speak, you would have to try to find friends that have similar marks to you or can help you in your homework. If you find someone who gets really low grades or slack off their work or procrastinate, then usually your parents prevent you from having this type of friends because of worries about bad influence. (Kitty)

Although Chinese immigrant children are conditioned to value good grades, their dedication to school is stereotyped, criticized, and laughed at by some local youths as nerdy and boring. As Cui (2013) illustrated,

in trying to be accepted by the White group, Chinese youth may become conscious of the fact that, no matter how hard they tried, they would never become Canadian like their White peers, but rather a racialized Canadian. Such identity construction may be associated with distress that manifests through retaliating against one’s ethnic heritage or simply ignoring it. It is very likely that one will end up with disappointment as they realize they still will be treated by their White peers as a racialized Canadian. (pp. 106–107)

Similarly, the interviewed immigrant youth also showed their willingness to accept or tolerate the difference. They think the key problem is whether their local White peers are willing

to accept the differences of “strangers” or foreigners or Asians. Mary, who has been in Canada for 11 years, added:

What I felt as a false perception towards immigrant youth is that they feel the discomfort of cultural differences when making intercultural friendships. I feel the barriers are not so much the cultures themselves especially if the Chinese children have stayed in Canada for an extended period of time. Actually, they [Chinese immigrant youth] might not be accepted or tolerated due to the difference. Furthermore, it is hard to build equal friendship without acceptance. (Mary)

Zhao (2013) further proposed that some top-performing Chinese students are “ridiculed for their excellent performance [and that] . . . some people misperceive outstanding students as a threat” (p. 104) to them.

I think grades are very important and it is very important for one to go to university. Perhaps I pay too much attention to my own grades. I sometimes feel unhappy about 92 points on a test; while local students will feel great about the same score. One of my classmates says I focus too much on class. He also thinks I am “street smart.” [sarcastic] I remembered saying to a girl that I need to be better than her on the test. She just said I had racial discrimination against her, which I did not understand at all. (Jennifer)

Chinese youth value education for both historical reasons, relating to their specific cultural background, and the pressures to survive in a new land. Chinese immigrant parents hold the core value that “childhood is the best time to learn more and to prepare children for their future, . . . deliver top-notch academic performance, and strictly avoid bad influences such as drugs and violence” (Zhao, 2013, p. 100). Another reason probably comes from a semi-colonial history. Maria, a mother participant, said:

In modern history, China has experienced the invasion of Western developed countries and has been defeated by the Eight-Power Allied forces, so I feel that as a Chinese, I have been bullied before. Thus, I want to be strong and I become more sensitive. I can’t stay calm and have a peaceful mind in face of a problem. I always want to perform well and even better. (Maria)

Traditional Chinese parents focus more on studies and care less about interpersonal skills and how to deal with relationships, which causes their children to be less outgoing and less likely

to actively interact or talk with others. However, these different values affect the establishment of intercultural relations, without which it is difficult to get on well with people from diverse backgrounds. A good relationship coupled with an open mind is important.

For example, Zhang, a father participant, noted:

In this society, you and the local people may have a lot of cultural conflicts, so it is important for you to learn more about local culture and carefully deal with everything in order to get along well with the locals. For example, the order of the expression of courtesy in English and in our language are not the same. When we communicate with colleagues or bosses, these differences will always cause misunderstanding and embarrassment. For example, when I send an e-mail with words like “Please send me” [which is Chinese English], my boss who is a White may feel very upset, then I understand that I should write, “Could you please send me” [because they neglect the different expressions of English and Chinese]. (Zhang)

The quotation above shows the difference in usage of telling and asking in English and Chinese because of hierarchical work relationship between employees and local bosses.

Dissimilar ideologies are reflected through different lifestyles. Some local children do not approve of the immigrants’ appearance, clothing, diet, ideas, or behaviour, and so forth. Thus, some of the locals might feel uncomfortable with their immigrant peers. Differences exist in the meaning and content of social interactions and expectations of friendship between Eastern and Western cultural understanding. Hao and Eva discussed their experiences:

Friends help you to send your resume into a company, and this is a very important part of your social network. For Chinese friends, it is possible to help you. . . . Westerners here are very expressive in their personality and generally very open about their opinions. This was quite the culture shock when I first arrived, but I think that I’m more used to it now. Some of them tend to be more aggressive in their opinion, always thinking that their opinion is the right one. (Hao)

I find that the young Westerners are particularly polite to friends, . . . jokes or humor are kind of different. . . . For example, Chinese students might say to their friends, “I’m going to die for my poor exam results.” It is a bit extreme, and we don’t really mean that. (Eva)

One of the barriers of ideological difference is the difference in methods of thinking. For

Chinese immigrant youth, utilitarian ways of thinking reduce spontaneity and creativity, which to some extent hinders the process of acculturation. In contrast, locals think more idealistically, which is not realistic or pragmatic. This difference causes a variation in life attitudes and the parents' perceptions of their children's future. One possible solution is for the school board and teachers to raise awareness on ideological differences, which I discuss further in Chapter 6.

Utilitarian thinking originates from immigrants' survival pressures and cultural influence.

Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese immigrant youth to balance Western and Eastern thinking.

Likewise, there are also different values and social relationships that vary between the cultures of the East and the West. The influence of Chinese immigrant parents' values on their children's style includes the expectations of study, living habits, life principles, Chinese traditional etiquette, and so forth. Eastern style may have more emphasis on pragmatism:

For the most part, Chinese people are more comfortable with the recognition that friends may receive instrumental utility as well as emotional satisfaction from their relationship, as long as the principles of reciprocity and non-subordination of the relationship to the utilities are maintained. (Smart, 1999, p. 132)

Many participants in my study believe that intercultural friendships need a similar ideology regarding friendship. Clearly, they think they do not have the same perception on subconscious ideologies with local peers. However, all participants realized the significance of intercultural friendships. For instance, one participant reflected:

Studying isn't everything. You might be a good student now. But that doesn't matter much when you enter society later on in life. Social conventions like communication are also very important, because when you are trying to find a job, the fact that you obtained high marks in math means nothing if you don't have good interpersonal communication and social skills. You will not be able to go far in life. I feel like many Whites are usually stronger in communication. (Wendy)

Accordingly, the process of intercultural friendship building is not a straight line but rather a bumpy path. Tracy, who was one of the participants, associated it with the challenges of

intercultural friendships on campus and commented that it is well known that different ethnic groups become clichés or differentiate themselves from the locals. She metaphorically described the reason why the host White peers are unable to accept the difference:

When Copernicus introduced his model of the earth revolving around the sun and everyone thought, whoa, that's weird, because it's something we haven't experienced before, it's something that we don't believe in because it's something that's odd, it's something that's not something you would see every day, something that you don't understand, you think that it's immediately wrong, so you kind of distance yourself it. (Tracy)

This section described the intercultural challenges Chinese immigrant youth face in values, lifestyle, language expression, and expectations on friendships because they hold ideologies that conflict with their local peers. Ideological resistance from locals can be a core barrier to establishing intercultural friendships. Due to the influences of pragmatic ideas from their parents, immigrant youth often reluctantly opt for more practical decisions and activities. However, the cyclic processes of diverse ideologies gradually lead Chinese immigrant youth to recognize the importance of intercultural friendships in their life, which helps propel integration in a multicultural society. Chinese immigrant youth struggling with this dilemma of ideologies need to attempt to find a balance point between the family and school so as to eliminate the invisible obstacles to connections with local friends. Acceptance of one another's differences is the strength that we should be striving for.

**Dissimilar social circles.** In senior high schools, there is a social ladder with different social circles. Many high school students have a fixed circle of friends. Having a small circle of friends will also restrict the establishment of interracial friendship. "It is hard to break into a fixed social circle at school. Sometimes bullying can take place. I am pleased I am not in that circle of people" (Nancy). It is much more difficult for newcomers to join in a circle, especially



with cultural or language barriers. It is evident that there is always division between ethnic groups, most noticeably during lunch break and recess, as well as after school club activities. The discussion below creates a clear picture of the social ladder in the school community:

A social ladder represents the social structure in a high school. Like, some students are very popular, their status is always in a high position; some students are loners; some students just group together with others that have a similar background. (Lily)

The top of the ladder symbolizes those who are popular and considered as, cool. They usually exhibit superior social skills and have a large group of friends. Their talent lies within what society views as important. The middle of the ladder includes two types of youth. Those who are close to the popular youth, and those who are less involved with the popular youth. The bottom of the ladder lays a group that is considered as lame and un-desirable by the rest of the high school population. The newcomers, like the immigrants, don't belong to any part of this society ladder because little is known about them by the rest of the population. They quickly lose their social standing because of their lack of foundation there and fall into the category of outcasts. (Lisha)

Some Chinese immigrant youths are very shy, and they do not know how to make friends. At first, if there is a Chinese student, of course, you will be introduced to the Chinese students' circle, so your friends are the Chinese peers. Local students have their own friends circle. Without referrals, they dislike making friends with us Chinese students. (Wesley)

These quotations disclose the huge challenges the students at the bottom of the social ladder have to face in a school community. The popularity ladder benefits those who fit in with the norms and qualities of mainstream culture through the eyes of the locals. However, immigrant youth were raised and exposed to different surroundings. This makes it difficult for them to be accepted by their local counterparts in the high school. The blocking force of closed social circles prevents intercultural mingling among different ethnic groups, and this means that immigrant youth could lack the networking necessary to make intercultural friendships.

There are a lot of different cliques in the school, and they're very rigid. If I want to be in the friend circle of the locals, there may be completely different ways to get along with them, and I think the circle has been closed, so it is difficult to cross over into it without a social network to help get in. It's hard to join a circle when you're new here, because they're already good friends. (Julia)

There is a lot of [Chinese] kids coming here. They form all grouping. They play video games together. They play computer games, online games together. They always hang out. They go to distraction center, play badminton, or anything like that. And it gets to the point where I was never a part of that. But I can get into the group all because of my Chinese identity. But I prefer not to. (Wesley)

Due to the barriers to joining a different friend circle, some Chinese newcomers are inclined to get together to spend time entertaining themselves with computer games as an escape from reality. However, this can desensitize students and limit their ability to differentiate fantasy from facts and reality. Panson is a newcomer, and he is cautious to face an unfamiliar environment. He noted:

In China, everyone wants to be friends with the kids at the top of the class, but here, [top students] they're known as nerds. Most Chinese students are nerdier than local students, because we're more obsessed with school and grades. . . . Good school reports are not valued as highly as social skills, for the school, young learners all want to be friends with the popular students. Chinese students are generally more reserved in class, and don't like to ask questions in class. We'll try to figure it out after class if there's something that we don't understand. We do not know their [local students'] activities, and maybe this is because of a lack of understanding. Personally, I don't find that there's much of an opportunity for communicating with them. I often stay at home to study or play video games and computer games together with Chinese peers. . . . A lot of locals here may like to go out and party, and this may restrict ourselves to prevent us from making intercultural friendships.

Zihao added,

Chinese youth are generally smaller in stature than Canadians. It's intimidating because they're physically bigger than us, so I'll try to find someone who seems to be friendlier when finding a desk mate. After class, we don't really have much interaction with them because we each have our own social circles.

Standards of popularity vary widely between China and Canada, as Chinese students generally want to be close to those who achieve highly, and Canadians prefer to associate with people who are more socially capable. These quotations also illustrate the immigrant youths' helplessness and inability to get into local social circles, despite their curiosity in the new culture and interest in learning more and making intercultural friends.

Another attribute concerning intercultural friendships is the length of residence in Canada; less time may contribute to the limitations of access to different social circles. As alluded to above, certain tensions related to hierarchical relations in the school social ladder are creating division and misunderstanding, which should be unacceptable in our Canadian multicultural school communities. It is my hope that more respect and empathy are taught to students to break down this culture clash.

**Comfort zones.** Comfort zone refers to a feeling of being accepted by opting for shared interests. Sometimes people may refuse to put themselves in others' shoes in order to reject rational judgments, preferring paralysis, denial, and evasion, just to make the body feel more relaxed. If immigrant youth and local peers want to make intercultural friendships, they have to widen their comfort zones or step out of their comfort zone and face the challenges.

According to Lisha, the social circles at school are already split based on varied interests, beliefs, and focuses (i.e. jocks, preps, geeks, etc). After experiencing two years of high school life, I feel the category "Asian" eventually fell upon me. It is rather a natural process of segregation in the school environment. I made friends who felt the same need as I did to obtain good grades, but who also liked to play the same sport such as badminton or watch the same movies. That lead me to make a lot more friends who are also categorized as Asian. However, similar to what separates jocks and geeks per se, it is the differences in interests, beliefs and values between Chinese children and other children that reduces their contact. I have noticed that when either parties became more involved and try to understand the interests that are common to each other, Western social media and drama being biggest topics, they are able to forge a friendship naturally and with more ease. An increase of intercultural friendships, requires conscious efforts of stepping outside of one's comfort zone and actively pursuing a variety of friends allowing oneself to be open to exploring different interests. (Lisha)

From this, one understands that for human beings, intellectually, there is also a fear of change. Many people are reluctant to change not because they are unaware of the barriers, but rather because they are unwilling to give up personal habits. Everyone has his or her own level of comfort. When we as individuals see someone refusing to change, we should try to change our

own perspectives; people often portray others based on their own criteria and entirely different life experiences. We accommodate our own instinctual desire to reject another's comfort zone, which allows us to understand that what we perceive as being the wrong way may just be a person's way of keeping what he or she considers a precious and important part of the self.

Chinese people tend to be more introverted and humble, which often puts us at a disadvantage. It's harder for us to make friends because of this—we wait for other people to approach us first. In contrast, kids who grew up here tend to be more outgoing and will seek out conversation. I think maybe some westerners don't like to accept different cultures because we're from a developing country. I think that they segregate themselves from minorities because of this. (Ningyu)

During my interviews, some parents mentioned the possible reason that they are being discriminated against is China's inferiority to Western developed countries. In contrast, the other respondents believed that this was not the case. They agreed with the idea Fong (2011) has emphasized:

China was wealthier than other countries in the world, that developed countries had their own share of problems, such as poverty, loneliness, violence, crime, racism, family instability, and over-commodification, that Chinese life had many advantages missing in developed countries such as stronger ties of kinship and friendship and the excitement and opportunities that came with rapid social change. (p. 54)

Despite the advantages present in Chinese society, many Canadians still have a distorted image of China which may originate from the influx of Chinese immigrants during the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The immigrants are unable to change these negative preconceptions, and the marginalization that results can often lead them to retreat into themselves. Fear often makes people refuse to change as a result of instinct; therefore, they are more willing to stay in their comfort zone. Kitty and Lily described the limits of their comfort zone. Lily said, "We feel more comfortable with people who have the similar backgrounds and similar parenting to us. They understand how we feel. Yeah, and sometimes we find our interests

[are] similar, and we feel the same way.”

It might just be . . . because I have been raised knowing so many Chinese people all my life that when I see someone who's not Asian, like someone who has a White complexion. I can't really take them seriously. I think this is all the people I have met so far who are White, are the type of people who seem to mess around a lot. They are the type of people who make jokes, and hang out in groups. As it's really cliché for me, I kind of like to stay away from that. I like to make friends who I can be comfortable around. I just haven't yet met someone who I'm comfortable around that's White.  
(Kitty)

Intangible psychological distance from local peers could be an obstacle that narrows immigrants' comfort zone. To clarify, this psychological distance is a gulf that arises between the two cultures, where some aspects of each are included and other aspects must be left out due to unavoidable conflicts. Children caught between both cultures are easily confused, and they can easily lose themselves when facing this clash between cultures. Naturally, the East and the West sides would have different ideologies, character development, and behavioural mannerisms, which would inevitably create conflicts, force immigrants to make difficult choices, and then establish their identity in the space between cultures. Huge differences in family background in conjunction with the gap between cultures leads directly to an increased psychological distance. These psychological barriers are largely focused on the strangeness and reactions of timidity that occur when a cultural gap arises. Chinese immigrant youth feel cultural alterations acutely; specifically, how their backgrounds are different from their local peers. Cason and Laochen, son and father respectively, talked about their feelings regarding this topic.

When I first got here, a feeling of horror went through my mind. Although my terror didn't manifest itself, it always weighed on me whenever I did anything. The main point concerning the fear and depression is that the Western culture and political system was all new to me and from a world with different ideologies. No matter how much I tried to improve my English and my pronunciation, it's still very hard to fit in because we had different topics of interest when chatting. (Cason)

It is not complete fear, but feelings of distance make them not to want to talk to them [local peers]. Perhaps people may say that they fear mistakes or saying something wrong. Even worse, there is also emotional distance which many people are unable to get over. This is weakness of human character. So, I talked to my son about this, that is, let him communicate and contact more with native-speakers. But he never listens to me. (Laochen)

Parents are mostly willing to support their children in challenging themselves to overcome this emotional distance; while Chinese immigrant youth find it more difficult to cross the border to fit in due to cultural shock, their fear of unknown ideologies, and lack of self confidence in language.

There are differences in comfort zones between Eastern and Western humour or jokes. Often Western humour requires previous knowledge to understand. Some immigrant students, especially newcomers, find it difficult and confusing to laugh at jokes that their host peers make because they do not have the background necessary to understand them. Interpersonal distance is different for Chinese youth and their Western counterparts. Accepting something new requires more patience. One must step out of one's comfort zone to learn new perspectives.

Sometimes, for example, immigrant students express their views, which are probably not very clear, and often not understood. Sometimes locals may ignore what we say, and then continue their discussion. The reason may not be necessarily that our English is not good enough, but that there are some differences in our views. They may need some time to understand our ideas or need more explanation, but some people like to listen to familiar things rather than new things. (Ziwen)

A lot of later immigrant students try to engage in conversation in class whenever there's a discussion, but I see that a lot of times, our opinion gets ignored by the class or simply passed over. I think that it might be because of an ideological barrier, but it's very frustrating not to have my opinion taken seriously. I think that a lot of Canadian students are reserved in their beliefs, and don't like to take in new perspectives. Just because in the real world, I think having experienced many different things rather than having a limited perspective can lead one to behave more tolerantly and accept more diversity. If you go on to university and you study a certain subject, you know you can talk to other people about that subject and that many people won't understand, maybe because they didn't study. But if you have real life experiences with other people, you can relate to each other. And that's how, you know, you can build intercultural relationships. (Lianna)

The quotations above illustrate how some locals might be conservative to some extent and reluctant to accept other cultures and new ideas because they value things differently. They also talk about how, when interacting with one another, locals often directly ignore questions from Chinese students which they cannot understand, without considering the Chinese students' feelings, which results in a negative influence.

Similarly, behaviours and even eating habits are so different that newcomers may feel embarrassed, and it seems that many local children lack awareness and understanding of the different peoples of the world. Local children use the most intuitive way to judge similarity; that is, sameness—same eating habits, same likes and dislikes, same set of values, same language—to distinguish between distant friends and close friends. This idea of common recognition affects the establishment of cross-cultural friendships. They often make use of their own criteria or experience to judge others from different countries with different cultures. Lily said, “Language barriers are not the main issue; it’s also the way we think, our personality, the clothes we wear, and our basic appearance.” Others mirrored her statement:

I get the feeling that local students think that we’re only good at schoolwork. . . . Some local students don’t expect high scores too much of themselves, and they do not understand why their Chinese peers feel so unhappy with a score like have 91 or 92 percent. They think that we’re useless at other things they’re interested in. They think it’s weird that we bring rice and stir fry for lunch, which forced me to start buying lunch to fit in. (Ningyu)

And local students will think we are nerds. In their eyes, we cannot do anything except study. Most of us can’t play major sports, like hockey. So through their eyes, it’s useless making friends with us. . . . Local students do not accept our eating habits. For example, many of us like to bring rice and vegetables, while local students prefer bringing Western meals. But they will regard Chinese students as very strange. For a long time, I just took the same meals as my local classmates. I can only establish a cross-cultural friendship by adapting to their way of living and learning through imitation of their sports and diets. (Matthew)

On the surface, we are so different from local students in many ways, including clothing,

behaviours and many others. In fact, the reason is that we haven't learned to accept alien cultures or values, or to understand the behaviours of local students from a positive point of view. The media here really emphasizes beauty and body image. A lot of girls over here will spend a lot of effort on makeup and beauty. In Chinese culture, girls are taught to be more concerned with inner beauty, so we don't spend as much effort on trying to look nice. If we act the same way or behave the same way, maybe we could get along. (Salina)

To summarize, comfort zone is a secure space for oneself, which is limited in three ways: fixed environment or social circles, fixed ways of thinking, and fixed disposition relative to one's values, beliefs, and interests. Young people tend to read people to see whether their peers will be easy to interact with. They sit apart to protect themselves from being excluded or hurt. In order to forge intercultural friendships, it is necessary for Chinese immigrant youths and their counterparts to step out of their comfort zones.

**Different interests.** The value placed on sports is diversified when comparing Chinese and White youth. Sports and trophies are often the ultimate goal in a White student's life. However, studying with one's mind, rather than physically exercising one's body, takes precedence with a Chinese student. In terms of friendship, people often build on commonalities, whereas intercultural friendships have to be built on both shared commonalities and accepted differences. On the topic of intercultural linkage, Confucius said, 'If there is no common interest, the two should not cooperate together (道不同,不相为谋)' (Zhao, 2013, cited by Z. F. Li, 2011). According to my observation in senior high school gyms and clubs, there is a type of separation between ethnicities, even within groups formed based on the same sports or interests. There is a conflict of interest particularly when trying to form relationships within an athletic White group. Students need more opportunities to share commonalities and make efforts to understand each other. Most participants in my study mentioned that this is one of the main reasons for a lack of common interest in friendship building. Lina, a mother participant, said:



It's the path of least resistance to make friends with a group of people you already know. It's much harder to make friends with a local student because of the cultural differences, so it's much easier for me to try and make friends with other Chinese immigrants, because I know that we'll at least have some similarities.

Ningyu, Zihao, and Wesley, Generation 1.5 and Generation 2, highlighted the importance of common interests for intercultural friendships:

It seems that common interests are the breakthrough point to build up intercultural friendships, because local students make friends on the foundation of interests. I find that they have familiar characteristics. For example, there are always some students, liking bragging, arrogant and studying better in class. We mainly chat about our hobbies together. (Zihao)

Many Chinese friends of mine have been here more than 10 years. Their English is good, but they still prefer to play with other Chinese youth because they feel they lack common interest to get on well with the local peers. (Wesley)

If our interests are not similar, we don't know what to say when chatting, and we don't have a mastery of cross-cultural communication skills. In general, they don't get in touch with us, and even they are coming into contact with you for group project, and they just do their own business without sharing with you. (Ningyu)

Undoubtedly, "having friends with common interests will lead to more shared values and mutual benefits than if there are no interests in common" (Zhao, 2013, p. 173). A physical education teacher, Carter, also claimed that acceptance is not equal to friendship and commonality is vital to make intercultural friendships:

I think you can build acceptance. It's hard to build deep friendship that way if you're not engaged in some sort of commonality. This person is really engaged in something, someone over here with different races, they can work together in certain projects or whatever, but at the end of the day if this person's interest is completely different from mine, I think you're not going to find that true bond where friendship can be made. There needs to be a commonality between friends. (Carter)

Although acceptance is somewhat easy to develop, friendship is more difficult because there needs to be similarities to base it on. Without that commonality, there is no reason for two people to become friends.

My inquiry into the reason for different interests is prompted by my observations

regarding the commonalities found within the various friendship circles and the problems that crop up for those who do not share commonalities. One of the attributes of relationship building mentioned most frequently by my participants was physical stature: “Due to the difference of congenital shapes, Westerners and Asian have different sports, which should be understood. White people have a bias against Asians” (Julia).

The difference in sports between Chinese and local kids is that we don't like to engage in particularly strenuous physical activities such as soccer, basketball, etc., because we're usually smaller and not as strong. This makes us less competitive and not as good as some of the locals at certain sports such as hockey and basketball. Because of this, we don't really have opportunities to make friends with them because we don't have the same sports. Canadians seem more violent in that they'll often fight for entertainment even after the game. They're more competitive than us. (Zihao)

The most important thing is that our body structure is not suitable for rugby and hockey, and we are not as strong as the White people. I only play badminton and table tennis, so I rarely play rugby with my foreign classmates. Then, they often say, Chinese bodies are not strong enough and we can't play their sports, what we play is low, and so forth. So you know, it is really difficult to make friends cross cultures. Chinese people are generally built smaller, so it's harder for us to be competitive at these same sports that locals play. There's a lot of clashing between teams in Western sports, and Chinese people like sports that are generally less violent. I seldom get together to attend some sport activities because we don't understand the rules for a lot of the popular sports here, like hockey, baseball, etc. It's hard for us to join in on conversation. There are less team sports in China; for example, I only play badminton and ping pong, so I don't really have an opportunity to make intercultural friends with locals through sports. (Steven)

Another reason Chinese immigrant youth dislike sports lies in the negative influence from Chinese physical education tests:

In China, every student is made to take a test for physical education in gym. Everyone is graded on the same system, but based on a genetic point of view, everybody is different in terms of physical ability. Using the same standard for everyone is intimidating and destroys confidence for a lot of kids. This oppression and lowering of confidence for Chinese students makes them resistant to join in on sports in Canada because it's viewed as a chore instead of a fun activity to do. This may lead to Chinese immigrant youths' resistance to sports when they were abroad, and local students especially love sports, so many opportunities to enhance the friendship between them could be reduced. (Ziwen)

Furthermore, family education would be a subconscious influence on youth on different

routines:

I see that the after-school routine for most local peers here is to go home, get a bite of food, and watch some TV and relax. This is totally different for us. After we eat, the first thing we need to take care of is our school assignments. I only get on to my hobbies after I finish my homework. During the weekends, my Chinese parents will take me to attend a lot of extracurricular activities (some of which I don't actually like). My parents think that these will be colourful life and good for my future development. My local friends don't seem to have as many extracurriculars, and therefore they have a lot more down time. Their extracurriculars seem to be mostly based on their own interests instead of what [activities] their parents think are helpful for them. For example, I asked my local friend why he's taking harmonica lessons, and he said it was because he saw someone play the harmonica on TV and really liked it. The parenting styles are really different. Chinese parents seem to believe that if they invest in time and effort in their kids, it'll pay off in the end. In contrast, Western parents like to send their kids to activities that they'll enjoy, and they don't seem to care as much about whether or not it'll benefit for their future development. (Salina)

Students' interests, such as favourite songs, movies, or sports, are also quite different due to family background. These different interests result in intercultural connection challenges:

Teenagers like movies and TV shows; however, different cultures have different movies or movies stars, this means that we do not have a common topic to talk about. If we don't understand and accept each other, then we can't make friends with each other. And other things like celebrating birthdays, spending holidays, discussing stars and other school stuffs. Sometimes we talk about things online, funny things like Microblog, and that's what Chinese people prefer. Maybe they [the host peers] like their own socialization, such as playing ball games, having parties and enjoying alcoholic drinks. They may not like our style of social life. (Julia)

The biggest obstruction is that what we are interested in is different. The divergence of interests is due to the huge differences between Eastern and Western cultures, as Eastern culture is quiet while Western is lively, and even a little crazy. After all, the cultures in which we grew up are different, but that does not mean we won't learn theirs, that is to say, we grew up in the Chinese environment, so we are more familiar with table tennis and badminton. Chinese people are good at small ball games; the smaller the ball, the better we play, while westerners are the bigger the ball, the better they play. In my school, the local students generally prefer more confrontational sports, playing ice hockey and rugby. They are more interested in rugby while we, Chinese immigrant adolescents, are not interested in it because we even don't know rugby rules and don't know their preferences. . . . Unlike Chinese teenagers, the locals are not interested in computers. They prefer parties and such activities. . . . It may be because we don't understand the cultures like Canadian or European and American cultures they have already known. It is hard to accept such new things. (Panson)

In addition, family values and customs play an important role in common topics with peers from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds. Terry and Laochen, father respondents, said:

It is related to the families or the environment. As I said, the foreign kids always talk about hockey, which we don't understand, and our children don't care so much. But that's what they are talking about. A Chinese kid might play badminton well and worship those Chinese badminton players. When he talks about that with foreign kids, they are not interested at all. In that, we lack the common cultural background necessary to be able to smoothly interact. However, after the child begins to work, I think it's possible for Chinese kids to cater to the Western interests if they try, since there will be more opportunities to communicate in a working environment. (Terry)

It is very important to allow time to take effect on the situation in various aspects. Even if there is something in common between two people, they still need time and an opportunity for them to begin associating. If only one wants to make friends with one another, the other one won't necessarily respond positively. If the two have common interests, they still need to seize the rare opportunities to interact that might come up in activities. Because of that, the reason why we participate in these parties or clubs is to develop mutual affection and communicate, since we have common spare time and interests. (Laochen)

In the opinion of some Chinese immigrant parents, an excessive interest in sports is counterproductive, specifically regarding one's survival needs and career development:

A lot kids that are Chinese are like me in that they want to focus on sports or music. When I was younger, I played the saxophone for seven years, and I got to level 10. . . . However, my parents realized that [my interest] wasn't a good path to follow. I extended myself towards that area [saxophone] and I pulled back. So I have that interest, but I don't have the time, even though I have the skill base now. So it's definitely going stay with me through my entire life so that it could become a hobby in the future or party trick if anything. . . . And focusing on my athletic interest [basketball] is also my own decision because my parents would never support it. My parents think I should never try to get into sports because I am not good enough to become professional. . . . I don't think a lot of Asian parents are supportive of their children to become athletes because they feel like because you are not going to get into NBA, it's not worth it. . . . Now, you just want to do it for fun. You are not going to get into anywhere. So that's not the best focus to have. (Wesley)

This quotation can to some extent be interpreted as a dispute between pragmatism and idealism. Some Chinese immigrant parents attach more importance to the achievements one can make instead of the fun one could have. In this sense, Wesley has chosen to compromise with his

parents' expectations for his future career development.

The children of immigrant parents try to adapt to Western culture views that are profound and unique. For example, although the majority of parents immigrating from China to Canada also try to learn and absorb Western culture, including the celebration of Western festivals, it is difficult to do, and they cannot create the same experience as Westerners on major holidays such as Christmas. Chinese parents think the Spring Festival is the most important festival, but it also reflects a demand for a sense of belonging. Nancy and Steven try to fit into the Canadian cultural mosaic while living in Canada, but do not celebrate their holidays.

They [locals] have Christmas, and we have our Spring Festival. It doesn't help us fit in very well, it will put their [Chinese parents] children in a very embarrassing situation, for example, when White kids are dressed like that on Halloween, but you don't, the local peers don't want to discuss it with you. We also don't have Thanksgiving Day in China, do we, . . . because my parents still don't celebrate it. Well, I guess maybe there are some special holiday activities that only Whites have. I guess I could join in with them or something, but I do not really feel like talking a lot about those holidays like Thanksgiving and so forth. We never have turkey, we never had that or a lot of other things, but we did try to adapt to it. I feel like I remember one Eastern holiday [because] my parents like Chinese holidays. (Steven)

Yeah, like my family doesn't celebrate stuff that the Canadian families do. I mean, like Halloween, we can go and get candies, but we are not really affected by it, and we don't decorate our house or anything. Never. For Christmas, not really. Maybe there are families who would get together with other families, but you don't really decorate the house and sing Christmas carols, like all these the other families do. (Nancy)

In this sense, immigrants lack a common topic to discuss with the locals. It is also a barrier in that it displays a lack of understanding of other cultures, as Chinese people do not understand Christmas, and Canadians do not necessarily understand Spring Festival.

To summarize, Asian body types, the beliefs that result from exam-based physical education, academically focused family influences, and different cultural festivities are likely to produce vastly different interests which can be barriers to making friends. However, these

differences could also work in the other direction to help youth to become friends. Perhaps both parties could learn more through exchanging ideas and opinions. And people could also learn to analyze the problem from different angles, and perhaps give one another useful inspiration and suggestions. Even if one's character is opposite, people can infuse their counterparts with enthusiasm. Certainly, different social circles can become friends if students are willing to make an effort to understand alternative perspectives. Understanding is helpful to develop oneself and circumvent stereotypes. In fact, the most important point is that youth should shed light on their peers' personal strengths rather than their weaknesses when trying to establish intercultural friendships. This approach could make students get along with each other much better.

**Intangible psychological distance with local peers.** Due to unfamiliarity with the host culture, the immigrant youth in my study would not dare to make jokes about their host peers. Instead, they have been frustrated and dismayed by the social distance with locals (Fong, 2011, p. 182), and only feel relaxed enough with their Chinese peers to tease and make jokes.

Local students here have a strong sense of privacy about certain aspects of their life, so it was hard for me to discuss about a topic into depth, so we would most likely talk about some superficial stuff to avoid offending anyone. It made me uncomfortable. (Cason)

I feel I am an outsider since they [the locals] are native, so I feel insecure, and afraid of being laughed at. Therefore, I don't want to be in the limelight because I don't think it is likely that I would be popular. I feel if I failed in doing something [intercultural friendship] that I take too seriously, my overall values would be totally subverted since I would find it difficult to accept the bad result. (Yani)

These quotes show that Chinese immigrant students might have a fear of being hurt by such an unfamiliar situation, have no idea where the boundaries are in chatting and joking, and are also unsure and fearful about how to integrate into the local environment. According to my observations, they think that their local peers just talk about a few interesting things, rather than asking too much about their personal lives, as they would think that kind of interrogation is

offensive. Chinese immigrant youth do not know how to keep a safe distance in their interactions, and are unaware of what words, topics, or content might be offensive. They are reluctant to face “racist discrimination” or “exclusion” because that would make them lose self-confidence, and feel inferior and excluded. Most of them believe that values, family expectations, common interests, and topics to chat about are the most important factors related to the building of intercultural friendships.

Thus, many Chinese immigrant youths encounter seen and unseen cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and racial challenges in schools, such as diverse ideologies, dissimilar social circles within the school social ladder, different comfort zones, or interests, and intangible psychological distance with local peers. Chinese immigrant youth, especially newcomers, must cope with adjustment and adaptation for survival in an isolated setting. They feel a lack of rootedness and self-confidence, are frustrated and lonely, and fear to offend. As Fong (2011) put forward, “It was clear that transnational migrant lifestyle played at least some role in reducing their ability to form deep friendships [while immigrating in Canada]” (p. 184). Nuanced family influence could also be an invisible barrier to intercultural friendships, and these obstacles to intercultural connection, to a great extent, illuminate and bring focus to the challenges of parenting in an unfamiliar setting and supporting youth in making intercultural friendships.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the challenges of intercultural friendships through the eyes of Chinese immigrant youth. Figure 4 was inspired by the photo shown in Figure 3. The center of Figure 4 focuses on the generation with the root of mixed East and West cultures and concomitant ideologies. The top three petals show the parental influences on Chinese immigrant youth in regards to the education and academic pressures placed on these youth due to the technologically minded immigrant parents and their family background.



Figure 3. Orchid as inspiration for the challenges of intercultural friendships.

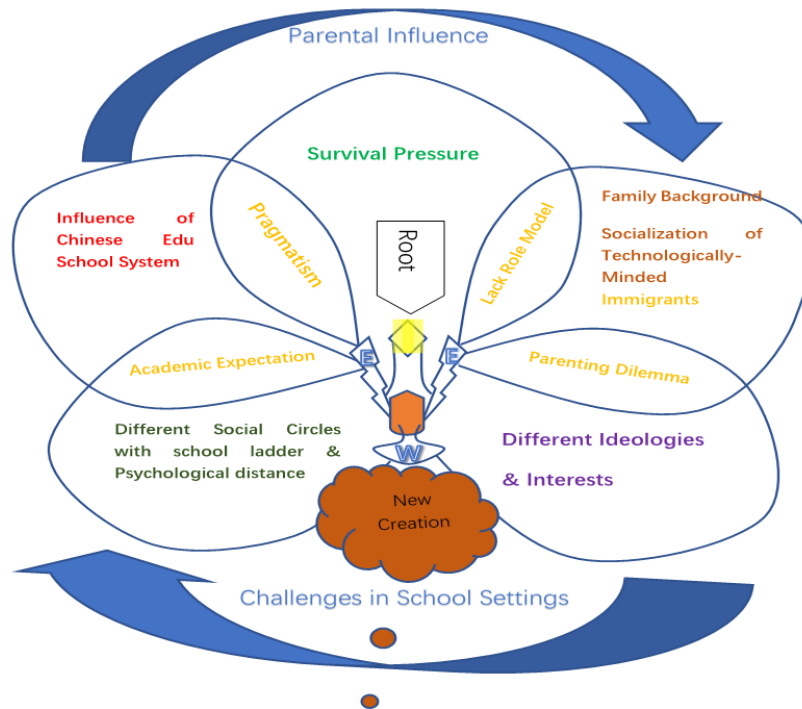


Figure 4. Illustration of the challenges of intercultural friendships through the eyes of Chinese immigrant youth.

The top orchid leaf represents the intense social pressures needed to survive and understand the influence of pragmatic parents. Many Chinese parents want their children to excel in academics; therefore, studying and achievement become the top priority due to their Chinese



education background. This causes a dilemma between the needs and wants of socialization both with the youth and their parents. The technologically minded Chinese and their different ideologies produce this ongoing dilemma. Immigrant youth desire to create a new identity and socialize in order to feel acceptance from their peers. However, the parents lack the social ability to interact according to Western expectations. The parents also desire to retain their Chinese culture. This, hence, presents various challenges in the school settings.

The other two petals demonstrate the challenges in school settings. Western youth do not understand the Chinese culture, and are, therefore, hesitant to openly welcome their counterparts into their inner circles. Thus, the Chinese immigrant youth with this lack of social acceptance may feel they are on the bottom of the social ladder even though they may be at the top of the class in academics. The scalloped central shape below the pedals reflects the new creation of in-between space with kaleidoscopic identity and culture.

### **Parenting Challenges**

In ethnic minority families, parental socialization influences children's educational beliefs, peer interactions, and habits (Gopnik, 2016, Hughes et al., 2006; Thornton et al., 1990). In this section, the focus is on the dilemma parents face regarding the potential benefits and downfalls of the various parenting styles that stem from Eastern and Western cultures. Unfortunately, due to their lack of cross-cultural experiences, immigrant parents are strongly disinclined to trust the effectiveness of Canadian parenting methods and feel the need to protect the hierarchical system in which they can expect absolute obedience from their children. They do this because they have little faith in their children's self-discipline; however, such a traditional approach is clearly inferior to the more balanced approach that would result from an objective and accurate interpretation of their new country's culture and value system.

This idea is best explained through a metaphor. Children are like computer parts, and cultures, especially the underlying values, myths, and ideologies, are like operating systems. Chinese children and Western children are like different computer parts, and Chinese culture and Western culture are like different operating systems. What many immigrant families try to do for their children is to install a computer operating system modified from Western culture in their brains. These parenting challenges have created three possibilities for cross-cultural communication between Chinese immigrant youths and their immigrant parents.

First, many Chinese immigrant parents have developed a self-contradictory, semi-authoritative parenting style, with semi-authoritative parenting meaning “a combination of influential parenting and encouragement of children’s independent thinking” (Zhao, 2013, p. 168). Specifically, semi-authoritative parenting results from the combination of Chinese and Western cultures, which normally occurs when Western values are absorbed in a fragmented way, and are then applied by Chinese parents to their children, despite their lack of experience with the culture as a whole.

However, many immigrant parents lack confidence in the benefits of Western values, and doubt that the Oriental parenting process needs to be updated. In fact, Eastern parents do not fully understand the Western parenting approach towards discipline and freedom. As a result, some Chinese immigrant children taught in the semi-authoritative parenting style experience frequent confusion due to oscillations between Chinese culture and Western culture. They can neither adapt into the Western society, nor can they integrate completely into the Chinese society. Consequently, some teenagers create a new kaleidoscopic culture that uses both Oriental and Western values, teetering between the two. Of course, Chinese immigrant youth need a powerful spirit to support them in order to establish self-confidence in their ethnic culture and find their

own identities. I also found that although immigrant children can still make friends with both Chinese youth and local peers despite their cultural values, most of their friends are still Chinese immigrants who face similar challenges.

Second, some Chinese parents naturally prefer that their children inherit their family's cultural traditions because they do not have a strong understanding of the new Western mainstream culture, often because local residents are resistant to cross-cultural exchanges. As well, Chinese parents' sense of belonging stems from their Chinese identity. There is no choice for immigrant parents in this new land other than to use their family as a platform to pass on traditional, Oriental cultural values to their children. Most Chinese youth firmly follow their parents' teachings of the traditional Chinese culture and most often make intracultural friendships.

Third, some immigrants strive to follow Western ideologies. "Groups that willingly immigrate to a new country seeking novel opportunities may voluntarily adopt attributes of the new culture" (Schiro, 2012, p. 15). It is comprehensible for those from formerly colonized or semi-colonized lands to be "ideologically indoctrinated to see the West through this ideal lens" (Orelus, 2011, p. 109). Yet, according to Zhao (2013), if "parents allow their children total freedom and are unwilling to exert an influence, the children will be incapable of managing either academic performance or their behavior and will fail to develop into disciplined people" (pp. 167–168). The problem of such permissive parenting is precisely that the children and their parents do not belong to the same system, so to speak; it is like if a very young child is adopted by someone and is raised in a different environment, culture, and language from those of the child's own parents. Although the families are aware that they have blood ties, they cannot communicate with each other effectively because of different ideals in thinking and acting, as

might be found between two strangers.

Three of the parent participants, Shan, Hong, and Victor, commented:

In fact, once we have the idea of immigrating for our children, we have already faced such a result [assimilation], but we do not want to face it, or simply do not want to think about it. Of course, there are many cases of success, but most people may only be part of failures. (Shan)

It's important for my daughters to make friends with their classmates in order to integrate into the local community. I hope my children are able to befriend the local peers who are native English speakers. We call them "foreigners," even though we are the "real foreigners." [My wife and I] chose public schools in order to force my children to communicate with local peers and get into a Canadian social circle. It's desirable to attend Canadian schools at an early age, just like my older daughter who has spent more time in her daily life with her local peers. (Jing)

Clearly, many Chinese-born, Canadian children walking on the streets have no connection with Chinese identity except for their physical characteristics. Some Chinese immigrant parents feel very helpless because this is not what they want. Some Chinese youth are more rebellious in that they fully accept Western culture and become "bananas" (yellow on the outside, white on the inside), but they are still not fully accepted by their Whitepeers, even at the cost of their Chinese identity. As in the proverb, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," they are forced to lose their previous identity, but doing so will not guarantee that they are included by society. (Victor)

Schiro (2012) further noted:

Non-white groups have encountered racial discrimination that has prevented full participation in the mainstream culture, which has made assimilation especially problematic for these groups. Groups that have voluntarily or involuntarily abandoned their own cultural traits and adopted those of the dominant group find that they are not necessarily accepted by the dominant culture. This cultural abandonment without full acceptance by the dominant group has led to the marginalization of ethnic groups throughout history and continues to limit the acculturation options of non-dominant groups. (p. 15)

In a new country, and struggling with their own cultural dilemmas, some Chinese immigrant parents are confused, and need creative selective absorption. This concept can be broken into three parts: a) dilemmas regarding beliefs and values; b) high expectations for academic achievement; and c) vulnerable parents.

**Dilemmas regarding beliefs and values.** According to my investigation, it is an

extraordinarily convoluted journey for Chinese immigrant parents to explore their special parenting. At first, when they arrive in their new land, they are curious about the Western parenting style, but have no idea how to practice it. Then, even if they have acquired some coherent knowledge about Western parenting, they still find it hard to imitate. They also have doubts regarding whether they should adopt the Western parenting style to better assimilate into their new society, especially if their children are not being accepted by their local school peers.

Schiro (2012) further stated, “In societies where one group is culturally dominant—meaning that one group’s culture is considered to be the prevailing mainstream culture—non-dominant groups are pressured to adapt more readily than members of the dominant group” (p. 14). China and Canada are very different from each other in their attitudes towards their values. For Chinese parents who have immigrated between cultures, their roles are significantly more complex because they are confronted with the intersection of their Oriental world and its cultural values with the ways of thinking that are more prevalent in the Western world.

According to Zhao (2013), in the past “Chinese parents tended to use an authoritarian approach (in which parents dictate most decisions for the children) in their parenting,” (p. 150), but today many Chinese immigrant families “use an authoritative approach which creates an authoritative influence” (p. 150). Tianyi echoed this thought:

The differences between Eastern and Western cultures in methods of raising children have resulted in the creation of two parenting extremes. The first extreme occurs when parents offer children too much freedom, causing the children to be very self-conscious. The second extreme happens when parents set too many limits, resulting in children who are very timid. Both of these extremes have their shortcomings. The combination of the two would be much better than either by itself.

Parents’ immigrant backgrounds can make their parenting choices confusing due to dilemmas regarding which values are better: those of the East or those of the West?

“The directionality of the cultural change [is] . . . another significant aspect of acculturation” (Schiro, 2012, p. 14). The first dilemma, whether to teach restraint or give children a free hand, when coupled with the chaotic mixture of beliefs regarding methods of parenting, creates a collision between Eastern and Western culture. This has a far-reaching influence upon Chinese immigrant children’s cross-cultural social interactions and intercultural competence. Due to the pressures of survival and the resulting sacrifices that Chinese immigrants have to make, some Chinese parents adopt an authoritarian discipline that is too strict. The authoritarian instructions given by the parents often prevent their children from being free or able to do what they want, leading to a loss of freedom that makes them feel passive and resistant. In addition, too many limitations and over-protection tend to create obedient or dependent personalities in children. This can result in the failure of the relationship between some Chinese parents and their children. However, in other cases these authoritarian parents become authoritative role models for the next generation. One respondent named Rena recalled her experiences:

Traditional Chinese parents are full of contradictions. Some Chinese immigrants were influenced by Western values, but my parents were not so much. They want me to stay at home to study; however, if I stay at home all day, they will ask why I don’t go outside to get some fresh air. If I stay outside and hang out with my friends all day they will call me home, and say, I play too much, and won’t have time to finish my homework. Their contradictory parenting limits my social time, and they are also struggling about the control of my social time and my schedule of my own time. (Rena)

Rena’s parents echoed their daughter’s comments:

Parents’ expectations of their children and their children’s own needs are contradictory. Communication is difficult, so parents do not understand their children and the difficulties they face when trying to make friends. It is not only because of a generation gap. It is just because parents and children are separated in ways that are similar to how China separates from other countries. (Reba)

For instance, Chinese and Western cultures differ from each other in their ideas regarding

socialization. Concerning social behaviour, knowingly or unknowingly, many Chinese immigrant parents “follow a set of unwritten rules that are deeply rooted, passed from one generation to the next” (Zhao, 2013, p. 151). Suzan, a mother respondent, reflected:

Chinese culture tends to be humble and restrained, and follows the Doctrine of the Mean [doctrine of Confucianism], while Western Christian culture advocates positive and ambitious attitudes, and it often has conflicts with Chinese culture because it emphasizes doing things in a more modest and artistic way, focuses on the development of an individual's personality, self-confidence, internal self-cultivation, and pays attention to independence, popularity of personality and display of personal charm. When talking about children, some Chinese parents are always modest and lack an outward sense of pride for their children. For example, Chinese parents always say that their child is not as good as how others praise them, and that their child has many shortcomings. In contrast, Westerners are often very outwardly proud of their children. Raised in totally separate cultures, and under the influence of different belief systems, it is not easy for Chinese and local children to integrate and get along with each other. (Suzan)

Western and Asian children are raised in different ways:

Most Western children are relatively more active. The Western [parenting] way does not emphasize learning, it emphasizes independence and not relying on anyone. So, parents in this culture encourage children to take risks such as climbing, which seems to be frightening for us. And some boys would dare to do dangerous or even illegal things without caring about anything. (Yingyong)

Another dilemma facing immigrant parents is the conflict between Eastern and Western attitudes towards the extent of constraints and interference necessary in regard to social activities. Under the long-term influence of Chinese parents, Chinese children may form a pattern of thinking and passive action that lacks independent thought. They might also lack their own characteristics, self-confidence, and innovative thinking abilities. In different environments, dissimilar characteristics between Chinese and Western children could cause obstacles to the development of communication between Chinese immigrant youth and their local counterparts, which would otherwise bridge the cultural gap. Many young participants mentioned feeling dissatisfied by their parents' parenting style. Irene and Lily are Generation 2 Chinese immigrant

youth, whereas Ziwen, Panson, and Steven are newcomers. They all made their own comparison based on their lived experience:

For example, the local parents have loose standards of discipline for their children. The children are allowed to go shopping or watch movies while Chinese parents would be unwilling to permit their children to do those same things. Chinese parents will ask whether you have finished your homework or previewed next week's lessons. I think sometimes Chinese parents have some resistance to Westerners' education ways. Chinese children just feel that sports are for Westerners, and they do not need to play them. We were doing our own thing at home. In China, I had not participated in many things, like mountain climbing. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, Chinese city life doesn't offer that chance, and Chinese students have no time or opportunity to play sports except during vacations and holidays. Sometimes, for example, I wanted to join the swimming team, but my mother told me that it was high time that I applied for university and I should not spend too much time on sports. I think Chinese parents have an unfounded and incorrect opinion that after exercising their children will be tired and have no energy or be in the wrong mood to learn. Because of this, they may sometimes limit the children's activities to a greater extent than they should. (Ziwen)

My mother is kind of bossy, and she makes me do as she instructs. Sometimes my mother has high demands on me, such as going to a good university and the like. If I fail to get into a good university, I should stop learning. The differences in family values and school education, in my opinion, reflect the clash between Oriental and Western values. The Westerners respect their own choices while Asians only respect the choices of their parents. (Panson)

The Chinese elders talk to me as if I were a child, but when I talk with the elders of Westerners, they treat me like an adult. Being Chinese, I am forced by my parents to go to Chinese school. Canadian children aren't treated like this. (Irene)

I think it's naive. You are putting pressure on your child. And your child already has pressures from their school, their teacher, their friends, and their homework. And you are still pressing them, which adds more pressures to them. That can make them become depressed and they might even commit suicide. (Lily)

So, Western culture, it's more focused on freedom, right? For me, it's more parental influences, it's sort of like parental forces in Eastern culture. It's like the parents are forcing you to want something. (Steven)

Due to their unfamiliarity with the Western parenting style and the pressures of survival, Chinese parents tend to give more care and material assistance to their children. From the above quotations, we can see that immigrant youth wish that they could have more freedom in their



decision-making. However, such restrictions originate from a passing of beliefs that relies heavily on criticism. The incompatibility between Chinese parents' criticism-style parenting and Western parents' encouragement-style parenting leads to a third dilemma. Several mother participants talked about their perceptions of parenting, which stem from their experiences:

Chinese parents always show dissatisfaction with their children and require them to work further without any words of encouragement. My son is not in favour of Chinese parenting with too much criticism and without approval or recognition. In certain respects, I also feel that we should respect Western values for children by way of always encouraging children. However, I also worry that my child may develop an extreme and incorrect understanding of himself because he can be overpraised. Between family education and learning, and Chinese parenting and Western parenting, my son is clearly very divided. If my son scores 80 points, I am certainly not satisfied with that, but then he said he will not tell me his exam results again. In contrast, Western parents will say that it is very good and that they should continue to work hard even if their children score much lower. But as a mother, I do not know who sets up these concepts for my son. He always compares Chinese parents with Western parents. My son believes Western parents communicate with their children in a friendly way, while Chinese immigrant parents employ less effective ways to communicate with their children. We have had many arguments regarding this issue. He always envies Western parents in terms of the values they pass on to their children. (Suzan)

I can safely tell you that children are always blamed by their parents. We have been blamed since our childhood. Our parents always said we couldn't do anything well and told us dos and don'ts, so we also treat our children in this way. Chinese children need more encouragement and less blame from their parents so as to develop their self-confidence. (Chenjie)

When I first came here, a foreign friend asked me if I have ever considered that even though I brought my child to a new country, I am still passing on my Asian values, and that, as a result, my child will learn two conflicting cultures, but be unable to determine which is right and which is wrong. At that time, I got the idea that Chinese parenting is not right when we try to control our children. She gave me a warning for making changes. However, it's not possible to entirely change the parents' beliefs. We can give him more choices to combine his own ideas and our ideas, but I feel that sometimes my child would jump to the conclusion that my thought is too conservative when she doesn't agree with me. Because of this, I feel that maybe she doesn't accept my point of view. (Lianna)

I think Chinese parents always want to protect their children. My neighbour is a high school Chinese boy. He always plays ball games with a local student in their backyard. He never thinks that there is any difference between him and his peers, but his mother is

unable to accept it. Because his mother does not like Western children's living habits, for example, frequent sleepovers and having girlfriends, it is hard for her as a Chinese person to accept it. I encountered the same problem once, and it also made me feel very unhappy, so I can understand that boy's mother's viewpoint. Western parents interfere very little with their children . . . and may feel that our habits are particularly strange, and find it difficult to understand why a Chinese boy can be so close to his mother at an age so close to adulthood. We are still a more traditional Chinese family, which insists that girls should not sleepover in other families or live with their boyfriends. These are our principles and deeply rooted traditions. Although he is 18, we still regard our boy as a child. We also want to protect our children, so sometimes local children may feel that our Chinese children are not independent. Sometimes it is just the different behaviours that they cannot accept, not the people themselves. (Zhijun)

I think my [parenting] failure is that I frustrated him too much. For my child's education, I feel I am too rigid and too serious, without flexibility. If Chinese children discuss climbing a mountain or going out to play, we would say, 'Oh, you can't do that,' while Western parents would never interfere with children's choices. Western parents may think the ideas of their children are okay. Local children do not want to play with immigrant children. The impact of family values on the children is actually extremely deep, so I often reflect on myself. (Lina)

The quotations above show that many Chinese parents and their children make assumptions or guesses about Western parents' expectations of and the guidance and freedoms given to their children based on criteria such as classmates' scores, which may not be correct. To be more accurate, most Western parents expect a minimum level of effort from their children, which is largely independent of their children's natural talent or exam scores. It is understandable for Chinese parents to stress academic achievement because Confucian values preach respect of knowledge and advocate that the passing on of traditional culture is a higher priority than one's social life, sports, or entertainment culture (Zhao, 2013). Tianyi, the father of one of the participants, explained in greater detail why this is the case:

Chinese people attach importance to learning because of China's large population and scarcity of resources, which is deeply rooted in their society. They have lived in China for three or four decades. The culture is in their bones and you cannot change that in a couple of immigrant generations. (Tianyi)

Western and Chinese parenting styles are also divisive in terms of intercultural

interaction; that is, they have two different ways of passing on values, and two different family atmospheres. This difference in passing on family culture produces great differences in the child's personality and character, which could possibly be a factor hindering the establishment of intercultural friendships. Dissimilar Eastern and Western beliefs lead to different ways of cultivating children, and Western youth are willing to take risks and try new things, while their Chinese counterparts may be more timid and quiet. Zhao (2013) argued for Chinese immigrant parents to remain vigilant:

Simply forbid their children from associating with people displaying bad behaviours such as drugs, gambling, and gang violence. . . . Confucianism-influenced Chinese families have exacting standards for their family management. It is a fundamental obligation for parents to teach their children about social norms and behaviour guidelines and impose strict requirements on their family members. This is called family cultivation. (p. 161)

Naturally, the characteristics and behaviours differ between the two groups of children, which is bound to give rise to contradictions and conflicts in the process of intercultural interaction. "The moral education [makes Chinese immigrant parents] . . . very sensitive to any signs of misbehaviour in their children" (Zhao, 2013, p. 162). Due to this belief, some parent participants still self-criticize because of the confusion in terms of their parenting style, which is based on strict discipline, and how it is different from local parenting:

Chinese parents are more in favour of critical education. They tell their children to follow teachers and parents. According to Chinese parents, children should be good boys or girls. Thus, Chinese children are more obedient and shy. The characteristics of the whole Chinese nation tend to be more restrained and humble. I think this is due to the Chinese culture. Our traditional education is to teach children to be submissive. Although my child was born in Canada, his parents were not, so the characters were not the same. The parents' personality is influenced by Confucianism and Taoism which advocate modesty and humility, paying special attention to internal strength. That is not to say that we can guide him like this. The child certainly grows up in such a family environment and slowly forms such a culture, in which he is not supposed to express himself openly and willingly. . . . I interact with my son in a comparatively rude and impatient way, and I seldom let him finish his sentences without interrupting. (Terry)

On the other hand, Canada's educational philosophy is the opposite. It is an open education, and the basis of how beliefs are taught is focused on growth. Based on my understanding, the belief of growth refers to all living individuals (including human wisdom), and under certain conditions it should be allowed to freely grow from immaturity to maturity. Parents should be open-minded to children's beliefs and allow them to follow their natural tendencies. They almost never interfere with their children's freedom to choose, let alone force children to do or not to do anything. They attach immense importance to the children's own experiences and allow them to rely on their own strengths for whatever they do. Most Chinese immigrant parents have to face the challenges of passing on their traditional beliefs and values, which may produce barriers for the development of intercultural friendships:

I think Canadian children are too free, they do whatever they want as long as they are happy. The teacher also respects their practice. Gradually, the children form an independent character. This may not be the best way of passing on values. My son felt that his classmates were so free. After the meal at home they began to watch TV until 8 or 9 p.m. After that, they would play their games. For me, the rule was that after you came home, you should first play the piano. After that, I gave him more work to do. He was certainly unhappy at first and did not want to accept it. All the children want to play. A combination of Chinese and Western cultures is the best, because Western culture is too loose with children while Chinese culture is a bit too strict. I did not require high scores of him intentionally, but I did ask him to guarantee that he would spend the necessary time on his learning. Chinese parents can't accept not assigning homework to children while Canadian people tend to allow children to take a rest when they feel tired. Chinese parents will say that you must finish your homework even if you feel uncomfortable. My child wanted to listen to music in class because all of his other classmates did so. I just told him that if he dared to listen to music while he was in class, I would throw his CD player down the stairs. Of course, paying attention in class is mandatory. He did not initially agree with me, and wanted to follow his classmates. (Lianna)

Chinese parents of our generation get used to following rules and restrictions. We tend to offer our children material things and certain concerns instead of educating them from their points of view. We just educate children by telling them what they should do and what they should not do. We give orders from our perspectives. Westerners educate children out of a consideration of their children's feelings and happiness, while Chinese parents just tell children that their orders are unquestionably right. Western parents care much about children's emotions while Chinese parents only care about telling children

the difference between right and wrong. But it is very important to make children happy, right? (Suzan)

The quotations above illustrate that Western parenting might be more democratic, whereas Chinese parenting pays more attention to Chinese-style authority: restriction and interference. Chinese parents may intervene in children's social activities and their sports activities, be more resistant to adventurous social activities, and prohibit children from participating in them. Chinese parents believe that there are many uncertainties in Western society and fear their children may be seduced or hurt. They wish for children to spend more time on their homework at the expense of their children's social interaction.

To sum up, the most fundamental difference between Western and Eastern parenting styles comes from having different beliefs and values. Chinese parenting emphasizes “guan” which means monitoring, controlling, and shaping, and stems from the idea that this gives Chinese children a prosperous future with a good education in science and technology, engineering, medicine, management, and so forth. However, parents often go overboard with their approach towards control and interference. In contrast, the Western parenting style advocates guidance and self-growth. However, too much freedom can be given, without proper limitations. The basis of the Chinese philosophy of education is to shape, in the same way that we put the raw materials into the fixed mould of an assembly line and make a batch of identical products. Chinese parents try to shape their children in accordance with their own values, requiring them to be outstanding and successful, which means that the children may have to lose their own ideals; in short, the traditional concept of “shaping” restricts people's independent thinking, free behaviours, and capacity for independent innovation. These fixed thoughts serve as invisible barriers that Chinese immigrant youth must break in order to establish intercultural

friendships.

**High expectations for academic achievement.** As stated by my Chinese respondents, the pursuit of academic success has become an invisible barrier to intercultural friendships. My investigation found that although Chinese immigrant parents pay extreme attention to academic work and emphasize achievement, they still hope their children will build healthy intercultural friendships in real-life contexts. The social skillset is a tool to “access the cultural knowledge of their ‘in-group’ and competence in the cultural capital of the dominant society” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 144). My study calls attention to the paradox of high expectations for academic performance as a “stereotype promise—the boost in performance that comes with being perceived as smart, hard-working, and deserving” (Zhou & Lee, 2017, p. 9) that results in intangible barriers for children’s intercultural friendships with host peers in southern Alberta high schools. “These so-called positive stereotypes, however, are a double-edged sword. While traits such as hard work, diligence, and a quietude that may be rewarded” (Zhou & Lee, 2017, p. 9) are within the bounds of academic outcomes, “the same traits become reframed as passivity, weakness, and coldness” (Zhou & Lee, 2017, p. 12) when used in reference to the process of intercultural interaction. Chinese immigrant parents identify that their children will likely “face disadvantages in the labour market as a result of their ethnoracial status, . . . [and therefore, they must] . . . expend more effort than their non-Hispanic, White peers” (J. J. Lee & Zhou, 2016, p. 2408).

Chinese immigrant parents believe, they have no language advantage and can rely only on their skills to make a living. In their eyes, their children’s academic performance is far more important than making friends. They worry that their children will be unable to fully adapt to the relaxed Western educational environment and will lack self-control, thus affecting their academic performance. Chinese parents’ expectations of children in school are too high, mainly due to the

philosophy of Chinese parents who are skilled immigrants. They have developed this philosophy through their own growth and work. Therefore, they try to limit their children's allotment of spare time, which indirectly leads to children losing opportunities to make friends with local children, and losing time to attend some extracurricular activities.

Jing, who worked as an engineer, shared her concerns and her parenting experiences:

In China, my daughter had great homework pressure in primary school. She got up at six o'clock in the morning for early learning, and had homework to do at noon at home. When she came back to home, she worked on her homework until nine or ten at night. The homework burden was exceptional. After coming to Canada, she felt very relaxed. Without homework to do, she just filled her school bag with some food and went to school. She felt very happy. I thought I should ask her to read some books, but she told me that her teacher said that learning should be enjoyable, that is, do whatever makes you happy. I taught her that if you want to go to university, you should study hard, and a test score of 30 or 40 points wouldn't work, universities and colleges won't give you an offer. I told her she needed to learn, and she followed my words. When she showed laziness in her study, I used my judgment to teach and guide her. My daughter immediately changed her attitude to learning. She learned to think critically, and it impressed me deeply. I told her my own personal experience. I failed to communicate with locals and was even laughed at by them just because my language was not good. In any place or any country, no matter what your home culture is, you won't enjoy your life unless you work hard and succeed. Then, others will admire you. From then on, she understood that you enjoy your life with some conditions, and she accepted my opinions. (Jing)

During the interview with the Chinese parent respondents, they recalled their experiences with exclusion and their various challenges in workplaces, and realized their vulnerable social position during the process of acculturation. They felt that academic success through hard work could be one way to build self-confidence and compensate for the weakness they felt as immigrants.

Most Chinese parent respondents highlighted their traditional cultural values as being one of the main reasons why they emphasize the importance of academic performance. For example, Chenjie and Shan, mother respondents, reported:

Most Chinese parents' values are similar. Chinese parents pay more attention to academic

performance rather than their children's development of social skills. Chinese people believe that to be a scholar is to be the top of society (万般皆下品，唯有读书尊). They all hope that their children study well, which will lead to a promising future and a highly paying job. They often expect that their children will go to a famous university so that they can find a good job in the future. Chinese children's behaviours are based primarily on their parents' requests. Chinese children center their life on the points all day and night. They devote 90 % of their time to their studies, without focusing on the development of social skills because they view them as being "soft skills." Although students know high scores may not mean everything is good, most immigrant parents with technical backgrounds do not know how to develop other aspects of their children's skills. (Chenjie)

Because traditional Chinese values stress that marks are the most important, you are pressured to make friends with people who have better academic performance in order to improve yourself. We care more about learning because it is a deeper-level cultural issue. We grow up in a social environment in which people believe that in books you will find girls with complexions like jade and houses made of gold (书中自有颜如玉，书中自有黄金屋). The whole of China firmly believes that learning is very important. Mencius (孟子) says that the man who uses his brain will govern; the man who uses his strength will be governed (劳心者治人，劳力者治于人). From an early age, we are subject to such culture and values. After we come to Canada with a Chinese traditional cultural background, we will still tell children how important studying is. I do not think this is wrong. However, many Chinese technical immigrants do not pay attention to the development of children's communication skills. (Shan)

Under the influence of the traditional beliefs that knowledge is power, and knowledge can change fate, "the rapid evolution of technology" (Zhao, 2013, p. 79) has led to more knowledge-based jobs. "Setting a great ambition is an effective approach to motivate your children. It is essential for children to have a great career aspiration, to pursue outstanding lives" (Zhao, 2013, p. 93). However, over-attentiveness to this Confucian value becomes an invisible barrier that leads to negligence towards encouraging children to develop social skills. Some student respondents echoed their parents' comments:

Growing up, I was mainly living by Eastern ideals; usually favouring Confucian philosophies, which emphasize strong work ethic and a thirst for knowledge. One of Confucius' quotes goes, "Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure." Because of this, from a young age, the theory that working hard is the only way to achieve success in life was implanted in my brain. This was further reinforced by the mass competition resulting from China's humongous



population. Soon, academic achievement essentially became the number one duty for students. One major form of academic achievement for the Eastern culture is your grade. This is considered as the closest relation to your progress at school. However, as I mentioned, the standards for what is acceptable rise under the pressure of competition. How much, is the question. While the bar varies from family to family, my parents expect above at least 90% for all subjects except for math, which they raised to 95%. Aside from grades, extracurricular activities serve as a supporting factor to the level of your academic achievements. Sports, extra tutoring, and instrumental lessons are all included. With these ideals, as my grandmother would always say, studying and academic accomplishments are my obligations as a student. (Lisha)

I find that local students value social activities such as partying and seeing movies with friends, and value family activities over schoolwork. In contrast, if I have homework, I'll have to complete it before I get to attend any family activities. (Ziwen)

I feel like Chinese people really emphasize the importance of studying. They feel the need to get that Master's and PhD, thinking this will help them find a better job. What Chinese children have on their mind are to get high scores and how to learn the subjects. They always want to be the first in all aspects. They are different from Western children in the values of study and life, which results in cross-cultural friendship barriers. Chinese children won't feel happy about a score of 90 points, while local students may feel that 80 or 90 points are quite okay. My parents have a concept that no matter what course you take, you should strive for 100 points. In their opinion, a student is judged by his school success or failure. In contrast, the Westerners attach more importance to your usual performance. They believe only a comprehensive evaluation can judge a person objectively while a single evaluation can't. (Irene)

Here we can see that despite their complaints, these students illustrate an understanding of the importance of a higher education. Tran (2016) proposed that it is unlikely for Chinese immigrant students to resist their parents' insistence on exceptional grades because they understand their parents' struggle for survival and would like to reimburse them for their sacrifices. In my investigation, some participants still complained about their parents' overly demanding academic requirements. For example, Nancy's mother and father have the same attitude towards learning as traditional Chinese parents. They hope Nancy will study hard, but Nancy has been influenced by the local culture because of her experiences in Canada. She believes that she should do more volunteer work. This again demonstrates the differences

between the West and the East in attitudes towards learning:

In the third year of senior high school, they want me to score high. I just think it's okay, anyway, I have to take diploma exams for university. They do not want me to participate in too much volunteering . . . because they believe it is a waste of time and I should stay at home and study. They feel that my staying home equals learning and staying outside means wasting time. I don't think that they are right. In China, scores and marks are everything. To go to college, you need high scores instead of volunteering work. But here in Canada, the score is only part of your evaluation for college admission and your contribution to the community counts for a lot. I think universities here judge you from your personality and characteristics, and they won't admit all the nerds. (Nancy)

Her classmates, Kong and Panson added their thoughts:

Those who are good at studying in China receive the most respect. But here, some of the students who have sports talent actually look down upon students who value a university degree so highly. This is very different from the beliefs and values in China. . . . My parents just moved from China to Canada. They're less concerned with making intercultural friendships and meaningful connections. (Panson)

Chinese parents care more about education, and think that children at our age should be studying and focusing on knowledge instead of friendships or socializing with others. Western parents focus more on their children's development on a broader scale. They do not care about whether their children go to universities or what kinds of job they might get in the future, they care more about their children's interactions with others and how they can survive in the society. Chinese children are under their parents' strict discipline, and they have little time for participating in social activities and communicating with White students because they devote most of their time to studying. Their immigrant parents will say, "You should work as hard as you did in China." (Kong)

Most student respondents argued that because they immigrated to Canada, they should follow the Canadian way and their parents should give them a free hand to do what they want to do. Accordingly, some parents realize their children's discontent and attempt some self-reflection:

My child will immediately know that I am dissatisfied if he receives a low score. I can check his recent performance on my computer, and he will sense my anger about his poor grades when he arrives home. However, he gradually gets tired of my response. When my child was a junior high school student, he didn't like seeing my solemn face and wished that I wouldn't be so serious. (Suzan)

Yingyong still believed that his son was too young to realize the significance of learning:

My son always tells me that local children are not asked by parents to learn every day like Chinese children. My son subconsciously accepts Western culture willingly. The children in the West have a special conformity, that is, they do whatever others do. He feels that his local friends do not learn much and he has already been considerably hard-working. He just questions why I still require so much of him. My son easily follows his peers, instead of adults, who think in a different way.

Zhao (2013) supported the Chinese cultural value, as a great academic outcome requires a great effort to fulfill it. To support such a goal, “parents need to set high standards for the children” (Zhao, 2013, p. 93), especially considering the public education system, “which has lost its way in living up to reasonable academic standards” (Zhao, 2013, p. 93). However, this academic goal may lead immigrant parents to neglect the development of other aspects of their children’s lives:

Based on Chinese values, social life is only there to offer a break from studying—a sidekick to the main subject of studying. Although my parents have changed their views over the years regarding this topic, I am still restricted from attending too many informal socializing events such as going to the mall with friends. Hobbies are in a similar position in this case. They are for entertainment and leisure purposes only, second to studying; becoming serious about wanting to transform a hobby into your profession was a big no-no. For example, ever since I was little, art has always been something that I enjoyed and excelled at. However, I was always told to view it only as a hobby, and nothing more. Sometimes I wish that my parents would portray and encourage studying in more of a fun and flexible way instead of as an absolute obligation. (Lisha)

I think that for many White people, studying isn’t their only focus. They want their children’s development to be well-rounded and for them to be exposed to other things such as sports, music, hobbies, volunteering, and part time jobs. Getting good grades isn’t everything. Grades are worth a lot in school, but in the real world, people will value your social skills and communication skills to a much larger extent. I need to make various friends and build meaningful connections for my social network. No one will care if you had 100% in math class. My parents have the hope that I can go beyond their current life, while the family relationship is not so much emphasized. I think that Western families value some family relationships more than Chinese families. Local children have generally more freedom, they choose their own life attitude, and their comfort is a higher priority, so they can’t be forced to do anything. They do not force themselves to achieve greatly. (Irene)

I think that in Western culture they kind of value, you know, like outdoors and sports and kind of just being more well-rounded. They want kids to be smart and to play sports and

they know that you can't just have everything perfect, whereas, you know that Chinese culture values education and you know, that kind of like, holds their child back from exploring more different things in the world, such as sports. (Lianna)

From these comments, it is apparent that the self-worth of Chinese immigrant youth is linked to academic performance, and their experience of the world is extremely focused on school and grades. It is hard to connect with others because they care about distinct aspects of high school during their teenage years. My findings show that Chinese students do not feel they are able to achieve what their parents want from them through interaction with local peers. Relatedly, their local peers do not take interest in the topics these Chinese students are obsessed with. In fact, their focus on grades and academic performance is considered relatively boring and uninteresting, and the local peers do not have much to say about it to begin with.

Almost all Chinese immigrant parents are greatly demanding of their children, which may be related to China's national conditions: a large population and an insufficient social welfare system. Chinese immigrant parents expect their children to excel in school because "parents are expected to have some influence over their children's career choice, in particular those who obtain a college education or higher" (Taylor & Cohn, 2012, p. 139). If people do not work hard in Chinese society, they will not obtain any social position in the world. "I still think that the main difference for our parents is that in the Eastern culture the competition is very fierce, but here, almost no competition exists at all" (Wesley). Hetty said,

It is traditional that all the parents want their children to have a decent job. Here you only need to find a good major and then you can find a respectable job in the future. But my parents just say I must go to a first-class university like University of Toronto, or one belonging to top three or top five. Westerners don't expect so much of their children unless the children have such a demand on themselves; that is, the children's behaviour needn't be based on the requirements of the parents, but on the children's own will.

Although Chinese parents may think highly of Canadian values, they can seldom teach

their children according to Canadian beliefs. At home, many of them are used to keeping their traditional Chinese beliefs. These beliefs, which emphasize that academic outcomes are far more significant than making intercultural friendships, may well lead to pressure that eventually prevents their children from forming or developing intercultural friendships.

In addition, some Chinese parents believe that their deep-rooted Chinese historical and sociocultural contexts are the cause of the high expectations they have of their children. For example, Tianyi, Yingyong, and John, father respondents, explained:

Chinese parents always expect much of their children. The idea comes from the Chinese culture, that is, for thousands of years, Chinese parents have hoped that their children will succeed and achieve greatly so that their parents can show off in the neighborhood. For example, here in Canada, a carpenter's income is not low. But in the Oriental culture, we think that a job of a carpenter is not good enough. Most Chinese parents want their children to engage in white-collar work. It is a traditional expectation of children from their parents, which is extremely deeply rooted. During the years from 1949 to the Cultural Revolution, China had experienced great poverty and everyone had to work very hard despite the miserable life. Since the reform in China led by Deng Xiaoping, some people have accumulated great wealth. But after the prosperity of the Chinese economy, Chinese people have different ideas and opinions about their lives. You see, some people make a great fortune or achieve success in governmental offices through their hard work and struggle, and other people envy them very much. My generation has failed to achieve greatly, so I want my children to succeed in the future. If my child can't put his potential to the best use, I will feel very frustrated. This indicates that Chinese culture is closely related to the development of Chinese history. Chinese history has cultivated within Chinese people such an attitude towards success. (Tianyi)

Parents instill in their children the idea that they should strive to be a doctor, a lawyer, or another respectable profession. In contrast, Westerners do not care much about the nature of the profession as long as their children are competent for the job. Children are allowed to take any job they like. I think we should learn from Westerners' ideas. Two days ago, I discussed this with my friends too, and I said we always wanted our children to be a doctor or a lawyer. Yet, the competition is so fierce in China, your children can't support themselves if they don't take a decent job. I said further that even though we had stayed abroad for as long as 10 years, we had still not changed much. We still have the idea of expecting much of our children. In fact, sometimes I just doubt whether it is right or not to impose our ideas upon our children. (Yingyong)

For middle-aged immigrants like us, a large part of the reason for our immigration was for our children's education. On the one hand, we want to get rid of the examination-

oriented education in China, on the other hand, we want to offer the children a relaxing environment of free growth. So, I try to allow the child to grow in accordance with his own personality and hope he can grow up healthy and happy. But gradually I found that the idea of making my child outstanding is still so deeply rooted. I can be easily affected by changes in the outside world, but it is difficult to change such deeply rooted priorities. (John)

However, due to the lack of social networks and resources in their low social position in Canada, many Chinese immigrant parents expect their children to excel in their academic performance. To eliminate cross-cultural friendship barriers, immigrant Chinese families need to strengthen their understanding of the need for a balanced focus between education and the development of social skills.

The foregoing was a mere glance at the keenness that Chinese immigrant parents display towards the educational aspirations of their children. In this dissertation, I also examine the failures of Asian and Chinese parents' emphasis on academic aspiration in the sections regarding different ideologies and parental influence. Cui (2013) argued,

Chinese students chose IB or AP because of their parents' request or their choice rather than aiming to "construct an academically based Chinese identity." They made friends with Chinese peers with similar backgrounds because they felt more comfortable and relaxed. . . . When Chinese youth identify with their peers within this social network, they feel safe to construct an academically based Chinese identity" (p. 167).

I agree with this statement. According to my investigation, many of my respondents did not want to take higher-level classes, but still took them because of their parents' influences. This is detrimental to their social development because of the larger proportion of Asians in these classes. In conjunction with this fact, the increased workload that comes with higher-level classes often functions to isolate students from their local peers who attend regular classes. Based on my observations on campus, this problem can be viewed as a possible invisible barrier to intercultural friendships in school communities.

Up to this point, I have discussed the two sides of the Confucian cultural and social functional perspective. One side proposes that the purpose of strict academic expectations is to make a child's family proud and increase their sense of honour. The second side argues that as postcolonial minorities, Chinese parents feel that academic achievement is essential to social development and climbing the corporate ladder. Some argue that the behaviours of Chinese immigrant students can be explained as an issue of face-saving, while others support the more utilitarian view that these students are solely focusing on their ambitions to get a higher-paying job, thereby improving their social standing (Cui, 2013; X. Li, 2016; Zhao, 2013; Zhou et al., 2003). In these sections previously discussed, my research supports and expands on Cui and Zhao's argument that high expectations for academic achievement cannot be explained solely by traditional cultural values. J. J. Lee and Zhou (2017) also suggested another elucidation regarding immigrants' "hyper-selectivity," which is based on the premise that highly educated immigrants with technological degrees from China are selected based on North American immigration guidelines.

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed how a lack of family time and a lack of socialization among technologically focused immigrant students can be direct consequences of the influences of their parents. My investigation from a critical perspective aims to rethink intercultural relationships while also trying to understand the barriers facing these immigrant families. As a researcher, I can examine results only from my own perspective, which is sometimes limited by a lack of intercultural understanding. Because of this, the same concepts discussed throughout this dissertation might be explained in completely different ways when viewed from the varying perspectives of Chinese immigrant parents and youth. The context of the research, such as Chinese immigrants coming to Canada as compared to the United States,

also impacts the contexts for research and the interpretation.

In my opinion, Chinese immigrant youth do not view academic achievement as a choice. This is partially because of the fierce competition found in their background that is strongly oriented towards prioritizing academic success above all else. Also, due to their exclusion by peers as a result of their limited social resources and their parents' influences, immigrant students are led to believe that academic achievement is the only possible way of avoiding peer discrimination and exclusion, and maintaining their self-worth. This directly contradicts their parents' initial motives, which were to give their children a better quality of life by escaping from the academically oriented Chinese society. The irony of such a contradiction is that after arriving in Canada, there are many unforeseen struggles and challenges that would normally be enough to lead immigrant families to give up and go back to China, but this is no longer possible because of the extreme challenge of reintegrating into Chinese society. Dei et al. (2003) expanded on the causes of the aforementioned discrimination and exclusion:

Invisibility refers to the negation of self and identity which occurs in and through the everyday practices of schooling. These negations erase the social, cultural, historical, and political realities of marginalized groups in society through the exclusive practices of Eurocentrism. . . . (The link between schooling and the structuring of identity is) how students can achieve self-esteem, self-confidence and self-actualization through their schooling experiences. (pp. 171–172)

Without any social network in their new country, Chinese immigrants' loneliness leads them to scramble to somehow re-establish a sense of identity so as to build self-confidence, fulfill their sense of self-worth, gain recognition, and maintain their ethnic self-esteem, which is necessary to uphold the uniqueness of their identity. Far away from their homeland relatives, cultural differences, alienation, and struggles for independence make it difficult to integrate into the mainstream society, making immigrant parents more fragile and vulnerable.



**Vulnerable parents.** To manage in Canada, many immigrant parents have had to “overcome the language barrier, culture shock, and in many cases, financial difficulties” (Zhao, 2013, p. 75). However, these parents are also faced with cultural conflict and differences in ideas, and they lack the ability to apply their traditional beliefs in their new home and are therefore unable to help their children find a solution to the confusion.

It is unlikely that Chinese immigrant parents provide support when their children are bullied because their English is not good enough. Their inability to solve the problems their children are facing produces a sense of helplessness:

My parents didn't speak much English. Even when they did, they'd talk to the teacher and the teacher didn't care. And when I was back in Edmonton, I didn't know that teachers aren't supposed to physically touch you when you aren't listening. So that's what happened to me when I was in grade 1. (Lily)

Some Chinese immigrant parents may lack understanding regarding their children's position between cultures, and may ignore their children's grievances by not providing the timely support that their children require to figure out the social barriers they face:

When our children are bullied, most parents choose silence. From my own experience, it is an unwillingness to communicate and a lack of self-confidence because of language barriers. Those parents feel very frustrated just because their language incapability prevents them from communicating with school authorities and people concerned. They feel so helpless and incapable that they eventually choose to be reconciled to the bullying. (Suzan)

As you know, our English is not very good, so children depend on themselves to solve most problems in high school. We offer them nothing but an occasional reminder. For example, I can only remind my child who is in the third year of senior high school of what he should pay attention to at university, just a simple reminder anyway. Yet I communicate little with teachers mainly because of my poor English. For example, sometimes at a parent-teacher meeting, I really want to talk with the teacher about my child's academic performance, but I don't know how to express myself. But when I attend a parent-teacher meeting in my home country, I can talk a lot with the teacher because there's no language barrier. (Lina)

The main problems are language barriers and communication difficulties. My kids came

here to attend elementary school. My eldest daughter's classmates were not willing to communicate and play with her because of her poor English. Because of this, she felt very miserable. She could only choose several classmates as friends who were willing to accept her. You know primary school is a key. After my eldest daughter succeeded in integrating into the primary school community, she had no problem in communicating with local peers at junior and senior high schools. I had the same experience in the first few years. My eldest daughter attended kindergarten here, so she had several friends as classmates in primary school, and her language is better than her sister's. (Victor)

By focusing on helplessness, I explored how a lack of self-confidence in language and intercultural interpersonal skills manifests itself in the intercultural social pressures Chinese immigrant parents face in an unfamiliar social context. Due to the significant language barrier between immigrant parents and locals, situations such as bullying or other concerns that require communication will lead them to feel especially vulnerable and alone, as they cannot support their children to the extent that they feel they should:

In the process of getting along with locals, we don't have the interpersonal skills we need and therefore don't know where the borderline is. In this case, we find ourselves at a loss and feel afraid to be offensive to their privacy. There is a lot of nervousness surrounding the asking of questions to other cultures that may seem obvious and silly. Thus, sometimes we feel we are too lonely and too weak to claim or defend our rights, and then if we were bullied, worry is inevitable. (Chenjie)

Immigrating to a totally unfamiliar setting causes great stress to immigrants and their families, especially for those who are close to middle age and have children. Perhaps our generation has experienced too much, which is easily projected onto our kids. Children find it very painful when they first come, and all parents can do is comfort and encourage them. I know this process is a kind of suffering for both the children and parents. (John)

The vulnerability Chinese immigrant parents have concerning their ability to provide intercultural social support for their children should be viewed as a failure of multicultural policies. To me, it indicates how the importance of establishing intercultural friendships needs more consideration from schools and from society.

### **Lack of Role Models for Intercultural Communication**

For individual levels of acculturation, my study has found that family-oriented Chinese

friends' social networks have exerted a profound influence on the child in terms of intercultural relationships. Parents also lack social communication with local parents and the intercultural competences that they could gain through interactions with local friends. The lack of intercultural competences or experiences with a role model could be an invisible obstruction for both immigrant parents and youth.

My son once told me that he wished his father was a role model, but in fact, his father was not. This is a great loss for our immigration. He always said he wanted to have a model. Our parents and we teach children in the same way; that is to say, the way we teach children is related to how our parents taught us. In another period of time, he said he hoped very much that there was a model. When his father is not accessible for communication, he can't talk with anyone (Suzan)

Parents normally have a small social circle and are basically limited to the Chinese community. They want to provide support for their children but are unable to do so. However, parents do realize that their children need role models to learn intercultural competences. Reba and Terry, two participants who are fathers, said:

Intercultural competences are, of course, important to the children. Our family circle here is not so big even though the entire family came here, though it is better than before. Generally, we live in the Chinese circle, which is quite small. Therefore, the local people with whom our children can communicate are very few, which is also not the same with the White kids. (Reba)

It is mostly due to the environment. We [parents] also hang out together to create a social environment because our children are friends. ..The biggest reason that they are separate is because we, as Chinese parents, don't keep in touch with the White parents. Since we don't understand each other and can't trust each other, it is unlikely for the children to get together after school. We often call our kids and ask with whom do they talk or play. Because of this, they won't hang out with a group of White kids. (Terry)

The parents' limited social circle could possibly be related to their children's difficulties in making intercultural friendships; that is to say, Chinese immigrant youth could never learn intercultural social skills from within their family.

I think [intercultural friendships] are also related to the parents, not entirely to the

children. If we can talk with or even be friends with some Chinese, our children would also hang out together. But we don't usually get in touch with Western parents because we cannot communicate smoothly with local parents. I think it is not the fault of the children. (Shan)

It is like the old saying, "Birds of a feather flock together [物以类聚, 人以群分]." Parents from China have similar experiences or sufferings and they would naturally help each other, hang out, travel, go on a holiday, or party together. Such opportunities would also provide more chances for children from similar families to communicate. (Suzan)

The interaction between parents, namely Chinese parents associating only with other Chinese people, affects the children. Apart from school time, they have no time to make friends with local children. Parents just encourage them due to lack of guidance, energy, and time spent on children. Outside of the school, the child has no opportunities to make foreign friends. The family environment also cannot guide children enough to help. Thus, one's parents can create an environment for the children that is much more conducive to making only Chinese friends. The interactions between Chinese families create a free environment that facilitates children's growth and mental health, but also, to some extent, has a negative impact on the children's propensity to form cross-cultural friendships. First, they cannot learn anything from the family environment about how to communicate with peers from dissimilar cultural backgrounds. Second, due to the lack of role models of cross-culture communication to learn from, they do not know the proper way to interact; instead, they must learn through trial and error from their interactions with people of other cultures.

As alluded to above, the inner social skills underlying the family social circle is yet another attribute that contributes to intercultural friendship barriers:

We Chinese and the foreigners don't have any common topics to have an in-depth discussion about. In the workplace, apart from talking about things when we are in the same car, going to another place to work, it's hard for us to become friends who can eat out and talk. It is kind of surprising that Chinese people from different companies but go to the same washroom become friends much more quickly. It's also true that I don't even

know the foreigners next door, even though we meet every day and say hello to each other. Despite that, we never became friends. One reason is the language problem. Another is that we have our own ways of association and we don't know how to form close relationships with foreigners. (Tianyi)

Chinese immigrant parents cannot serve as role models to teach what their immigrant children need to know regarding the intangible nuances of Western culture and the new skills required for social competence. They are also much more traditional, and cannot use the Western parenting methods of expecting more independence while also giving their children more freedom. One mother participant responded:

If a child is not so confident, it would be very difficult to make friends, since it is not a matter of ethnicity but a matter of personality. Even if a person would approach someone eagerly, he would not necessarily get a positive response because it is not appreciated by the other. We should hold on to our own independence, self-respect, and self-esteem, and in turn, the foreigners might like to understand and communicate with us. ..When a Chinese kid wants to hang out with a foreign kid, the foreign kid would wonder what his intention is. (Suzan)

In conclusion, lack of role models and intercultural competences calls attention to the vulnerability of Chinese immigrant parents and youth in the unavoidable process of integrating into a new country.

**Parents' worries.** There are two main concerns from Chinese immigrants. One is selecting intercultural friends; the other is parents' communication gap with their offspring. Chinese immigrant youth, especially teenagers who are going through their rebellious phase, are living in a paradox of their conflicting traditional Chinese values and the culture and beliefs absorbed through Western schools and their social environment. Their parents do not know the details of Western culture and education, so children and parents are partly cross-cultural. Besides, children and local students are cross-cultural. They all live in the third space, neither Eastern countries nor Western countries, so it is hard for them to get the right guidance and

support from their parents in cross-cultural friendships.

The first worry of Chinese immigrants is that they wonder whether their children are selecting the right friends. Xun zi (荀子, as cited in Zhao, 2013) said, “One should select nice people as friends. One should be prudent when selecting friends because friends form the foundation for one’s moral development (取友善人，不可不慎。是德之基也)” (p. 172).

Wouldn’t you worry that your teenager child would hang out with drug-addicted children? From my perspective, I’m very cautious of Western family culture. I have to learn about what family my child is associating with or playing with. ...It is the environment that he is in that I care about most. ..I’m more willing or more relieved to let my child associate with the families I know about instead of the families I don’t, because we don’t know much about westerners’ life. There are cultural barriers, too. (Maria)

[My son] tried to make friends by consciously choosing a group of whites rather than building friendships in a more natural way. He did this because he wanted to be praised and recognized by other immigrants and let others know that he can be accepted and included by the locals. However, everyone constantly reminded him that he is not the same as them, which became very exhausting for his resolve. His decision to try to be part of a White group constantly tried to divide him within himself, but he still couldn’t let nature take its course. (Suzan)

“As early as 2,500 years ago, Confucius had identified such challenges and provided this advice: ‘Listen to what he says, observe how he acts, and understand his purpose. How can you not have a good assessment of this person’ (视其所以，观其所由，查其所安。人焉廋哉?)” (Zhao, 2013, p. 172).

Chinese parents still have a little anxiety and worry when their children get in touch with foreign kids. It is mainly because of the worry regarding drugs. I have the same concern that my son may make bad friends. The day before yesterday, Wesley came home by school bus after school. When I came back, he asked me if I know what is going on today. Then he told me that some Grade 10 students did drugs on the school bus. . . . In this case, I usually invite his cross-cultural friends or local friends to my house, so I could check their behaviour. This worry may be also a barrier to cross-cultural friendship. (Suzan)

Chinese parents tend to get much of their information from their children regarding the family environment of their children’s friends. They believe that lack of recognition and

understanding of Western life could be a barrier to intercultural interaction. In the interview, those young participants who totally accepted Western culture mentioned their parents' worry regarding distinguishing good friends from bad influences.

Some local kids tend to do activities like partying, watching movies, or drinking. My parents think that I need to be cautious, and [those activities] might be a gateway into drugs. My parents are generally more worried that if I go out with my Western friends, there will be a higher chance of underage drinking. (Wesley)

Coaching youth to learn to independently differentiate good peers from bad ones is worth considering. Some Chinese immigrant youth feel confused about which norm and popular lifestyle they should follow. They are in a dilemma about following peers' Western popular culture while struggling with Eastern values.

We probably overprotect our children, which is our fault as parents. We protect our children too carefully. We sometimes don't let our children communicate with others independently and develop this important ability. We keep our children at home every day, limiting what they can do and with whom they can have contact, and we set up a lot of restrictions that create a limiting mold for our children. Besides, children can't face setbacks, which is a frequent problem for Chinese children. (Maria)

We should give them more counseling, starting with their feelings instead of ours and then give them some inspiration and lead them out of this gray area. We Chinese people are only concerned about this point of departure rather than actually understanding their point of view. In fact, this is absolutely to add pressures on them, even though they do not deserve to bear these pressures, and the pressure may be more than they can deal with. I think this situation is common among Chinese families. After he grew up, I still rely on him a lot, . . . There are many parents among the Chinese people who will have this dependency. I feel that our children's English is better than ours, but this should not be added to them as a burden or a responsibility. (Suzan)

Young students responded to their parents' comments:

My mom said, "If you have a friend, you should first bring him to our house and let me see what he is like." She will always say so and I think she does not understand me. However, if I play with Chinese children, she will never ask. I am allowed to go out to play. But if it is a local child, I am required to bring him to her if I want to make friends with him. (Panson)

They are afraid of what's to become or what's to happen. Sometimes people lock up because they feel like this is the best place to be. Kids are always saying, "I don't want to

go, I don't get a try, I am scared, I am not gonna make friends." That's why they lock up. They get into junior high. They have the same mentality. Or they get into the high school and they start the junior high mentality. Or they get into university they start the high school mentality. . . . Because many Chinese parents are very safe, very stable, you find that they are stable, you find that backup plan, such as my parents. My parents always say that if people lose their jobs, their house will be confiscated by banks. Chinese people need to keep some of their money for their kids to go to university. Also, they save some money for themselves in case that one day they lose their job. They save some money for their children after their death. They do not want to change jobs because "I was afraid if I did not work here and did not get the job offer there, I will be unemployed. I cannot do something dangerous." Chinese people always talk about that because they will be weak, they would not take any risk and do not make a choice for a better decision. (Wesley)

Many Chinese parent participants thought that they needed to give children more guidance and protection because they are still young and immature, while the young people are aware the parents avoid risks.

Chinese parents are mostly conservative in their children's decision making regarding choosing friends. A famous Chinese phrase goes: "One who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and one who stays near ink gets stained black (近朱者赤，近墨者黑)" (Zhao, 2013, p.

178). Zhao (2013) illustrated:

By recognizing the significant influence of friends, many Chinese families encourage their children to play with kids who have good behaviour, are interested in learning, and are ambitious. This creates worthwhile peer influence and peer competition that will encourage their children to make progress. On the other hand, party girls and party boys are not welcomed by Chinese parents. (p. 181)

However, excessive interventions and limitations on their children's social time and interactions with friends or local peers can be detrimental to the parents' relationship with their children. For example, some parent respondents may subconsciously view their children going to bars at night with foreign peers as improper, because they still have fears and worries regarding their children's ability to choose their local friends.

Another worry is that parent–children communication faces a cultural gap as well as a



generation gap. Many parents were worried about the communication barriers that they face with their children:

Apart from academic issues, we don't communicate much with her. She does not have many friends and feels lonely. For about half a year I think she is not so happy. But we do not know how to help her. Indeed, Chinese parents care about the academic studies of their children too much, so my daughter is reluctant to communicate with us, but we do not know how to help her. (Jing)

My son doesn't like me to interfere in his business. For example, he associated with a friend some time ago. Then I asked him many questions: Whom does he play with? What does he do? How is the boy? . . . I don't know much about his friends, so I really worry about my son. (Suzan)

My son is more introverted. He doesn't talk to us at ordinary times and only chats when he wants to. In my opinion, children at this age don't have any common language with their parents. We give advice to him and teach him how to behave and how to do things, but he doesn't want to follow us. It will be different if he gets together with his classmates. They could talk about games and whatever things they know. Certainly, there are more common topics. I don't know how other children perceive my son's hobbies. He has grown up, but he still likes to watch cartoons. It's strange to watch Japanese cartoons at his age. (Lina)

Some parent participants were aware of their restrictions beyond the range of parenting.

According to my observations in participants' homes when interviewing, some parent participants insisted on being interviewed with their children present, probably because they were not sure of what my interview questions would be. Their children protested bodily and out loud but compromised in the end. For example, when interviewed, a Chinese girl was together with her mother. Her mother was worried about her and requested to sit with her daughter. When the girl was speaking, she started crying, which confused me at first. Neither her mother nor I could grasp the subtle emotions. She must feel wronged. Later, when I had more interviews like this, I found youth, often girls, sometimes cry silently. Male participants were concerned about face-saving with high self-esteem. When one boy was bullied, he would tell others what exactly happened in a choked voice; we could feel his frustration. Thus, I think in some instances the

interviews helped to build better understanding between parents and children.

I am neither close nor distant with my parents. They know what they have to know and I do the same. I would not consider them my friends or people I can share my deep thoughts and feelings with, but they are, after all, my parents and I love and respect them as any child should. We spend most of our lives in completely different environments with different people and ideas and I think that is the root of any real barriers to communication. For example, my dad does not believe in global warming and is homophobic. What the heck. . . . My parents are naturally a bit reluctant to accept any intercultural relationships because that is just the norm in China. I don't let that affect me though, and although it does not affect my intercultural friendships it somewhat affects my relationship with my parents. (Shiruan)

My relationship with my parents isn't that great. We are not best friends. When I have issues, I don't tell them because I don't know how they will react. Sometimes we are afraid of how they will react. (Ancy)

These quotations illustrate that the cultural and generation communication gap between parents and children lies in a lack of mutual understanding, so it is unlikely that Chinese youth will learn how to overcome those challenges based on their parents' guidance. Shan, a mother respondent, shared her worry about the conflicts with her son.

He felt hurt when he knew I checked his messages on mobile phone. He told me he never forgave me. He said I did not respect his privacy and invaded his rights, and I did not get permission to read his mobile messages. In fact, I think I am helping him to correct mistakes. . . . Our relationship is less close than ever. I have no idea the reasons. My family atmosphere is cold and quiet. During the last year, my son is reluctant to have a conversation with me. His father is very silent. In the past, my son was willing to talk with me. So now my son is reluctant to stay at home, probably because my facial expression is too serious, and my family lacks a feeling of warmth. When my son was young, he always observed my facial expressions. Maybe I am not a mature mother with childish temper. In my subconscious mind, I feel parents are authorities, but my son looks forward to the freedom; he is willing to be integrated into Western culture, but he also lacks confidence to be accepted.

It is likely that people have different interpretations of the same issues. In my opinion, the above comments show that parents are concerned for their children's social life and want to protect their children from being hurt. However, they may be unable to adequately demonstrate their care and love for their children, somewhat due to the extent to which they lack an

understanding of the boundary that must exist between them and their children. Some parent participants stated that they do not know anything about the background of the intercultural friends their children are making, that they also do not have time to communicate with their children, and that they are afraid that their children are risking making bad intercultural friends. Accordingly, their children are reluctant to talk with them. This may lead immigrant children to have difficulty identifying with their parents' cultural background, or possibly, to some extent, hinder their children's willingness to risk trying new intercultural activities.

Some Chinese parents outwardly support their children in making intercultural connections but still feel anxious about the unanticipated danger. These worries may cause them to interfere or limit their children's social life. This illustrates that some Chinese immigrant parents are in a dilemma between their worries in terms of xenophobia and the necessity for their children to develop in all aspects. Despite what some immigrant youth might believe, their Chinese parents are willing to encourage them to make intercultural friends and most of them attach importance to social skills development. However, due to cultural disconnect and language barriers, such ideas would be highly impractical and almost impossible to apply. For example,

Because of the cultural disconnect, White parents will always come in and volunteer and always be looking after the children. My mom and dad would be at work and then my mom, she didn't know English, so she couldn't come to volunteer, right? She couldn't get involved in the school as much, like they care for me, but it seemed so isolated compared to other children because I didn't really see them at school, it was sort of like that cultural or that language barrier. . . . Well, sometimes I learn something from experience that, sometimes language miscommunication and that words in Cantonese are different from in English and sometimes like I have trouble in saying stuff and sometimes I switch to Cantonese randomly while speaking English, so it is so confusing for them. (Sherry)

Some immigrant parents might worry about the intercultural social surroundings. It is likely that certain immigrant parents are relatively closed-minded and are not familiar with

Western culture, and thus may often feel afraid and insecure. As such, they will secure their children in a controlling way. However, psychologically, out of protecting their kids, parents excessively interfere and restrict their children's independent communication, involvements in the social arena, and social resources, which leads to children's general frustration and lack of adaptation to their unfamiliar environment. Parents' fears and worries prevent young learners with possibly low self-esteem from growing and developing positively. Such strange surroundings may create a deep sense of self-protection in one's identity.

**Challenges of integration.** My research found that integration is a gradual process and should, to some extent, happen in both directions. Chinese parents are not well integrated, which is directly reflected through their impact on their children, which possibly results in a lack of strong social skills with local peers. It is stressful for the Chinese to associate with local people due to different methods of communication. Conflicts and contradictions arise in people's behaviours and ways of thinking because of the deep-rooted cultural differences between ethnicities. Children are directly affected by the poor integration of immigrant parents into their new surroundings.

When it comes to integration, it is actually more important whether the whole society has a tolerant attitude towards immigrants and if they are inclusive in terms of their ethnic culture. If local residents reject your intercultural connections, it is very difficult to integrate into it regardless of how hard you try. This [integration] is [a mutual] acceptance on both sides. . . . As an immigrant, everyone has a desire to learn local culture, but this is not integration. . . . I think I have the kind of sense of insecurity in this country that results from my work experience and skills not being recognized. I don't have the same feelings of security and belonging. . . . I think, in one of the more advanced countries, it is not just science and technology that should be advanced but also the humanities, which would include being more tolerant of ethnic minorities. (Maria)

So-called integration can't form a combined culture without changing either. For my part, the integration of cultures is mutual understanding and mutual acceptance. However, the concept of integration is not easy to accept. As far as I'm concerned, most Chinese people tend to be forbearing and conciliatory, which is very different from westerners, who are

self-concerned. They want to think, express and behave as they want, while most Chinese would tend to accept what others want because of mutual respect, even if they think differently. However, most westerners will express their ideas or even criticize if they don't agree with others. Therefore, I think the difficulty in integration lies mostly in the westerners' part instead of that of the Chinese. (Suzan)

The above quotations illustrate that Chinese immigrant parents feel that Westerners need to be more accepting of immigrants in order for them to integrate rather than just the immigrants being willing to change to fit in. Respondents also explain how there is still a long journey to maintain one's heritage, language, and culture when building intercultural friendships because of how unwilling the locals can be to accept differences between the local and immigrant cultures. Immigrants do not expect locals to significantly change their own ways to mimic Eastern culture; however, it is detrimental to both sides when either is so closed off to new ideas and dismissive of others' methods of solving problems. This issue exists despite the multiculturalism policy of 1971 and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 acknowledging "the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1985, section 3.1). One of the students described his perception of his parents' challenges of integration:

Integration means a person has both Western and Chinese cultures, values, ways of thinking, and concepts. Yet, a Chinese person can just try to accept the Western concepts from the perspective of a Chinese, and vice versa. I mean it is not possible to deal with the culture clash between two cultures. . . . I can only say that I can understand diversity, and I think there is a link between each culture by which we can understand each other. Canada has so many different peoples and diverse cultures. It is impossible for them to integrate into a single one. What people can do is to have a mutual understanding between different cultures. (Wesley)

Clearly, it is unlikely that children will acquire assistance to integrate into a new culture from their parents, who are struggling with their survival or professional development in a new country. Such a communication gap between Chinese immigrant parents and their children

results in frustrations and dilemmas when Chinese immigrant youth face intercultural barriers.

Chinese parents want their children to integrate, but at the same time they do not want them to lose Chinese values.

If you want to blend in, you have to please them. However, under their good manners is their contempt of you, since I deeply experienced their indifference and feeling of distance inside their hearts. I don't want my children to be just what they are in the future. So, in my opinion, there is no use for blending in with these westerners and one should keep them at a distance in the same way. Many parents want to pick a school for their children which has few Chinese, which I really can't agree with. Children are Chinese, so we can't separate them from Chinese social circles. Don't think that your children could make friends with westerners in a school full of westerners. As children grow up, they will have strong recognition of ethnicity. Therefore, if they don't have their ethnic group circle around them, they couldn't bear this kind of loneliness. We don't have to blend in with White groups, because Canada is a multicultural country and there are more and more Chinese living here; so the best way is to make ourselves strong. I mainly teach my children Chinese culture, because in my opinion, children with love, ability and confidence in their hearts can find their place in any society. I hope they can always admit their Chinese identity and be proud of it. (Victor)

I think the cultural difference lies in food, ideas, and way of handling things where there are different modes of thinking. In China, there is also a stark difference between minority groups. For thousands of years, the Han people are educated with the doctrine of the Mean culture, which is passed down for generations. The Han people approach things differently from other ethnic groups who are not influenced by Confucianism and Daoism. They are more direct, while we are more euphemistic. (Lina)

The intimacy between Chinese parents and children is just about the parents caring about the children, keeping them warm, cooking good food or some simple communication. The relationship is not easy-going. Only in a party or some special moments we would shake hands, express some good wishes, hug with each other, or say "I love you" to each other. It is the only kind of opportunity that we can talk intimately. It also reflects the difference in education which would result in the obstacles or difficulties for Western and Eastern families to associate. (Suzan)

According to Chinese customs, the youngsters should use two hands to hold things out to the elderly, senior, or leader to show their respect. But I once heard one Westerner said, "Why use both hands doing something that can be done with one hand? It's a total waste." They are not used to it. However, why should the Westerners shake hands when meeting someone? It's just a custom, as we use both hands. Why can't they just say hi or hello instead of shaking hands, patting each other's back, hugging, or even cheek kissing. It's just the Western culture. So we Chinese should be inclusive to that. When meeting a Westerner, we can just cheek kiss them; when meeting an Easterner, we just use both

hands to deliver things. However, I certainly would not demand my kids to adopt either way. They can just choose their own way, whether it is more Western or more Eastern.  
(Jing)

This ethnic difference is evident in the company where I've worked for 50 years. Certain staff were outwardly friendly; inwardly, they were far apart and looking down upon us.  
(Tianyi)

Parenting challenges, fear, worries, and choices can unconsciously cause an increase in children's internal conflicts and resistance to fit into a new environment. This forms the basis of the cultural gap and estrangement between the Chinese youth and the local youth, resulting in a lack of the common interests and hobbies that cross-cultural communication needs, which in turn forms an obstacle to cross-cultural friendship. The point is that how parents treat their children is not static. Challenges of immigrant parenting are a special, complex, and controversial issue, which can greatly affect the ability of young immigrants to act, as well as achieve a quality social life. What I believe about the proper way to raise children changes; many ways of parenting can lead to acculturation. Recognizing and adopting diverse parenting styles mainly depends on the child's unique characteristics and how those characteristics could be complemented by a parenting style that is more critical or accepting, or more authoritative or lenient.

Vulnerable immigrant youth face challenges due to parenting development. From a social-critical perspective, concerning microlevel acculturation, it should be noted that nobody within the schools is concerned with establishing intercultural role models. According to my investigation, discussed in Chapter 6, this is because teachers are unwilling to be those role models, as it is not part of their job, and immigrant parents do not have the capacity to fill that position.

### **Parents' Expectations for the Role of Teachers**

Although the role of parents is "the foundation for other socializing institutions (e.g.,

school) that prepare individuals to be productive citizens in society and develop morals and values that are in concert with the laws of the land and social norms” (A. James & Fine, 2012, p. 880), the overlooked language and cultural gap for immigrant parents should be considered. As Fong (2011) posited,

To be capable of functioning as they want to function, people need access to resources. . . . The particular resources needed to maximize capabilities vary depending on the capabilities individuals already have, their values and priorities, and their sociocultural context can change as individuals’ capabilities, values, and sociocultural contexts change. (p. 189)

Immigrant parents are unable to be such a resource for their children and they also lack resources and experience of their own. As such, they are forced to fall back on teachers to help their children. It is clear that immigrants’ susceptibility and helplessness to assist their children to develop intercultural competences and connections has been confirmed, and my results show it is almost impossible for them to undertake the role of intercultural friendships counsellor. Some respondents expressed their expectation and hope that their children’s teachers would create a close-knit intercultural community so as to improve and expedite the transitional progress of immigrant youth mentally, culturally, and linguistically:

We all agree teachers should take more responsibility, since they exert an enormous influence on the children, even greater than the parents. The children learn a subject better if they like the teacher. What the teacher has taught makes a difference to the children. From primary to high school, children spend more time with teachers than with parents at home. If the teacher is extraordinary, it’s natural that the children will treat him as a role model. (Suzan)

After Chinese families migrate, they subjectively believe that challenges of intercultural friendships have to be resolved in schools. Contact with social agencies and community activities are limited, and Western schools are a more advantageous platform to bridge the intercultural gap. Chinese immigrants believe that Canadian teachers should be more helpful in the



socialization of immigrant children. Besides, the new immigrant parents are busy working overtime for their livelihoods, with no time or experience to help educate their children, and they do not know the social skills necessary to interact with local White peers.

Parents also hope that teachers could act as role models to bridge the gap between the education received in China and the education offered in Canada, and could pay more attention to some puzzles and perplexities that Chinese children have met in their growth, such as providing help in their socialization and cross-cultural competence. Zhao (2013) proposed that if parents are “not knowledgeable enough, what you should do is to get the help from school teachers” (p. 68), because they are proper role models to help immigrant children to build intercultural friendships.

We, as new immigrants, don't know much about Western education system and beliefs. We want to help our kids very much, but don't know how to do it. In China, parents only have to send the children to school and all the things should be done by the teachers. However, in Canada, the case is different. Teachers are responsible for the class stuff, while all the rest of the responsibility would still belong to the parents. In the beginning, I was not used to that. I had to fill out a variety of forms about my kid. We couldn't understand and answer some of the questions in the form, even though the answers to the questions gave Canadian schools and teachers more information about the child. Later, I slowly adapted to these methods and felt that this approach is right, because parents understand what the child is like and tell the teacher about it and what special talent of the child they want to develop or what disadvantage they want to correct. The teachers are assisting the parents to do the job instead of doing it independently. (Maria)

We wish teachers would encourage our kids. Although they are good kids, they are not confident and lack skills for social interaction. Self-expression and confidence is good for the child, since they would have the courage to present what is positive about themselves. It is what many Chinese children lack. . . . For example, a Chinese person is just different at the first sight, in the appearance and colour. So naturally, the child would have that concept in his mind and the Western children would differentiate between the Western and the Chinese. As a result, most Chinese children would suffer from pressures, except for those who are adaptive and confident. Children with strong confidence find it easy to integrate and those self-abased just can't. Because my son has these difficulties, I think that school and teachers can and should help my child to overcome such psychological challenges and try to encourage and motivate the students so that the students can have endless motivation to study hard. (Qiong)

A comparison between Canadian and Chinese education demonstrates expectations that teachers should teach more than the lessons and devote a lot of emotion to it and treat students and immigrant parents more patiently.

It worries me most that the teachers only teach subjects without any intercultural moral education. Some teachers just treat their job just as a job and a tool to make money. I think teachers deserve respect from the whole world. We hope they truly care about the children rather than only limit their teaching to precisely the boundaries of their own subjects. It is a common thought in China that education of children is the job of the schools and teachers, while the Western education system believes the responsibility doesn't only belong to the school but also to the parents to a larger extent. After all, parents know their children the best. But I always have the idea that education is not only about teaching lessons but also includes things such as how to stimulate the child's interest in learning and intercultural communication. (Shan)

Communication opportunities between parents and teachers in Canada is less than it was in China. It [the communication between parents and teachers] is more about the child's study and lacks guidance to other aspects, including mental health and intercultural communicative competence. For parent-teacher meetings, the teachers here would talk to us in a very targeted and direct way only to tell us about our child's situation. However, the talk lacks mutual understanding, communication, and human connection. We cannot feel the teacher's care for the child. I don't know whether it is because we Chinese parents lack the ability to express ourselves. (Lina)

Teaching should not only be about focusing on one's dominant subject's academic results and grades, but should include more important hidden curriculum or additional education involving a constant influence and teaching by being a role model, so that immigrant children can have a sense of belonging. Furthermore, a real educator should care about the children's spiritual and emotional needs. Students are different, so teaching should be in accordance with students' aptitude to individualize their learning.

Compared to domestic education, I think the educational system here is very different, and much simpler. Education here does not have so many difficult test questions and the algorithm for students is not the same as in China, which is based and evaluated on the last test scores. Schools here put more emphasis on the usual performances. However, the criteria of grading test subjects here and that in China are different. The method of taking exams in Canada is not the same as those in classes taken in China. Even if the answer is the same, some Canadian teachers here will judge Chinese students as wrong and not

give points to the students. If asked why, some teachers would be very impatient, so Chinese students are afraid and unwilling to ask further, because the effort is useless. (Maria)

Maria has expressed hope that teachers can be flexible on the criteria for some questions if answers are correct but arrived at by different methods due to different thinking. This is also a multicultural outcome. The approval of various ways to figure out the same question would increase new immigrants' self-confidence and shorten the intangible psychological distance of intercultural communication. Another respondent also discussed some issues that happened in social studies.

I heard my son say that in social studies the teacher often led the discussion to some controversial political issues, such as Xinjiang and Tibet independence, Tiananmen incident, or other sensitive topics. The teacher may intend to teach the children the ability to think critically; however, since the children don't have a comprehensive understanding of Chinese history, the present situation and its advantages, the locally born children would have one one-sided idea that there is nothing good in China and would keep away from children from China unconsciously. My son may feel inferior about it. Can Canadian teachers talk more about other nations' advantages instead of focusing on the disadvantages? Saying something positive about Chinese culture is necessary to balance it out or the current curriculum would just send an idea about Chinese culture that is totally incorrect. (Huang)

It is hard for youth to learn critical thinking regarding some controversial issues without considering things from many angles. It is also improper to introduce negative aspects underneath a lens. This could be an invisible obstacle to intercultural contact, because local youth do not have a complete knowledge of the history and culture of China.

Isn't it better to let the immigrants or the international students get involved in the school business? I think it's better for the school to design more activities for them to participate in. I don't agree with others that they can live in their way and we live ours. (Maria)

The teacher should infuse an idea of integration. Mutual integration is firstly about mutual understanding and secondly, mutual respect, which means one can participate in what they accept and/or respect what they can't. Teachers should guide them in this way and instruct them to understand each other and then follow the so-called cultural mosaic, namely the coexistence of different ethnic groups. Since we are immigrants here, we

don't know much about the other cultures. There are group projects in primary school which need teamwork. One good way is for the teachers to involve students of other cultures by choosing groups so they can learn from each other or they will otherwise only form a group of their own people. (Zhang)

Here is one teacher's response to such hope:

The term "openness" seems to be key. . . . There is so much to learn about each culture that it's impossible to try to learn it all. But it seems to me that being a good teacher for an immigrant/newcomer or refugee children is more about the stance or tone that you take with your students and the sincerity of your interactions. . . . Students can feel if you're genuine and just taking interest in them like you would any new person in your circle. The best way to get to know students' personal circumstances is to get to know them like you would any "client" in a professional relationship. I always imagine that it's my child in the classroom and how I would hope that an adult was talking to them . . . not their friend, but a caring professional adult. (Colin)

As discussed in this section on parenting challenges, it is clear that parents find it difficult to take on the role of modelling intercultural social interaction. Thus, joint-venture social support between parents and schools could engage principles of mutual complementarity, mutual benefit, and coordinated development between school communities and immigrant families.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the past 20 years, Canada has admitted skilled immigrants from mainland China, and from 2006 to 2015, 290,912 Chinese graduates and postgraduates brought their families to Canada (*The Canadian Magazine of Immigration*, 2016). These immigrants have contributed to the development of Canada. Many Chinese parents, nevertheless, have a strong sense of insecurity, and such a sense of insecurity also affects their children when parents put too much pressure on them. Although stress is a driving force, too much pressure can have a negative effect on intercultural social activities.

We should give them a heart of counselling, starting from their feelings, not from us, and then give them some inspiration. Let them out of this gray area. But we Chinese parents are only concerned about this point of departure, rather than the real understanding of their point of view, to stand in their shoes. (Suzan)

Some parent respondents described their concerns this way. At the beginning of their immigration, after a short period of excitement, the freshness of the environment gradually subsides and these parents are confused and frustrated in life and work, as well as increasingly in their children's education, beliefs, and cross-cultural exchanges. This confusion, along with social stereotypes and misunderstanding, results in barriers to the establishment of intercultural friendships. Suzan, an engineer, called for a new parent role in a multicultural society. "Parents need foresight and a sense of responsibility for a new society. The impact of family culture on children lasts a lifetime, which is too deep, and too long" (Suzan).

Accordingly, Chinese immigrant youth with different experiences and personalities have their own negotiation process. According to my investigation, youth would like to perceive things positively so as to move beyond cultural and ethnic differences. For example, some Generation 1.5 youth who came to Canada before the age of five have alternative opinions on the challenges caused by their differences and ways to move beyond them. Michael, 18, stated,

I see that there's sometimes a racial divide between kids from different ethnicities during lunch break or recess. Personally, I can't deny the fact that it happens. I think the basis of this sort of segregation stems from both parties. On the immigrant kids' side, it's much easier to hang out with their friends from the same country because there's no language barrier and it's more comfortable. For example, I've seen groups of Chinese kids huddle together and only speak Chinese to each other, which doesn't create an open invitation for any other racial group to join in, simply because other kids can't speak Chinese. For locals, it's also much easier to stick with their friend group, which they've already probably formed at this point. Why spend the effort to explain certain things that seem like common sense to new immigrants? To close the gap, I think it'll require some work on both sides; it'll come with time and maturity for most students. (Michael)

Salina, 17 years old, added,

We have to completely follow locals' customs. But sometimes I feel very tired. . . . If the locals don't accept or haven't understood us, the most obvious and effective way to make friends depends on the skin colour. Take yesterday for example, half of those Asians I stayed with were Korean people, and the other half were our Chinese people. Less than half of these Chinese people speak Cantonese instead of Mandarin, so that skin colour is

the most obvious way of having a close friendship. (Salina)

As illustrated in the information above, there is a constant struggle inside each of the participants to balance nature and nurture to find comfort in social situations. When these individuals are forced to conform to the ideals of the locals rather than embracing their differences, they lose an essential part of themselves. This loss creates a gap in each individual's identity and intercultural connections, making the individual unable to embody all of his or her true self. Immigrant youths are not inferior from birth but are born into different beliefs, values, ideologies, perspectives, fields of vision, and family environments that some cultures may find hard to accept. Success on the journey to building intercultural friendships depends heavily on the exchange of cultural norms and ideas. As people's horizons expand, the new ideas produced from intercultural interaction—an amalgamated blend of two or more beautiful cultures—can give a whole new meaning to life.

Between the complex boundaries and value sets around the world, the desire to connect through friendship and understanding is a human activity. My research demonstrates that many other human behaviours such as prejudices are the result of asymmetrical information, concerning different worlds with different histories and cultures. Nobody can choose or have any impact on his or her family background. The value of the individual, however, does not lie in his or her social position, but in the contribution to our society and the world. When Eastern culture and Western culture meet, there is the opportunity for the intrinsic strengths of different cultures to combine towards a civilized, humane society with a new lustre. For diversity to be successful, locals and immigrants need to learn to respect and understand one another and deepen feelings to establish common values.

The interplay between family culture and the building of intercultural friendships is

exceedingly complex. Family culture and children's friendships have immediately discernable aspects on the surface, but also significantly deeper aspects that cannot be directly observed. Parents' family culture can create challenges that affect their children's ability to make intercultural friends and this will, in turn, change how the children affect their own family culture. As the various aspects approach an equilibrium, intercultural friendships will gradually become more attainable, and this success will help people work towards a more tightly connected and harmonious multicultural society. To help the situation, some Chinese immigrant parents have realized their weaknesses and are making an effort to make changes. Warren noted his growth in understanding life change and his parents' changes:

I truly think that, based on what I've seen or experienced with my friends, the fact is that people change. Understanding of life changes, understanding of people's changes. . . . It's that we grow more and more integrated into, more and more immersed into Western society because of our immigration status. We understand westernized life changes, especially I see my parents, as well, because they understand what's going on here more now, because they've been here for a longer time. At the very beginning, they started with the ideal of getting good marks in school, focusing on academics more than freedom. And now they've changed, too, because they seem to have grown. I don't know if that has to do with me getting older or their increased respect for Canadian values. I think it also has to do with understanding more of what's really going on here. Because no matter how much you tell someone something, if they don't see it, they won't believe you, right? It doesn't matter if it's your parents or your friends. If you say something really different than from what they think, they won't believe you. They will never believe you until they see it or understand it, right? So, as myself, growing up here, I guess there are many transitions of understanding of what I came to be. When I was younger, I used to hate being an immigrant because it's so hard on you, because of coming here and having your parents not understand what you are going through. That's really hard. And you know that you were supposed to work hard in school, but all your friends make fun of you if you're working hard because you are really geeky or something like that, right? It's also like that because your friends don't understand you, either. And there are other Chinese people who understand. But you want the majority of the population to understand you. You want the White kids to understand you. You want them to realize that maybe you are not someone who is ordered around by their parents; maybe you are not the one that wants to play badminton because your parents want you to play. Just based on that, I would say coming here and just understanding a lot of things would definitely help with the barriers there [intercultural friendships]. . . . Looking back on it, I think my parents pushed me to get good marks at the right time. In a year or two my views may change

again. . . . Now that I understand them, I regret some of the things that I did. I never hated my parents, I just didn't understand their motives behind what they wanted me to do. This is just one of those things.

Warren expressed the knowledge that becoming familiar and more accustomed to Canada has allowed his family to change. As they have become more confident in their new surroundings, parents and children understand one another better. They can see how hard the transitions in a new society can be. Parents and children have a better understanding of the merits of intercultural friendships.

In conclusion, family socialization is a profound influence on the formation of intercultural friendships. On the one hand, through the eyes of Chinese immigrant youth, their kaleidoscopic identity is shaped by diverse challenges in the school setting. They progress in intercultural friendship-building through the stages of trying, helplessness, protest, tortured feelings, and compromise, when encountering the cruel reality of not being accepted while constantly struggling with the dilemmas and confusion of two different worlds. Due to culture shock, newcomers are especially fearful to make contact with local students, which is also partly because they are unfamiliar with them and their culture. Another possibility is that they become over achieving during class because they are too self-aware and are especially afraid to be looked down upon by their peers.

For Generation 1.5, compared to Generation 2 immigrant children, their East–West kaleidoscopic identities will have different compositions owing to the ways that their experiences inevitably diverge. A main difference is that Generation 1.5 immigrant youth more often have their own immigration challenges that the Canadian-born have never experienced. Additionally, Generation 1.5 immigrant youth have a deeper feeling and understanding of intercultural challenges as they have been living in China for part of their lives, whereas Canadian-born youth



have an understanding of Chinese culture that is developed solely from their family's take on it, because they have had only indirect contact or a small amount of direct contact with China through their travel experiences. Many Canadian-born youth may not have any issues regarding cross-cultural friendships in school; however, most of my Generation 2 participants still made the majority of their friends within their own ethnicity.

On the other hand, through the eyes of Chinese immigrant parents, their cultural adaptation is challenged by several aspects, including parenting style, fears and worries about their children's selection of friends, and fears and worries regarding the lack of role models for them to follow. They also have an expectation for teachers to have a joint-power relationship to facilitate a harmonious atmosphere that is conducive to intercultural friendships and a warm school community, given that education is intended not only to teach students but also to enhance their ability to cooperate and to constantly improve themselves. The process of family influence on the making of intercultural friendships was not conceptualized as a generalized challenge. Rather, my examination focuses on the dynamics of individualism within a multicultural discourse.

In conclusion, this chapter strengthens the understanding of the barriers to intercultural friendships through a lens of multiperspectivity.

Multiperspectivity is a "strategy of understanding" in which we take into account another's perspective (or others' perspectives) in addition to our own. That process entails understanding that we too have a perspective which has been filtered through our own cultural context, reflects our own standpoint and interpretation of what has happened and why, our own view of what is and is not relevant, and may also reflect other prejudices and biases. (Stradling, 2003, p. 13)

The multiple perspectives of Chinese parent and immigrant youths' experiences in intercultural friendship-making offer pre-service and in-service teachers suggestions for better

teaching practices and curriculum improvement toward building bridges of integration in schools. Given that the children of immigrants are a key component of a multicultural society, this chapter explored and presented the thoughts and vulnerabilities associated with school-based obstacles of intercultural friendships. It offers encouragement to find ways forward toward intercultural understanding and respect.

## **Chapter 6: Beyond Teaching Borders: Rethinking Intercultural Friendships Through the Eyes of Teachers**

As Shangyin Li, a famous poet from the Tang dynasty of China wrote, “Till the end of life a silk worm keeps spinning silk. Till burning itself out a candle goes on lighting us (春蚕到死丝方尽，蜡炬成灰泪始干)” (Wang, 2010, p. 298). Good teachers are like candles; they consume themselves to light the way for others. Educators are the backbone of schools. Teachers not only transmit wisdom, they impart academic-based knowledge and help and support students as they develop and learn to solve problems. Teachers also serve as important bridges between the family and the school, and between immigrant students and their host peers. In schools in Canada, teachers can help to facilitate the development of intercultural friendships. The greatest strength teachers possess to encourage intercultural friendships is their strong understanding of the interactions between students, which comes from extensive experience in the classroom and school setting. Hence, teachers’ perceptions and insights are also exceedingly valuable in the investigation of the barriers to intercultural friendships. As well, teachers might flag ways of avoiding situations and problems that are detrimental to the formation of such relationships.

Senior high schools function as communities where youth can develop or change their values, worldviews, life goals, future career plans, and self-awareness. Schools undeniably play an important role in the process of intercultural friendship building between immigrant youth and their host counterparts. Unfortunately, immigrant youth in senior high schools face multiple changes during these last years of public education, including the transition of changing grades and the transformation of culture, education systems, beliefs, and peer groups. As central in the lives of young people, schools must play the important role of agents that facilitate peer group socialization, and help immigrant and mainstream youth gain approval and develop a sense of

belonging. This study suggests ways for creating and promoting more inclusive discourses within schools, so that children can learn in a safe and caring environment within the teacher–student and student–student relationships, and so that parents and teachers also work together. It also encourages the development of needed educational reforms that will “foster greater acceptance of other cultural perspectives” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 386), so that schools can help host students foster a better sense of cultural understanding and acceptance.

I invited teachers from several different subject areas to participate, in order to thoroughly investigate the barriers to intercultural friendships. Based on data from their interviews, this chapter suggests ways to create and promote more inclusive discourses within schools. The focus is on two main components: the provincial social studies curriculum and the hidden curriculum that contributes to preventing intercultural friendships. The findings related to these factors could be helpful for encouraging mixed-ethnicity schools to strive to accommodate individual uniqueness and multicultural characteristics within Canadian pluralistic society. A critical look at ethnic divisions amongst youth groups may encourage educators to take more responsibility for gaining a critical awareness of conditions that stretch beyond simplistic explanations of cultural differences.

### **Alberta Social Studies Curriculum and the Development of Intercultural Friendships**

The relationship between the high school social studies curriculum and the development of intercultural friendships between local peers and Chinese immigrant youth is complex. Social studies as a curriculum area “may include the learning needs of immigrant students, including issues of belonging, security, understanding, and acceptance with school curriculum, instruction and pedagogical practices” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 143). Hence, social studies is closely connected with intercultural interactions and

provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens. Recognition and respect for individual and collective identity is essential in a pluralistic and democratic society. Thus, Social Studies helps students develop their sense of self and community, encouraging them to affirm their place as citizens in an inclusive, democratic society. (Alberta Education, 2005, Program Rationale & Philosophy section, para. 1)

When used effectively, the Alberta social studies curriculum can play a significant role in the navigation of intercultural conflicts, resistance, or cultural clashes. Emancipation from narrow-minded thoughts on ethnicities and cultural differences can open students' minds, encouraging them to respect others and practice openness. As Kumashiro (2009) noted:

Social Studies focus on teaching and learning about the aspects of our lives that we associate primarily with issues of oppression, namely, the social aspects of our lives, including how we identify, how we interact with one another, and how we experience the world around us, both historically and today. . . . It is often easier to imagine anti-oppressive changes in Social Studies curriculum than in the curriculums of other disciplines. (p. 59)

A diverse cultural context may influence the development of a social studies curriculum and promote mutual understanding among different ethnicities. Culture is like an iceberg; the hidden part of the iceberg includes shared human characteristics and principles such as justice, equality, understanding, and forgiveness. Thus, a multicultural social studies curriculum is not contradictory to the development of intercultural friendships. "An inclusive curriculum, which is positioned through the cultures and experiences of all students, is one that has the broadest range of academic possibilities" (Dei et al., 2003, p. 175). Similarly, teachers' perceptions of the content of the social studies curriculum and classroom teaching practices are also important as "educators can do even more to change the nature of social studies in order to work toward social justice" (Kumashiro, 2009, p. 60). As such, the development of intercultural education is feasible through the platform of a social studies curriculum and would empower local and immigrant youth to learn from each other, especially when there is the fostering of intercultural friendship-

building and the creation of an equal and tolerant classroom and school environment.

Although the multicultural policy in Canada has encouraged the creation of a provincial social studies curriculum containing elements of multiculturalism, social studies teachers also need to “include the lives, histories and experiences of diverse groups in their curriculum and pedagogy” (Marri, 2012, p. 2013), to integrate and demonstrate different cultural elements and various ideologies, and to inspire students to think dialectically. Critical theory is “a moral construct designed to reduce human suffering in the world, and in the critical theoretical context, every individual is granted dignity regardless of his or her location in the web of reality” (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 140). As such, throughout this section, I critically examine the barriers to intercultural friendships through the lens of the social studies curriculum. I focus on the challenges teachers face when attempting to connect students’ lived histories with their cultural experiences by examining (a) the Alberta social studies curriculum in diverse classrooms, (b) teaching issues, (c) teaching content, and (d) the integration of ethnic content into social studies curriculum.

**The Alberta social studies curriculum in diverse classrooms.** The social studies curriculum is a good platform for creating intercultural friendships, as it is crucial in helping students “to find a place within schools that allows their histories and experiences to be part of the curriculum and culture of the school” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 172). However, given that Western ideologies are embedded in the social studies curriculum (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998; Loewen, 2008; Zinn, 1999), the current teaching “privileges particular knowledges and histories while silencing others” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 173). Such a pedagogy is mismatched with Canadian multicultural policies and “reinforces the false sense of superiority of mainstream students and fails to reflect, validate, and celebrate the cultures of students of color” (Banks & McGee Banks,

2010, pp. 252–253). Emily, a young social studies teacher of colour, echoed these sentiments:

We have lots of aboriginals in this building and you spend a lot of time going, “You know what, your information’s wrong,” and that’s what I mean by a teacher has to be willing to stand up and say, “You know what? Everything you are talking about is a legacy of our own European imperialism.” (Emily)

Emily commented that the mainstream-centric curriculum does not see the European imperialists critically enough for what they did. Teachers need to be able to make these critical connections more strongly instead of teaching their class that “Eurocentric traditions [are] the primary source of knowledge in schools and society” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 172). Some of the teachers who participated in this study believed that the mainstream social studies curriculum is contradictory to Canada’s multiculturalist values. Cindy, a young female Whitesocial studies teacher, stated,

I would say that I have always noticed that multiculturalism, to a certain extent, in a classroom runs in the singular direction, almost where there are some ideologies and what we called the “hidden curriculum,” which obviously has certain Western biases, but that’s part of the fact that the curriculum is set by the government, and the government is teaching Western values to the students, right? At the same time, we’re creating an accepting environment in the classroom, and a lot of the time it’s up to the teacher . . . in terms of how much we want to integrate, but at the end of the day we do have curriculum we have to follow . . . although we have a multicultural policy, what we are teaching and in our classrooms as well, because we teach the curriculum, and Western ideology is what is accepted. (Cindy)

This quotation shows that although the social studies curriculum is more focused on Western beliefs and ideals, teachers still try to be inclusive of other cultures. “It would be pragmatic to interrogate how we [teachers] might achieve the inclusion of local knowledge into schooling when a curriculum that is both highly centralized and ultra-standardized has been put in place” (Dei, 2003, p. 240). It is up to the teacher to integrate students, but they are often constrained by the curriculum they are required to teach. This constraint can strengthen the reluctance of youth to accept the differences of their peers and can create an implicit barrier to

the development of intercultural friendships.

As Dei et al. (2003) pointed out, “The hegemonic practices of Eurocentrism represent the imperialism of that knowledge and the simultaneous subversion and erasure of other ways of knowing. There is a need to see Eurocentric knowledge as culturally-situated rather than universal” (p. 173). Cindy, a young female social studies teacher respondent, presented her understanding of this idea:

[Multicultural policy] is a really young idea, and I think people forget that . . . or they hear Canada’s multiculturalism policy, and they go, “Yeah everything is all right and everybody is perfect.” No, because it is just an idea and it’s getting there, but it is going to take a long time. This is the same Canada that built residential schools for aboriginals and treated them so harshly that they are still dealing with legacies. . . . You know, Chinese immigrants laid down the railroad and lost their lives in the process, and we didn’t do anything for them. . . . This is that Canada, and look how far it has come in the past hundred years. . . . We changed from that Canada to this Canada. It just means you can’t be in such a hurry to rush everything to be perfect all at once. But unfortunately, it does hold some negativity for some communities, but I think if they continue to come in and teach each other, really at the end of the day, the more information you get, the more accepting you become. (Cindy)

In this quotation, Cindy shared her insights on how multiculturalism has developed over time. As Bennet (1999) said, “Active inquiry and the development of new knowledge and understanding about cultural differences and the history and contributions of contemporary ethnic groups and nations, as well as of various civilizations in the past” (p. 12) can be beneficial for people to respect and understand each other, and it would be unreasonable to expect it to go any faster. Cindy has high hopes that it will continue to improve, and that the increased acceptance of other cultures and social equity, especially in school communities (Gutmann, 2004), that results from a decrease in ignorance will usher in a new era in which intercultural interactions will be easier for everyone.

It is also important to consider the makeup of the school population when exploring the



use of a mainstream-centric social studies curriculum, especially for schools with large immigrant populations, as mainstream-centric curricula lacks information on ethnic diversity. Emily noted that if the social studies curriculum were more diverse, it would create more opportunities for teachers and immigrant students, and for host students and immigrant students, to conduct intercultural discussions and exchange ideas. Such interactions could decrease cultural misunderstandings between schools, communities (K. H. Au, 2006; C. D. Lee, 2006), and families, and promote effective understanding:

We have a greater opportunity to ask those [immigrant] students their opinions in a classroom setting—"You didn't grow up here, what's your take on this idea? What would your dominant culture think or what would you do at home?" . . . The students in the social studies classroom have the opportunity to ask the students to bring their culture into the room to create understanding and kind of to develop that multiculturalism. (Emily)

Additionally, Emily thought that it is a lot more challenging to teach multicultural knowledge and ideologies when there are immigrants available to help describe their own cultures.

To summarize, the content of provincial social studies curriculum often does not represent the reality of ethnic diversity for immigrant students from different cultural backgrounds as "it marginalizes their experiences and cultures and does not reflect their dreams, hopes, and perspectives" (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 234) and has undesirable costs for local students. As Banks and McGee Banks (2010) noted:

It reinforces their false sense of superiority, gives them a misleading conception of their relationship with other racial and ethnic groups, and denies them the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, perspectives, and frames of reference that can be gained from studying and experiencing other cultures and groups . . . denies mainstream students to view their culture from the point of view of another culture. . . . to understand their own culture fully . . . to understand better how it relates to and interacts with other cultures. (p. 234)

If discussion of diverse ethnic ideologies is missing, it is unlikely that the curriculum will

offer more chances to promote intercultural understanding. Even worse, this loss might result in some intercultural misunderstandings when cultural clashes and discontinuities occur.

**Teaching issues.** Improper teaching methods with one-dimensional perspectives and the use of inappropriate teaching content can cause students to develop sentiments of resistance to intercultural conversations with peers. Some key teaching issues that were proposed by the social studies teacher respondents who took part in this study included the problems of one-dimensional perspectives, incomplete information, and the teacher's attitude towards controversial issues.

***One-dimensional perspective.*** The value of being open-minded to diverse ethnic perspectives should be advocated in the social studies classroom in an attempt to break the shell of unacceptance and intercultural misunderstanding and strengthen the recognition of varying ideologies. As Cindy pointed out,

The whole point of teaching, particularly in social studies, and this is in the curriculum, is to provide perspectives in this context. Every single one of the textbook titles we use is perspective on something. A better approach would be okay about this country, and the kids list down . . . and talking about how this is one conflict area, but does that mean the people are the problem. Their kids are probably thinking mostly what mom and dad thought and what their peers thought. I mean, they were all heavily influenced. And that's the opportunity. . . . If this reading is really negative, let them read it first. Ask what you think about this, to tell us the amazing things about your country because we know there is amazing things in it. . . . It's all in how you frame it to the class, how you approach that student. . . . It's part of my job to tell my students to get rid of the ignorance involved. (Cindy)

According to Cindy, the focus of the social studies curriculum is to teach new and different ways to look at issues. Because many students have picked up a rigid point of view from their parents, it is important to encourage them to be more open-minded and less judgemental based on the close-minded things they might hear. Some teacher respondents commented that one of the most difficult aspects of their job is fighting against the ignorance and

resulting prejudices that students come into their class with. They feel that their job is to provide students with alternative perspectives, so that they can be less judgemental and more accepting of other cultures. Additionally, Cindy believed that it is important for teachers to approach every issue from two or more directions, as students will otherwise learn a biased and one-dimensional perspective on various groups and cultures. If the event being discussed reflects negatively on a group, it is important to talk about some good traits of the group in order for the discussion to be more balanced.

Seeing only one perspective in their history textbook may cause learners to take unequal things for granted. As Dehli (1996, as cited in Dei et al., 2003) noted, “Unequally structured material and social conditions” (p. 143) contribute to the success of middle-class White students over that of “other” students—“othered” in that they “are not in the dominant group, and ‘othered’ in the subaltern sense of being made foreign and being classified as marginal” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 144). An inquiry-based teaching method is essential “to enable students to view concepts, issues, and problems from diverse ethnic perspectives [and] . . . make students social critics and reflective agents of change” (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 253).

It is evident that “many factors have slowed the institutionalization of a multicultural curriculum in the schools, including ideological resistance, lack of teacher knowledge of ethnic groups, heavy reliance of teachers on textbooks, and focus on high-stakes testing and accountability” (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 253). Sean, a male White social studies teacher, noted,

Teaching can be super uncomfortable for the teacher because sometimes you have to look at the students and say that you know what they are thinking about the group of people is ignorant. They don’t have all the information, let us try and find out the information. That’s where you turn it into an inquiry-based assignment where the students go out and find out information, and then they can take the chance to speak to that student or

different things like that. Or when we talk about Canada's own horrific history towards aboriginal Canadians. . . . I feel horrible that students have to be put through that. That's just not good teaching. (Sean)

Sean believed that although it is difficult, it is important to look at everyone's history in a multi-dimensional perspective. This type of perspective-taking fosters recognition of similarities between diverse cultures because no culture is described as better than any other, which brings everyone closer together.

***Incomplete information.*** Some of the teachers interviewed for this study believed that the curriculum they teach is biased, to some degree, with incomplete information—it is not objective to discuss only a part of the whole. For example, Dorian, a male social studies teacher, said:

It is also unfair for social studies teachers who have lived and breathed this curriculum, who know and can very easily look back and make a statement about [it]. . . . The average Canadian would think that the average teacher doesn't think that way because they are not inundated with history and politics every day of their lives. But this is my life [and] my passion. I make the assumption as well, of course, that everybody knows that it has been brutal for the last hundred years, and we're just another brutal face of multiculturalism. (Dorian)

***Teachers' attitudes towards controversial issues.*** Dorian's quotation above also illustrates teachers' attitudes towards controversial issues. Some teachers have a better understanding of certain topics than others. Because of this, they might understand the history in such a way as to make the curriculum seem exceedingly biased and incomplete. The problem of hasty generalizations when presenting controversial knowledge to culturally diverse populations needs to be noted. In Canada today, as a multicultural country, different ethnicities should respect one another in order to create a win-win situation rather than competition or hierarchy. Specifically, Canadians should objectively perceive ethnic differentiation and accept diversity. David, a social studies teacher respondent, added:

It is hard, and I have noticed that a lot of it [information] is negative because that's what they [students] have seen in the news, that's what's with the information getting in their face not getting this cultural significance. . . . That's the whole point in showing two sides.

This quotation further shows how a teacher's attitude towards other ideologies or countries can determine whether his or her teaching will be effective. Positive attitudes in regard to various ethnicities are important to create a less discriminatory school community by helping learners to "understand differences and refrain from stereotyping" (Kumashiro, 2009, p. 65) as "all decisions in teaching are political" (Lund, 2014, p. 3). In addition, content being taught in social studies class is closely related to the success of intercultural relationships.

**Teaching content.** The type of content addressed in the social studies classroom and the types of materials used during discussions can have a huge impact on students' perspectives and their relationships with peers. The use of improper teaching materials, such as handouts with discriminatory connotations or misleading discussion questions, can lead to emotional estrangement, racial stereotyping, and prejudice. As Cui (2013) wrote:

School knowledge includes not only what is written in the textbook, but also how the teachers interpret the textbook to students. Given the relatively authoritative role of school knowledge, it is difficult for young people to challenge what they are taught (e.g. teachers' negative comments on China) in class. Since young people are the future of Canadian society, what they learn in today's class will affect how they interact with people from other racialized and ethnic groups in the future. (p. 169)

My interview data also showed that students in senior high schools felt uncomfortable and embarrassed when their social studies teachers delivered handouts with controversial topics, or questions that discussed the negative sides of their home countries. It is the teacher's job to provide the proper direction with regard to critical thinking in order to "create a plural center within educational discourse and praxis that emphasizes diverse epistemologies as core curricular content" (Dei et al., 2003, p. 172) when they are making use of mainstream

curriculum. Especially in social studies, teachers should focus on the issue rather than the people. Teaching should result in effective learning outcomes of diverse perspectives, so as to guide students to see the pluralistic world through critical thinking. Otherwise, there is a risk that students will overgeneralize what they have learned.

Some teacher respondents believed that it is reasonable to present the all of the sides of a controversial issue:

Your job, as a teacher, is to present all of the sides of an argument, and then let them make decisions from there. You want to try to be as unbiased as you can, so do you want to present positive sides of a culture? Of course you do. Do you want to promote more multiculturalism? Of course you do. But is it okay to look at some negative aspects of culture and history? Yeah, I think it is. . . . Just opens the door to other countries and moving forward, not fearing the retribution. . . . That's politics, that's global affairs, and just things that happen, we can use them in here to provide examples for things that we are going to teach. (Sean)

The more knowledge you have about different cultures, the more educated you'll be, the better off in life you'll be. You open up the conversation and you look at it honestly, you say, "Here are the good things, here are the not so good things." (David)

These teachers believed that an accurate portrayal of the negative sides of a culture is integral to a complete understanding of the surrounding world. They did not by any means think that the positive sides should be ignored, but believed that both past and current issues should be analyzed in order to keep the topics relevant and interesting, and to promote a more applicable understanding of the subject. Most Canadian students just learn the history of Canada. As a result, they may have an independent and neutral stand on the negative aspects of Canada, such as its history with residential schools, as Sean noted:

We spent too much time talking about residential schools, we are beaten to death. And talk about why is it bad, what did we do here in this issue, why are our First Nations people still having problems in society today? It is a direct reflection of residential schools. What is the social responsibility? How much should we do to help them now? So those are things we are looking at there.

The problem is that in the case of the other countries, Canadian students may lack the necessary knowledge of the history and current status of development of the countries of their immigrant classmates. They may have a sampling bias if they were not taught the “whole picture” history of controversial issues. This bias might then serve as a possible barrier for local youth and immigrant youth to build intercultural friendships. As Cindy, a social studies teacher, said,

They [social studies teachers] present the negative aspects of the country, then they ask the students to think critically about it. Any student gets painted with this brush. Because if you think this is only negative, you're crazy. For teachers to say, I give them the negative perspectives of and I let them critically think about it. If you're going to constantly present the negative attitude towards a group of people or something along those lines, and not back it up or make sense, knowing that's the part of being a teacher, where you have to be able to be the adult in the room, be the professional in the room, and remind the students that . . . it's a matter of perspective, but perspective comes from knowledge, and if you only have half the story as the teacher is presenting to you, then it is a leading question. But don't get me wrong: . . . the key to learning is to critically think. It's a skill you have to teach them. You can't just assume that they have it. (Cindy)

This quotation illustrates that youth need assistance from their teachers to recognize the history of social situations in the appropriate political context. Without this assistance, handouts can be manipulated, and class discussions may be used out of context.

This draws attention to and raises questions about some underlying issues. During my investigation, some student respondents mentioned that when their teachers drew on controversial political materials regarding different political ideologies from their home country and events such as Tian An Men Square, Dalai, and Xinjiang, they felt uncomfortable, embarrassed, and discouraged about the political issues related to their home country. They noted that their parents hoped some of the positive historical events that occurred in their home country would be introduced, as “students need to see how the people [are] being stereotyped and scapegoated” (Kumashiro, 2009, p. 65). Furthermore, based on my observations during recess

time, such sensitive topics were further discussed between immigrant students and local students. This can be problematic because as Kumashiro (2009) said, social studies typically includes the “experiences and perspectives of only certain people and teaches that only certain people matter in society, historically and today” (p. 59).

However, some teacher participants responded that even though they select problematic negative issues from some developing countries for students to discuss, they also ask students to discuss problematic events in Canada, such as residential schools, as they mainly aim for the development of critical thinking skills. In my opinion, since local students already know the good side of Canada, it is much easier to understand a less positive side of Canada. When exploring the historical, social, or political issues in developing countries, where many Canadian students have never been, these students may only learn about the negative sides of these countries. Immigrant youth may have more historical knowledge and political information to understand why these negative issues happened in their original country but lack the confidence to share.

In some instances, Canadian-born immigrant youth feel ashamed of their parents’ birth country, especially if they lack some positive background knowledge regarding these countries’ controversial events. When negative political events are discussed in the classroom, these youths do not have enough knowledge of the history, culture, and politics of their parents’ home country to use as a defense. As a result, an uncomfortable sentiment can develop for those with purely negative perceptions of their home countries. Local youths may hold negative attitudes about other countries and people. This can create another possible barrier to intercultural friendships between host youth and their immigrant peers.

In addition, misleading questions may increase cultural division by causing immigrant



youth to be stereotyped or scapegoated. Although some teacher respondents suggested that discussing negative issues helps with developing critical skills, others disagreed:

Asking you a leading question and acting as if where I have led you is where you have come to by yourself. If they [social studies teachers] present the negative aspects of the country, then ask the students to think critically about it. No. The question would be a more neutral question, or questions that allow for both perspectives, or demands both perspectives and then asked them to come to their conclusion. Because a lot of teachers don't know every single thing about the country that they are teaching about, what they hear about or know about is what is in the news, and a lot of that is very negative at that given time. So it has to be the teacher's conscious decision to either go out and find out some of the positives they can temper that with, or build an inquiry project and have the students go on and make their own observations about it. We aren't entitled to judge others when our own history books are tainted with blood. (Cindy)

Cindy felt that questions pertaining only to the negative sides of an ethnicity could sway students to view that ethnicity in a negative light, which is counterproductive to the objectives of the social studies course. Because teachers might not necessarily know about the positive sides of a country, they are likely to teach only the negative things that the media talks about. The teacher respondents in this research thought that Canadians should not be judging others, as Canada also has dark parts to its history, and that these darker parts could be used to temper the unnecessarily strong sense of nationalism that can sometimes arise. In Cindy's opinion, another solution to this problem is to do an inquiry-based project instead, so that the students can find the various perspectives on their own and reach more well-rounded conclusions.

Teaching about different histories and cultures in a balanced way provides a better education and better guidance for children, reducing prejudices and perceptions of differences, and allowing children to learn to think critically and make their own judgments.

Cultural conversations can turn into arguments and disagreements on different perspectives from different cultures so they use them as scapegoats for what's going on in their country. . . . There are some things you just can't really solve. . . . Sometimes there is not a right answer, but you have to try your best to come up the best possible conclusion. . . . I think that goes back to the teacher addressing the fact that, the issues are

so complex, and have so many different historical things, where they are now, there are millions of things that are involved in that issue that cannot be simply that you're bad because this happened. There is a reason for it happening. But personal attacks and such are not acceptable when you are an educated person. You understand that person is not to blame, because look at this issue, it is much bigger than that person. So make sure that you are being responsible in terms of how they are using the knowledge you give in class. Thinking of the bigger picture, just creating that safe environment. (Cindy)

It is kind of like bullying, essentially. It just takes something you have learned here, and moving it out, and using that information to bully someone. It is never going to end. I wish it would. But no. It's a part of life that bullying happens, we have all experienced it. But your job as a teacher is to try and address those concerns so that they do not come up. And that's what I mean to create that safe environment. But it's pretty hard to just stop it from completely happening, right? . . . And you can't tell them they are wrong for that. Because there's no possibility of having a wrong answer. That's only if you want them to think something. But in my opinion, that's not what the goal is, you want to get them to think on their own. If you have done that, then no answer they gave you is wrong. (Donald)

In the above excerpt, Donald focused on the importance of understanding the information one absorbs, and using it in an appropriate way. He thought it is acceptable to disagree with others, but that bullying or arguing is counterproductive and unacceptable. In his view, a safe classroom environment is critical, where any opinion can be voiced so long as it is based on information and not intended to put anyone down. There are many interpretations of each issue, and every one of them may be accurate if based on a strong factual knowledge base. By talking only about the negative aspects of a country, students are subliminally led to believe that no positives exist. Because of this tendency, it is imperative that the teacher ensures that the students maintain a balanced perspective and that they develop proper critical thinking skills so that they can form well-rounded views without assistance.

As asserted by Derman-Sparks (1991, as cited in Dei et al., 2003), "Extending our educational strategies beyond a 'tourist curricula' and towards an integrative anti-racist approach requires a new philosophy of schooling" (p. 171). This philosophy would "acknowledge the

multiple identifications that individuals bring to their schooling experience, and it would negotiate that experience respective of their racialized, classed, gendered, ethnic bodies” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 172). Thus, dealing with sensitive topics requires one to set up an objective view of the history, explain the sensitive part of the culture, take into account the feelings of all students (guiding students to accept different cultures in social studies classes), encourage students to look for strategies to answer questions, and think independently. When teaching, educators may redirect questions that imply questionable racialized statements, and try to help youth to be open to more diverse ethnic perspectives.

David noted,

Something might be culturally sensitive I always preface . . . we need to be open-minded and accepting both from the perspective of the culture that might be directly impacted by the material and other kids around that might respond to seeing in a way that might be sensitive to the group I’m talking to as well. . . . From a pedagogical standpoint, that’s kind of my role in the process of doing that, it facilitates friendships or conversation between students from different backgrounds to build understanding. . . . I can create an awareness in students of the importance of acknowledging differences, recognizing the differences that aren’t necessarily bad that they can actually add to the richness of a society or cultural fabric. . . . And I make the students aware of that I’m not an expert. . . . but youth want to work together and see if we can find an answer. . . . Students struggle with the idea of, well, if I say yes this or that must be the right answer, and recognizing the person sitting next to them has different perspectives, when they say no and disagree with that issue, and they have a perfectly valid reason for doing that. That’s why it’s so important for students to realize that it’s not my job to teach them what to think.

Although teachers do not have a significant direct influence, their actions will be picked up by students, and in that sense, they have a tremendous influence outside of the information they pass on. By being careful with how they talk about other cultures, and showing the methods they use to arrive at conclusions, teachers can guide students to be more sensitive to racialized issues and better at critical thinking. By supporting many different students’ perspectives on the same issue, teachers help students learn to be tolerant of opposing viewpoints and see a situation

from more angles. In the social studies classroom, teachers can create a safe and comfortable communication environment through multivariate classes to encourage students to express what they are thinking. David further noted:

Your main role is to provide a safe and secure environment for students to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and sharing thoughts. Especially being a social studies teacher . . . I also have to deal with constant material that frequently directly relates to experiences that students in my class have had. . . . For starters, social studies is an obvious area in which the build up, certainly, is the responsibility. I think that role of the teacher is to build an environment where everybody feels that they can belong and they can contribute their ideas without ridicule, without being singled out, or anything like that. (David)

This quotation sheds light on the primary responsibility of the teacher, which is to facilitate a classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas without fear of ridicule or judgement. Cindy added:

You demand that they look at all sides of the spectrum before they go ahead and make snap judgment calls. Do I think that this is what happens the majority of the time? No. I think that there is a lot of negative perspective presented when it comes to countries that are not Canada because the case studies focus on things like the legacies of globalization cases that are negative. . . . To be a critical thinker, it's important to cover everything really . . . to look at both sides. . . . You may give them a negative source, and it clearly has a negative opinion on it, then you tell them: I want you to explore the positives, and I want you to explore the negatives, and then I want you to come to your own judgment, and that's the key. (Cindy)

To have balanced content, it is important to look at both sides of the argument—the positive and the negative. Moreover, teachers have to consider immigrant students' sentiments when discussing the negative history of their original country. As Friere (1997) highlighted, there is an important connection between learning and “expression of feeling”—“I cannot, in the name of exactness and rigor, negate my body, my emotions, and my feelings” (pp. 94–95). Cindy advocated for encouraging students to find the positives in a seemingly negative source, in order to build students' critical-thinking skills. There are a lot of negatives presented in the media and

the curriculum, so these skills are indispensable in the pursuit of a balanced point of view on the world.

**The integration of ethnic content into social studies teaching.** The relevant research regarding intercultural education in combination with social studies teaching categorizes this process into four main approaches: the contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 253). Except for the issues mentioned in the sections above, from an interdisciplinary perspective, intercultural education with content-based diversity can be combined with social studies in senior high schools to create a more inclusive curriculum. Intercultural education curriculum can be integral to social studies. Social studies teaching can be a good platform to provide opportunities for intercultural education, including intercultural competence development, in cross-cultural classrooms. These opportunities could include “intercultural attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills” (Deardorff, 2009, as cited in Gopal, 2011, p. 374). Some teacher respondents noted:

At the start of the year, I ask kids, “What’s your history, where are you from?” I have them fill out the sheets, and I know who is in my class. And that’s how you shape the examples you use. And I think if you are a teacher who cares about keeping things current and up-to-date and interesting to your students, that’s the best way to do that. . . . Especially in social studies, because although there is a curriculum, it is so free to look at examples, how we get that message across to students, that it’s really easy to adapt your lesson plans to your class, which is a luxury we get. . . . That helps kids be a little bit more interested if you are talking [about] something that is relatable to them. (Donald)

I can use a variety of different countries, and there is freedom for choice of topic. However, most of the curriculum is down to the government. That’s what you’re trying to get the students to do in social studies, is to have those critical thinking skills and to read between the lines . . . and to talk rationally about a topic of any kind . . . to infer and to look at something and say that’s biased, too, that doesn’t make sense. . . . You have to find the hidden things and see what the underlying issue is. Look at the facts, what’s going on to research? What’s a good reliable source to research? These are the things in social studies that you’re trying to get them to reach. (Sean)

These teachers believed that personalized examples are the best way to encourage students to be more engaged in class and to promote understanding of the people around them. Using cases from students' home countries makes the content more relevant to them, makes it easier for the teacher to teach skills such as critical thinking, and allows everyone to approach an issue from multiple angles. This more well-rounded approach brings cultures and ethnicities closer together, and therefore would stimulate intercultural interactions.

Furthermore, cultural awareness from teachers could have an impact on the quality of intercultural teaching. Mack, a science teacher, commented:

I think the influence we have is very limited, but the subtle influences are important. It's ourselves being culturally aware, and I think that's important for us as teachers. . . . We are not as culturally diverse at this school as some, but we certainly should have an idea about major aspects, and being interested in different aspects of people's cultures, and being able to talk to them about it. . . . And make it that you don't ignore that different cultures exist, but you're aware of them and you talk to the kids about it. And this past year, one class of mine, we had running jokes about moon cakes. I have had moon cakes, they're horrible, but they [immigrant students] thought it was hilarious, but I have had them. So being that little connection, and so we'll talk about things like that and little things on the way. (Mack)

In regard to the feasibility of putting intercultural education into social studies classes, some teacher participants argued that they need more freedom, support, and flexibility to properly teach intercultural education through a social studies platform. For example, Dorian, a male social studies teacher, said:

Some of it [criteria] is set up by the province, here is the government saying, your social studies teachers in Grade 10 need to teach these concepts by the end of the year. So some of that right in there saying you need to focus on China and globalization, and you need to focus on these different things. But the freedom of the choice for a teacher comes in in Grade 10 or grade 12. I am looking at the concept of self-determination. Well, I have to get across what self-determination is—what examples can I use. I can use Bosnia and Kosovo and Serbia. Or I can use Yugoslavia. I can use these countries fighting for those things, so there is some freedom for a choice of topic. . . . But most of the mandatory curriculum is set by the government, and we don't have any saying in that. So we are left with, here we need to teach, get it across to the students. (Dorian)

Because the curriculum is rigidly controlled by the government, teachers can only choose examples for concepts. They need to teach particular ideas, but it is up to them to choose how to approach them. David, another social studies teacher, added:

I would argue that most teachers already want to pursue this [intercultural education], but our hands feel very tied because the curriculum already has so many places you would be able to talk about this interracial understanding or understanding the differences, and it's not fair to constantly bring it back to these immigrant students and go, "Speak on behalf of your culture." It's better for students to be able to stand there, look at that religious leader or cultural leader and go, "How come?" You know how great it will be to bring in somebody from the Chinese Consulate to be able to go, "Can you speak to Chinese ideology and understanding of communism to my students?" The students would have such a unique opportunity, but quite frankly, 15 hours' worth of paperwork for one-hour worth of lesson [is not worth it]. (David)

This teacher believed that having guest speakers would be a much better way of promoting intercultural understanding; however, this approach is not feasible because of all of the paperwork necessary to arrange such an opportunity. Curriculum requirements may also pose limitations on intercultural interactions. There is still a lot of ignorance and barriers that the curriculum does not help teachers overcome.

In summary, the current social studies curriculum is still mainstream and based on Western ideologies. This issue, combined with various teaching issues such as biased perspectives, and incomplete or one-sided discussion questions, can hinder intercultural interactions between local students and their immigrant peers. The social studies curriculum should be a more flexible space to accommodate intercultural education. "Social studies educators are required to emphasize diversity in their curriculum and pedagogy to help students see each other as individuals, while learning the varied experiences, narratives, perspectives, and contributions of an increasingly diverse population" (Marri, 2012, p. 2015) and to "enable educators and students to gain a better understanding of the diverse populations surrounding

them” (Marri, 2012, p. 2013). If the curriculum included more immigrant experiences and perspectives, students would become better at the processes of critique and discovery—tools that are vital in the quest to change the status quo and establish a harmonious multicultural society by encouraging participation in intercultural conversations.

The integration of ethnic content into social studies teaching increases intercultural knowledge about different groups as “the concept of holistic education emphasizes that the acquisition of knowledge is a process of interactions among the physical/ received body, the learner’s adaptable/adaptive mind, and the power of the human spirit” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 143). This integration allows political and sensitive issues to be discussed in a neutral way as “nurturing feelings of belonging and entitlement among minority students involves pedagogical and curricular strategies that reinforce the notion of Canadian identity as a common, yet plural space, shared by all citizens irrespective of their origins” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 174). Hence, teachers, especially social studies teachers, should embrace Friere’s philosophical standpoint, who, “at the risk of appearing foolish, repeatedly insisted throughout his life that teaching is an act of love” (Darder, 2002, p. 148). In short, an effective social studies curriculum could serve as an important platform for facilitating intercultural friendship building and development between immigrant students and their host peers. This, in turn, could serve as a vital tool that government and school communities could use to help develop outstanding intercultural acceptance and harmony in Canada’s diverse multicultural society.

### **Intercultural Friendships and the Hidden Curriculum**

Far from being separate entities, intercultural friendships and the hidden curriculum are indivisible characteristics of multiethnic schools. The hidden curriculum is “a central problem within critical pedagogical studies” (W. Au, 2012, p. 593) and “one of the most difficult aspects



of racism to isolate and identify” (Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2006, p. 204) because it “encompasses the norms, values, and beliefs that are conveyed implicitly through the cultures and structures of educational institutions [and] . . . teach[es] students social norms and expectations” (W. Au, 2012, p. 593). One of the main purposes of the hidden curriculum is to build relationships between teachers and students that focus on the informal transmission of knowledge and the provision of practical and emotional support, which “entails that voices and bodies of all students be central to this holistic understanding of curriculum” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 175).

My research is concerned with how hidden racist assumptions and biases are historically embedded in school environments and how the hidden curriculum influences the construction of intercultural relationships. As Cui (2013) noted, the hidden curriculum “is expressed and delivered in a more subtle and implicit way, such as . . . a slipped-in comment, a low expectation of Chinese students’ performance in English and Phys-Ed class, [or] in negative comments about China” (p. 169). Ultimately, hidden curricula are invisible barriers to intercultural friendships development as they are “transmitted through mechanisms such as the regulation of who can talk and when (for example, the raising of hands)” (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 67). Many immigrant students find their questions unanswered or ignored. Other mechanisms by which teachers can regulate students include the creation of seating plans and group work, which offer students opportunities to interact with one another and to learn to negotiate cultural conflicts.

According to teacher respondents, the implicit curriculum, which is “achieved through creating a sense of presence for all students in school” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 175), creates challenges for the development of intercultural friendships. These challenges can be divided into four main categories: (a) challenges of building a diverse classroom culture, (b) student-teacher

relationships and opportunities to ask questions, (c) seating plans and group work, and (d) challenges of immigrant parent–teacher communication. These challenges can become opportunities for creating intercultural interactions. In the section below, I explore these three categories and discuss how each relates to the hidden curriculum and its impact on the development of intercultural friendships.

**Challenges of building a diverse classroom culture.** Diverse classroom culture refers to “inclusive classrooms” and “identity-safe learning environments” (Tuitt, 2012, p. 396) that teachers create for students “by working to reduce overt and subtle acts of racism” (p. 396). For example, David, a social studies teacher, noted:

I think you need to set up your classroom in a way where kids feel it’s okay for them to be different culturally or racially as long as they’re respecting everyone else’s ideas. If everyone were the same, it would be boring. One of the things that I emphasize in my classroom is that this is a safe place. (David)

An emphasis on mutual respect between classmates encourages students to try to talk about cultures and learn from one another because they can feel comfortable and relaxed in their classroom environment. In this section, a diverse classroom culture is used in reference to the empathy-based attitude that teachers sometimes employ when dealing with marginalized students. In a diverse classroom, the teacher creates an inclusive atmosphere to encourage in-depth student learning, including how immigrant youth see themselves in relation to intercultural communication. “Research and theory indicate that students cannot be expected to learn in classrooms in which they are marginalized, discriminated against, and made to feel invisible through overt and subtle acts of racist microaggression and stereotype threat” (Tuitt, 2012, p. 396). The diverse classroom culture aims to allow each student to have a voice, thereby levelling the playing field for all involved. Mason, a CALM (career and life management) teacher; Colin,

an English as a second language teacher; and Sean, a social studies teacher, all explained the significance of increasingly diverse classroom cultures:

We have such a massive influx of immigration . . . inter-ethnicity relationships are almost impossible to avoid for a lot of these kids now . . . whether it is in the workplace, whether it is sports teams or other sorts of things in the community. . . . We're getting to a point where we have enough ethnic immigration that it's almost like it's unavoidable. . . . That seems to be the case because it seems like when you become an adult and go to your workplace, those relationships can potentially be unavoidable. (Mason)

Every relationship is essentially an interracial friendship, because you're not coming from the same culture when you walk in that door. Now we live in the culture together. (Colin)

I do have a responsibility to help all my students to feel comfortable with each other. It's okay to disagree, but personal attacks are not acceptable. . . . It's making sure that the person is being responsible using the knowledge that you are giving them in class. Thinking of the bigger picture, just creating that safe environment, this can alleviate some of the concerns. There could be a kid who is ignorant and gives someone a hard time for the example they've given—you try to alleviate that as much as you can. It's kind of like bullying—it is taking something you've learned in here, and then using that information to bully someone. It is a part of life, bullying happens; it is a part of your job as a teacher to try to address those concerns. (Sean)

These quotations suggest that an acceptable, comfortable, equal, democratic, and diverse classroom climate needs to be created by teachers. Deborah, a physics teacher, added:

Our culture is constantly changing. People are maybe not overtly racist, but there are certainly some aspects where they see things changing and it scares them a little bit, because they don't understand the changes. They can also get frustrated when groups come in, and try to change things to something that they perceive as being wrong. . . . There's going to be some backlash for that. We should be encouraging diversity and getting these ideas out there to challenge them. (Deborah)

Sophia, a French teacher, echoed:

In the school setting, whether it is kindergarten or grade 12, you have to encourage the values of accepting, of accepting humanity as opposed to not accepting anything else, and we also need to encourage understanding, or just teaching some of the barriers that are just there. (Sophia)

Elizabeth, a cosmetology teacher, shared her thoughts:

Discrimination is pretty much ignorance, right? . . . So, we need to fix the ignorance by

giving people knowledge, and teachers are huge part of that. That's what we do in the education system here. That's our job. (Elizabeth)

As illustrated by the quotations above, these teacher respondents recognized how the increased rate of worldwide immigration has increased the importance of teaching students intercultural skills in order to improve cultural understanding and decrease ignorance. Due to the unavailability and necessity of intercultural contact, it is best for our society and school communities to inspire students to understand and accept other cultures. A democratic classroom climate is necessary if each student is to have a voice in a multicultural community:

I find lots of times that immigrant students are trying to destroy that inherent bias; they want to have an opportunity to have a voice. When it's one-on-one, I've found that there is a lot that they want to tell you. And they're perfectly fine, even if they know that what they're telling you is kind of contrary to the popular opinion. (Elizabeth)

This quotation demonstrates the importance of teachers building one-on-one relationships with students in order to help newcomers move towards making intercultural connections with their teachers and with their classroom peers. Such steps can eliminate "strangeness" and "otherness," and provide immigrant youth with more opportunities to share their culture and ideas in order to build self-confidence, fit in with the class, and generate desire and curiosity within their peers to get to know them better. Two social studies teacher respondents, Cindy and Emily, voiced their opinions:

Classrooms have culture, they always do. And that changes year after year, day after day. We need to do something that involves more talking and getting them engaged. You do the same thing when you see different students—you get to know them when you find ways to work with them. There isn't really one formula that could work for all of that because then you would be too rigid and you wouldn't know how to change based on the circumstances. . . . You need to be looking for the diversity, and you need to be getting to know the students and their differences . . . on a different level and that you see how that impacts their behaviour, and how it impacts how they perceive others, and as a teacher it is my job to pursue their understanding of diversity by getting rid of ignorance and prejudice through knowledge. For example, if I understand that a student might be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in a unique manner because of their ethnicity,

I need to be providing them with an opportunity . . . when it comes to the fact that I work with these kids 6 to 8 hours a week, it's like having friends. (Cindy)

As long as you are not using a way that makes them uncomfortable, because it is getting to know them that takes a lot of understanding, and subtlety is the key to understanding their emotions, which is what you do as a teacher every day. You deal with so much emotion every day that you become able to gauge somebody's mindset by talking to them. You read them, and it's learning to read them, that's a part of getting to know them. Being a good teacher means that you take whatever information you can get . . . to make your classes better . . . the students don't necessarily use it to make assumptions about people, in fact it's the opposite, it removes assumptions. Knowledge is key, if students around the classroom know each other, if they know where you're coming from, then they're more likely to connect, so you just have to find ways to allow them to have a voice, give them the option to have that voice, and then find ways to integrate them instead of making the groups for them. And that's part of what we do as teachers. You have to be aware of what your students are struggling with and what they are good at so you kind of have to be aware of where they are at emotionally. (Emily)

In these quotations, the teacher respondents shared their opinions on the individuality of students and classroom contexts, and the need to provide students with opportunities to share their unique insights. They also discussed the need for different actions within the classroom based on their observations of their students' unique personalities and various visible cultural differences, and how a rigid plan that does not accommodate these differences will inevitably prove unsuccessful.

The creation and nurturing of a diverse classroom culture built on respect, warmth, caring, trust, and harmony is the foundation for establishing an environment in which students are empowered and enlightened. Teachers act as cultural workers who are teaching values on the meaning of life and the meaning of interaction with other human beings through their attitudes and behaviours (Freire, 2005). The Calgary Board of Education's (n.d.) *Three-Year Education Plan* and governance policies align with my project in that they share similar expectations and values. Highlighted in the three-year education plan is the idea that "[educators must] clarify and extend inclusive practices through responsive, enabling learning environments and

instruction . . . [and] identify and create the conditions for success for students as unique learners and as members of their school and home communities” (Calgary Board of Education, n.d., p. 2). This directly reflects the implications of my study. In order to understand the scope of this theme more thoroughly, I examine the following subthemes: (a) teachers’ perceptions on multicultural policy, (b) teachers’ culture-blind perspective, and (c) policy and organizational challenges.

***Teachers’ perceptions on multicultural policy.*** Some of the teacher respondents’ perceptions regarding multiculturalism have an impact on the development of an effective diverse classroom culture. Many challenges can arise due to multicultural policies being deeply rooted on a political level, but they are largely ignored or missing in social situations. “Canada is moving backwards toward more assimilative and coercive multicultural policies and practices, which were discouraged by its official multiculturalism” (Guo & Guo, 2015, p. 137). Many teacher respondents, such as Diane, an international student coordinator, discussed the limitations of the policy in Canadian school classroom cultures:

What I like to point out is that what people don’t realize is that politically we are multicultural. . . . That is our legal policy here. . . . [However], socially, [it] is not necessarily multicultural and . . . multiculturalism hasn’t existed long enough to fully integrate into our society. . . . And children are raised by parents and grandparents who did not necessarily grow up in a multicultural society or political system. (Diane)

Cindy, a social studies teacher, echoed this sentiment:

We don’t, as Canadians, have a very good understanding of integration, which I think is ironic, because our policy is multiculturalism and it’s almost as if the vast majority of the Canadians have no clue what that really means. We’re still in a generation of dominant European cultural thought, and I think that because the vast majority of adults in this country still hold onto that and are still passing that on, it will continue until a couple more generations roll along who have worked in a workplace or gone to a school which is multiracial, and developed those friendships. I don’t see us fully understanding multiculturalism, so it would be best if teachers modeled it, and explained it to encourage those interracial relationships. . . . I don’t see interracial relationships being the norm. I think that all groups involved will unfortunately begin to move towards the dominant ethnicity. (Cindy)

Olivia, a food studies teacher, added: “I think that the reason why multiculturalism is so slow to evolve might be because the perpetuation of stereotypes and assumptions isn’t being addressed enough, and I think the schools have a responsibility to focus more on that.”

These quotations focus primarily on the changes that have occurred and will continue to occur in Canada. These teachers discussed how multiculturalism is supported politically but noted that it will take a long time before these changes will be fully implemented on a social level. The speakers were mostly optimistic and felt that the situation would inevitably improve over time as ignorance decreases and intercultural understanding is thereby facilitated. Hence, intercultural friendships are significant for the future of healthy social development in Canada’s multicultural society. As Bannerji (2000) noted, “Canada cannot be taken as a given. It is obviously a set of representations, embodying certain types of political and cultural communities and their operations” (p. 64).

Furthermore, Deborah, a physics teacher, talked about objective perceptions on multiculturalism:

I think for my background in physics, [if] I take a look at even the history, and physics has people from all different nationalities that have contributed to science. It’s not one nationality that has done the most, and everyone can learn from someone else. So I don’t see it as one group has all the knowledge, and we are all trying to imitate them at all. We are all trying to learn from each other, and come up with better ideas, and even some of the best physics places now are where international scientists get together and think. I think if you grow up with a certain perception, it’s good for you to challenge someone else who comes from a different culture, because then you have to get around what your biases and your assumptions are, and you just have to talk it through, and you often learn better that way. (Deborah)

Deborah’s opinion was that intercultural cooperation has been and will continue to be the most efficient way to make progress. She thought that by communicating with others, people can break down internal biases and learn better together than on their own. Cui (2015) asserted that

differences exist not only in cultural backgrounds but also in unequal power relations with different social circles between the majority and visible minority based on one of the critiques of multiculturalism. In short, how multiculturalism is perceived can play a significant role in the development of a diverse classroom culture. Although some scholars criticize Canada's policy of multiculturalism for various reasons (e.g., Day, 2000), I am still proud of it and believe it holds much promise for moving forward as a pluralistic society. In my view, critical scholars can continue to inform and improve how multiculturalism is lived and experienced by all citizens. However, I believe it is problematic when some teachers may handle issues of diversity by employing a culture-blind perspective.

***Teachers' culture-blind perspective.*** Teachers' blindness to cultures and their corollaries validates that some educators lack critical intercultural awareness. There are some controversies regarding the advantages and disadvantages of a culture-blind perspective. In terms of advantages, some scholars have argued that, originally, cultural conflicts might be avoided and decreased to some extent by the culture-blind perspective. Further, some findings have also disclosed that group membership should not be highlighted to avoid "stereotype threat" and "biased behaviour" (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010, p. 276). As Banks and McGee Banks (2010) proposed, the culture-blind perspective

not only [makes] it more likely that individual teachers [will] ignore the challenge of trying to present all students with materials that [relate] in motivating ways to their own experiences, but actually [will lead] to a constriction of the education obtained by students. (p. 275)

In my opinion, having a thorough understanding of the fine balance between the advantages and disadvantages of the culture-blind perspective is key to its implementation. Neither ignoring ethnic group differences, nor stressing them, should be used as the primary



method of encouraging intercultural interactions. Cindy echoed this thought:

The best way I feel to build a community is to get the kids to get to know everybody, but you kind of have this stark contrast, I mean if we're doing a project, and I want everybody to introduce the background of their language and some of their cultural understanding and their holidays, you're going to get a lot of similarities, right? . . . But you're going to get that one student who is quite different in their ethnicity because they just arrived in Canada and those cultural elements are still going to be very strong. However, you don't want to constantly focus on that one student who is clearly different already, and in many cases, they don't want to get up and present because they are struggling with the language, and it is not even that they're necessarily struggling with forming sentences, they are usually just very uncomfortable with their accent. They feel like they're not being understood and they tend to speak quietly because if they don't, if they make a mistake with a pronoun or with a verb, they feel very ashamed and you can just see the discomfort. It's a confidence issue. So part of that is that for the teachers, my job is to get my class to accept everybody and get them to understand each other. (Cindy)

William, a science teacher, shared his thoughts and worries about the culture-blind perspective:

Hidden curriculum includes culture-blind perspectives, and non-diverse classroom culture building, so I understand kids who were [newcomers] and Generation 1.5 [when they] say they want to learn more about Canadian culture. [They do] feel some rejection by Canadian-born kids. Why that is, I think, it's probably on its individual basis. But when I read something like CBC news, and you know there is a comment section at the end of a story, some of the things my fellow Canadians would feel about immigrants piss me off. They really annoy me, because I think it's not a majority of Canadians, but we are Canadians, I think it's very offensive to the Canadians. Immigrant kids coming in are sometimes threats to their entitlements as Canadians. . . . That is, I think, something that is obviously difficult for immigrant kids to deal with. (William)

This quotation implicitly demonstrates that some people may allow their largely unfounded fears to turn into prejudice, in a way that is unrelated to culture. A culture-blind teaching approach may develop attitudes towards one's ethnocentric assumptions (D. G. Ellis, 2006) that one's culture is "superior to others, [and this in turn] narrows perceptions, inhibits learning and communication, and leads to misunderstandings" (Gopal, 2011, p. 375). This ethnocentricity, along with feeling threatened, excludes cultural others.

Deborah, a physics teacher, echoed William's comments:

I think perhaps people get scared because of stereotypes. And it could be anyone else, but I think it's those stereotypes that make people afraid, because they start to judge different cultures based on recent violent events, but I think it comes from fear rather than true culture. (Deborah)

For Deborah, stereotypes play a significant role in driving groups apart. "Racial stereotypes and discourses which are deeply embedded in the value system . . . are reflected and discursively reproduced by some well-educated teachers" (Cui, 2013, p. 168). Use of the culture-blind perspective may contribute to creating stereotyping due to fear and needs to be remedied based on the circumstances of each classroom.

Conversely, during the process of interviewing the teacher respondents, I had a casual talk regarding the demography of their students, and I found that some of them did not know their students' cultural backgrounds at all. Some teacher respondents with culture-blind perspectives lack awareness of the concept of a multicultural classroom because they claim to treat every student in the same way, and pretend not to see their cultural differences. For example, although there is often a clear racialized division in schools, a young, male physical education teacher explained that there is no racialized division in his school. This finding illustrates that some teachers hold a culture-blind view and ignore the issues of group separation, blaming the divisions on other reasons instead.

Jim, an English teacher, acknowledged some intercultural divisions but did not consider them to be an issue:

I don't see a lot of racial separation. . . . Maybe a little bit in my classes but you're going to find it anywhere in the school. I think a lot of it comes down to what the personal interests are for the students. . . . I don't necessarily see one group here, one group there and some of the interests and some of our clubs, you can see a little bit more sometimes in those, but overall in our school it's not blatantly apparent, though there is a hard line of division. I find the kids at the school very respectful and open-minded, and generally very nice people. I just don't think they see a division as well. . . . Who are their friends? Their friends are the people often they are with all throughout class, right outside school, court,

date, hang out around with them on the Saturday, you know, if they are new Canadians they will go and hang out around people, family, and extended family and that is just a natural thing that you make friends with the people you see more often. (Jim)

According to the experiences of some teacher respondents, their students are separated more based on interest than on ethnicity. William, another science teacher, commented:

Canada is not a distinct group. . . . It's unique because there is no true Canadian. It's just White people, Asian people, and Black people. . . . They have to understand that they can't fully be accepted as Canadian because they never will be, because they are not Canadian. But that doesn't make sense because the meaning of 'Canadian' is so unclear. . . . I think they tend to think of Caucasian as all one group, but I don't see that because I am considered as Caucasian, but I'm not British and I don't have blue eyes. . . . I don't see Caucasian as anything other than skin colour, I don't see it as a culture. (William)

This quotation illustrates the lack of clear identifiers as to what "Canadian" means.

Dorian, a social studies teacher, showed his differing opinions and practice when considering the culture-blind perspective:

You should treat them the same in terms of expectations. Well, that's tough, there are some different angles you can look at that, right? But, I think you have to adapt your expectations depending on your students, right? So, in terms of academics, I think you have to expect different things. But in terms of, you know, class participation, . . . how I treat them as an individual, I don't think it differs based on whether they have been here, or [are an] immigrant or what have you. (Dorian)

In this quotation, Dorian described how teachers must change their expectations based on their students' backgrounds and culture. There are also many opportunities for teachers to help students learn to understand each other, and learn to respect their differences, as Cindy explained:

In grade 11, we teach a course which picks on ethnic nationalism or civic nationalism . . . [and] you have a massive opportunity there to go, "Okay, what is your ethnic nation and is that significant in your life today, what about that makes you different?" As a teacher, you have to be willing to risk it, because if I don't, then I'm ignorant, and that takes work. I think it depends on a lot of factors for the teacher on what they can bring to the classroom. (Cindy)

As Cindy's quote illustrates, teachers need to help immigrant students to learn more

effectively by providing examples that they can relate to. Olivia additionally clarified the issue of challenges when teaching students from diverse backgrounds and education:

You do kind of treat everybody the same, but different. But you still make allowances for a little bit of leeway on this or that. But at the end of the day, it needs to be fair for all students. So, you're looking out over the long term, judging them all fairly and evenly. (Olivia)

As illustrated by the quotations above, teachers need to create a balance in the classroom, where students can be given some extra help in areas where their skills are not as strong, but in the end, everyone must still be judged equally and fairly without discrimination. If, due to the culture-blind perspective they exhibit in their classrooms, teachers do not provide their students with opportunities to gain knowledge about where their peers come from, they may prevent the success of their students in the multicultural society that surrounds them. The existence of cultural differences can be used as a tool or as a bias—teachers' perceptions and actions will determine which path they choose for their classroom:

I think it's a cop-out to say that I'm colorblind because in a way you are doing them a disservice if you're going to try to promote collaboration and if you're trying to promote integration you have to have the realization, the consciousness, the knowledge, the understanding of the differences that exist in your classroom, and you work with them. You know you're not trying to make people aware of their ethnicity—in a way, they are aware of their ethnicity. My ethnicity has been pointed out in a very positive way, and there have been times that it has been pointed out in a very negative way. Again, that's on the teacher to find ways to do it in a positive manner, and it is for the purpose of integration and for the purpose of making students more comfortable. (Emily)

You sometimes have to give them the benefit of the doubt that they are going to ask. It's the method of the knowledge. We see something, [and if] we take in what we see, we will perceive it in a certain way, and we will ask questions. I know that there might be people who are more sensitive about it. Then you also have to figure out whether this person is asking in order to gain knowledge, or are they asking in order to be biased. (Cindy)

In this quotation, Cindy explored ideas relating to how outwardly noticing or ignoring skin colour affects others. She noted the difference between asking where someone is from in

order to understand them and asking such a question in order to form a bias. She also talked about awareness of one's ethnicity, and how to include people from diverse cultures. Due to a lack of understanding regarding the complexity and diversity of cultures that can exist in various developing countries, many educators have formed limited and inflexible stereotypes upon which they base their treatment of immigrant students. This may cause a breakdown in communication between students and teachers. In the "saviour" type of self-positioning used by some teachers, conflicts are often caused by a lack of mutual understanding, which then becomes a fundamental interpersonal communication barrier because of stereotypes. In these scenarios, it is rare for teachers to successfully establish a sense of belonging for immigrant students when integrating them into their classroom settings. Some teacher respondents believed that the constitution of the school could be a factor in teachers' culture-blind perspectives towards building a diverse classroom culture:

I think another factor would be the number of immigrants in a building because I think that impacts the resources of the teachers. If there are lots of them, they're going to get more care, more focus. If there's only one or two of them, I think that they are unfortunately going to slide under the radar. (Cindy)

It depends on the makeup of the school. There is unfortunately a huge discrepancy if a student who is an immigrant comes to a more Caucasian building. When there are a handful of students, the students who are learning English in this building will get the type of support that students in schools with more immigrants get. Namely, if there are more immigrant students and infinite administrators, then maybe the principal would be more likely to think about what the teachers need to do for them to support the parts of their culture. (Colin)

These quotations focus largely on the effect that the proportion of immigrants has on how they are treated in a school setting. These teachers generally agreed that a larger proportion of immigrants would lead to more support from the school's administration, while a small proportion would be given little to no support. They also touched on how the school's vision and

mission are related to the types of students that attend that particular school. Different schools have different principals, administrations, and teachers within their school settings and cultures, which includes their different visions and missions. For example, according to my investigation, the use of a culture-blind teaching perspective made the Chinese immigrant youth respondents (especially the newcomers) in this study feel exceedingly frustrated and confused with the new education system, including the dynamics of classroom culture, class participation and management, and the teaching philosophy and expectations. My personal learning experience as an intercultural student attending Canadian colleges and universities serves as a case in point. I felt my instructors' culture-blind perspectives and my classroom surroundings. This disturbed my self-value and self-awareness, which could also happen among the immigrant youths when negotiating their identities and their sense of belonging. Even though some of the teachers in this study employed a culture-blind perspective, I believe that many other teachers do not. In fact, there are some educators who strongly support multiculturalism and believe that honouring differences and showing respect for a diversity of cultures is part of their job as teachers.

However, some teacher respondents thought that students of the same ethnicity may feel comfortable with one another because if they speak the language and share the same culture, they would be more likely to accept each other. Although this assumption might be true, it does not mean they should not interact with the majority in order to help the majority understand the minority. To sum up, due to the diversity of today's classrooms, it should be considered essential for teachers to get to know their students as individuals and re-evaluate their use of the culture-blind perspective.

***Policy and organizational challenges.*** Teachers often lack the courage to teach outside accepted norms. Unfortunately, they also lack the time and flexibility to go through the process

of bringing in outside sources of information:

I think the problem is that the policies that the board put in place are limiting our ability to expand kids' opportunities to understand interracial relationships. We need more freedom. I understand the legal elements behind bringing someone into a classroom—you don't just want to bring in anybody. Here's an idea. It is a database I would use to bring people in all the time to speak to my students. The CBE [Calgary Board of Education] or other boards needs to create an accredited list of people . . . if the CBE did the paperwork, I could go into the database [and say], "He's good," and I tell my principal to bring him in and then I email him. . . . The school board is well aware of the racial issues going on inside their buildings. They want us to deal with it, but they have completely tied our hands on it. But a database would absolutely facilitate the opportunity to bring organizations in and do the interracial education, I think it's most important in a multicultural country. I don't know if it's to speed up the process but at the very least to start breaking down some of the boundaries. So, I think that having something in place that the teachers can draw on easily or at least easier, absolutely changes what happens in the classrooms without question. And you could ask 80% or 90% of my colleagues, and they would agree. (David)

I think that quite frankly, the policies in place are limiting this already. It's not about changing the curriculum, it's about removing the road blocks that have already been put in place by policies created by the board. . . . The government isn't preventing us from bringing student speakers, and the board isn't preventing us, but the board has created so many hoops to jump through and given the lawyers so much control. (Dorian)

The semester system really cuts into that relationship building. . . . The relationships are cut short, so you don't have the luxury of time in high school, and there's so much to do and so much content, especially in the core subjects. (Olivia)

These teachers all agreed that the system does not function well enough to allow teachers to bring in guest speakers to talk to the students. Because of the long list of formal processes they are forced to go through, many teachers simply give up and not try to bring in any guest speakers. David suggested that there should be a database of people who have already been screened, so that it does not require an overwhelming amount of work on the teacher's part to facilitate such a visit. Olivia was concerned that teachers have limited time to know students in the semester system. David further pointed out concerns with school environments:

Our primary responsibilities are to make sure that we have a safe environment for students, a welcoming environment for students and an environment in which cultural

diversity is accepted. We also need to support other forms of diversity, and ensure that nobody is threatened or made to feel less important because of the colour of skin. . . . And by doing that, it will hopefully take some of that negativity away. If nothing else, it generates awareness in everybody's mind that people around us are different. . . . And probably have to be willing to accept the differences and tolerate these differences. And maybe embrace these differences. (David)

In this quotation, David expressed his belief that the school setting should strive to be inclusive of everyone, and ensure that nobody is being put down in any way. This concept of school culture would create an awareness of differences and lead people to learn to accept those differences. As Dei et al. (2003) stated,

If language, culture, and other such identity factors could be integrated into mainstream education, the Eurocentric model of schooling practiced today would shift towards an inclusive environment where minoritized students could develop a sense of space, place and belonging within their schools. (p. 107)

In conclusion, in regard to establishing a diverse classroom culture, the contributing teacher respondents talked about the challenges they face regarding perceptions on multiculturalism, the culture-blind perspective, restrictions to school policies, and the various methods needed to fight racist stereotyping. It is easy to make assumptions about people based on their appearance, but such assumptions will do nothing other than inhibit personal growth. Another aspect that was discussed is the prevention of ignorance-based bullying, and the knowledge could inevitably be used incorrectly to put others down, and it is the teacher's role to step in to ensure that all students are protected from such coarse and damaging behaviour. Finally, the teachers in this study also stressed that the classroom environment should create a safe secure space open to diversity, emphasizing fairness in the perception of students.

**Student-teacher relationships and opportunities to ask questions.** Teachers serve as role models for establishing intercultural friendships. The ability of students to ask questions of teachers is a demonstration of student-teacher interaction, which helps develop students' insight



and depth of thinking, and facilitates the development of critical processing throughout the education process. As part of the student-teacher relationship, teachers should know when students are at different levels and what may affect their behaviour, and they should always be receptive to the voices of all their students. The student-teacher relationship is like a bridge built between two hearts and is vital to effective communication within the classroom:

If the relationship between students and teachers is good, . . . if teachers are like their friends, . . . students are more likely to tell them their stories, [and] . . . the teachers are more likely to teach students well. . . . You can call them on it when they mess up because if no one ever corrects them, they're never going to know. You need to teach them to ask questions in a way that gives them information and that does not offend or lead to conflict. . . . Get to know your student, sit down with the immigrant student and ask what they like to do. Forget the education side, forget the colour, forget how long you have been in this country, forget how long you have spoken the language, and find common human interests. And I think that will be the key, but teachers are perpetuating the myths in their classrooms and putting that pressure on students or painting a student with that ethnic brush. . . teachers have to be cautious not to say, "Oh, all of the Asian students are shy and quiet" and all of the other groups are whatever. So, I think it's important to be aware of those biases. (Cindy)

Cindy said that student-teacher relationships serve a significant role in the successful integration of immigrant students into the classroom culture and can help them become more confident and comfortable. Hence, it is important for teachers to have a good relationship with their students, because it makes it easier to help them deal with learning issues in a way that is more personal than the curriculum requires. A successful student-teacher relationship can be attained by asking questions in ways that are inoffensive and avoid conflict whenever possible.

Dorian added his thoughts on the student-teacher relationship:

A lot of times there are signs that maybe things are not right at home for a child, there could be a million different things that you could recognize. Then you, as a teacher, I think, are somewhat responsible to kind of look into what's going on at home, and figure out how to help at school. . . . But if you have the ability and you recognize that home is not a great place for the students, then, you know, really make them feel extra welcome in school . . . just feeling needed, wanted, that kind of thing; . . . being observant of your students. . . . If you notice signs or things changing, then it's one of your responsibilities

to just act on that. (Dorian)

These teachers believe that it is important to interact more and in different ways with students who lack confidence, or are otherwise in some kind of bad situation. They are friendlier to these students and make them feel more welcome, so that they can overcome their confidence issues or other problems that might be plaguing them. These teachers view it as their responsibility to pick up on potential problems, and to modify their lessons and interactions to accommodate for that. Pressure is another factor that influences the relationship between teachers and minority students:

You know you have developed a self-fulfilling prophecy for students who might be doing things less than ideal, you're putting the same pressures on students. . . . It's hard because I'm never an immigrant, but I have been a kind of the minority because I'm gay. So I understand the part of it of trying to fit in, and always looking over your shoulder about what people will think of you, . . . but I do understand [the] bias people bring into a place. (William)

I need to teach them why even though they are different, they are actually the same. But then part of it is the comfort factor of communication, which makes it very difficult to talk, so you would have to think of different ways of doing it. I find that you have to really focus more on a one-on-one relationship early in the semester, so that they will trust you; so that they know that you're not out to make them look bad or make them uncomfortable, and then you have to integrate them into the classroom. But I think that if they start the relationship with me first, then you can get to know them so that they will feel confident and then bring it out to the classroom. (Cindy)

These quotations illustrate that these teachers focus especially on ensuring that their relationships with marginalized students exist without prejudice. However, there is a hidden regulation regarding who can talk in the classroom and when this talk is allowed. My interview data shows that some student respondents feel that when they raise their hands to ask questions, their teachers ignore them. Ziwen came to Canada in grade 8. She recalled:

Some teachers think, because you are Chinese students, you may find that what you are required is not high, that what you are expected to do is not difficult. That is, for them, if you can get a 70 percent, that will be a very good mark. Thus, they will not invest much

time and effort on your learning; while in the classroom, the local learner or top student, if he raised a question, my teacher will take them very seriously. But if, for example, you are a Chinese child in the class of Social [Studies] or English [Language Arts], they will assume that your question is not content comprehension, but probably questions regarding language understanding. They will think it is not very important, because other people may have understood the lesson. So it is not necessary to take time in class to talk about it. The teacher does not want to discuss these issues in the classroom because they feel it is not worth it. But in fact, sometimes those questions I [want to ask] are very valuable and the other students could also benefit from [those questions]. (Ziwen)

This quotation discusses the discrepancy between how teachers treat questions from different students. Ziwen thinks that teachers assume all questions from Chinese students are related to language difficulties, and are therefore unimportant to answer during the class. Due to this assumption and the low standards that teachers think their students are satisfied achieving, they do not make an effort to help Chinese students with their studies. It is evident that immigrant students strongly reject these preconceptions, prejudices, and fixed ideas about their learning and language background. Unfortunately, in some scenarios, if English is not a student's first language, some teachers may ignore them and be reluctant to talk with them at all. During my field observations in some senior high schools, I found that some teachers displayed a rude attitude toward their students. This negative attitude can easily pollute the teacher-student relationship. Again, I can relate to the experiences of these students. One year during university, I chose to attend a training workshop that focused on computer software. During question time, the White, male staff always answered questions from the local students who could speak fluent English without an accent. I raised my hand five times, and yet was only given one opportunity to speak. I initially thought his lack of acknowledgement was due to the number of students asking questions; however, the majority of his answers were provided to the questions of local students.

The superficial interaction of asking questions does not seem to be an issue for most

teachers. However, teachers' reactions and attitudes toward immigrant students can be reflected onto all of their students, via the role model position they play within the classroom. It is part of the teacher's role to model for students how to understand and accept others, rather than providing a purely exam-driven education. William, a science teacher, echoed the young student, Ziwen. He made several insightful comments:

I know there are some students who raise their hands a whole lot more, other students sit there and don't say anything. And so that's something we, as teachers, have to be aware of and try to avoid any biases that way. [Be] open to those biases that we have and try to work around that. I think we have to, as teachers, be much more aware. If it comes down to it, we're still in control of the environment; we create the culture in our classrooms. And so we need to model, we need to nurture that environment that is inclusive. And if we're not that, then that is an issue. (William)

William felt that it is his job to create and maintain an environment that encompasses the needs of all his students. Although some students want to be more active and ask more questions than others, he thought that his job is to ensure that he does not allow that to bias him against any other students.

Jim, an English language arts teacher, expressed a different viewpoint, emphasizing that these types of problems are only individual emotional complaints:

I do not think any teachers will not answer any "problematic" questions. Teachers might choose any particular time given the classroom size and the time they have. They might not have time to answer the questions. . . . As far as ignoring students, certainly from my personal point of view, that's not the case. And I would say that teachers don't do that as a whole, not consciously, they would never do that. I think that more than anything it is the students' perceptions and their own sense of maybe personal inadequacy to know they're not worth it. Many questions are not. I think it's more perception than anything. (Jim)

Jim believed that teachers as a whole will try to be fair with which questions they answer, and thinks that the problem is either subconscious or just an inaccurate perception by the student.

As the interview transcript above demonstrates, some teachers are conservative and may be

quick to draw conclusions in regard to a problem despite the multiple solutions to consider, and the potential consequences. Certainly, if there are other reasons for not answering questions, these can be addressed after class. The second teacher's response represents the indifferent attitude that some teachers hold towards immigrant students and their intention to protect themselves. For instance, David, a social studies teacher, responded to his students' questions in his classroom with positive feedback:

Every question is valued. Now sometimes it's not comfortable to answer some questions from the class. So, they can ask me during lunchtime, before school, or after school. Part of [the] complaints might be the way students perceive Mr. Jones to answer the question. He always like obviously Kim, part of that is immature perception. But I would never answer the questions of just one student asking questions if we are discussing. That's part of teaching practice, that you get a variety of students try to, but to let all students eventually know some students don't like to speak out. Part of my job is trying to get them to speak out, but not embarrassing them. (David)

This teacher values all questions that students might have, even though there might not be time to answer all of them during the class. To that end, he is willing to answer students' questions before school, after school, or during lunch break. He is aware that some students want to ask more questions than others, and regards it as his job to encourage everyone to participate more actively.

In short, in their roles as mentors and coaches, teachers should be conscious to model values for students any time they are in a classroom setting. If they fail to do so, one must consider what host students would learn from a teacher who displays an ignorant attitude towards their immigrant peers. What kind of subtle message would this ignorance transmit to newcomers and what subconscious influence could that potentially create? Unfortunately, ignorance can bring about feelings of discomfort, and foster the misconception that immigrant youth with accents are not worth being treated as equal students or friends.

**Seating plans and group work.** The creation of a classroom seating plan and the assignment of group work are a part of the hidden curriculum which stresses the agency of teachers to produce more opportunities for students to learn about themselves, to interact and get to know each other, and to seek their commonalities by negotiating various activities that may arise during the education process. In general, it is much easier for human beings to build friendships within their comfort zone through the sharing of similar perspectives and ways of life, and through being familiar with their partner's way of thinking. However, developing intercultural relationships often requires learners to step out of their comfort zones and be willing to learn how to understand and accept the differences amongst their peers. Teachers are constantly meeting different students and must frequently change their classroom layout due to the mobility of their class schedule:

At the beginning, especially at the start of the year, I will try to group kids with people they don't know to try and get some familiarity in the room [and] to stimulate conversation so that kids are more comfortable talking to everyone as they move forward. (Sean)

Martin, a student respondent, agreed with the teachers in the previous quotations and said that most students are more inclined to move towards others who look the same as themselves. He commented:

Cultural barriers appear to form mostly out of familiarity. When students walk into a class of complete strangers, they will tend towards others who seem to have something in common, which at first glance is frequently skin colour or ethnicity. This tends to be self-perpetuating as groups of friends are of similar ethnicity, and new students will follow that trend. (Martin)

In addition, these students noted that their peers are more likely to make friends with those sitting around them:

I just joined the group of people sitting around me. I think that if a teacher just says to form a group with the people sitting around, it is easier because it saves time and it is just

a random pick so you get to interact with multiple students. The first and second time is awkward, but then you start working as a team. . . . The occasional mix-up brings an exciting element to the term ‘partner.’

The classes should be mixed and rotated for the first part of school, so people can interact with each other and find the right person to sit beside, rather than staying with the same person and not blending at all. It is a common problem in Canada; we are a multicultural society, which is [more] cliquey than the standard “jock” and “nerd” cliques.

I agree with placing students in the groups based on their cultural barriers, as by doing so, students are able to speak to other people of the class, discuss ideas with them and more importantly they would not be like in a shell or in their comfort zone and would be able to communicate and socialize with others.

These students believe that mixing around the classroom encourages students to make more friends and interact with people who they never would otherwise. It can be awkward at first, but people get used to it. For teachers, proper and consistent adjustment may be the solution. Deborah and Dorian shared the seating plan she uses to meet her teaching goals flexibly:

The first few weeks, they are in alphabetical order so I can learn their names. I tell them that that’s the only way I can learn their names quickly, and next class they can sit where they want. But I always have the choice to move them around, and sometimes I will just mess with them a little bit, and I will just change where they are sitting just so they have to sit with different kids. Sometimes, I’ll see pockets of kids that work well together, but are too chatty, so I separate them. Sometimes, I see kids who are maybe a little bit weaker in one area, and I will kind of throw them in a little section where kids seem to be a little more focused so that they don’t have the distractions. And other times with some classes I’m like, “Just sit wherever you want, I don’t care.” It depends on the class makeup. Grade 10 [students] usually need more guidance than grade 12 [students]. (Deborah)

If I have a class of kids who are responsible, and have the ability to pick their own partners and actually work with them, then I will do that. But a lot of times, especially at the start of the year, I will get kids to work with people they don’t know, to try to get more familiar with someone else in the room. That makes people more comfortable with one another, so that stimulates conversation, and you will feel more comfortable with speaking because you know people with whom you are with. But if you always work with the same kid, and you don’t talk with others, you would find it frustrating. (Dorian)

These teachers believe that students should be moved around so that those who are better in some areas can help those who are struggling. They also think that this makes students more

comfortable with each other, so that they can interact more positively. Deborah also agreed with this point:

No matter whether it is one immigrant or if it is a handful of immigrant students, they're always sitting in a different place, which also encourages the majority of the students to interact with the [other] students as well. So, I think in that sense, move the kids around. When I see my little clique crews hang out, I don't care whether it's an ethnic clique or whether it's a friendship clique. (Deborah)

This teacher moves students around whenever they start forming groups, so that they will be more familiar with everyone else in the classroom. However, in reality, this is a controversial issue. Some teacher participants argued that they should give freedom to students to make their own choices. Based on my observations, this type of freedom regularly results in ethnic group division and gender division in the classroom setting. Regarding group work, some teacher respondents also believe that freedom and being comfortable should be the priority; however, young learners also need some guidance from teachers, as noted by Sophia, a French teacher:

You don't want students to see this as a stressful situation. So usually the first few times doing group work I will just randomly put them into groups, and then the next time I do different random groups, and after about a month or so when they start to know quite a few people in the room, then I start to let them pick some of their own groups. But you need to create an environment where they feel comfortable working with each other. In my class, I really do think that I try to treat them as a team, like you're not against each other. . . . As a team working together and I want them to be interacting with everyone in the class. Whatever ethnic background; male or female or whatever, I think that's all important. And to be careful that's not an immigrant thing, just a human thing, treating them as delicate humans who need some support to make friends sometimes. (Sophia)

This teacher chooses groups for her students at the beginning and then gives them more control when they know more people. The reason why teachers need to move students around can to some extent be explained by the significant implications of making intercultural friendships. Cindy, a social studies teacher, shared her thoughts about life beyond seating plans:

When you get into the workforce, you're going to be working with a million different people. You're going to be working with people you don't understand, you're going to be



working with people of different opinions. . . . Guess what? You need to suck it up. So here how do you do that? Talk to them, and as soon as I move those kids, I put a list of questions on the board, the first thing you do when you greet a person in Canada is you shake their hand. . . . I talk about a million different ways to say, 'Hello,' [and how] this is what we do in Canada.' . . . You have to facilitate it; you can't just sit two kids together and tell them to get to know each other. . . . Because they won't, they're terrified; they're teenagers. They are like, "I don't want to talk to you." And it's not that they don't want to talk to each other and it's not that they don't desperately want to know this person. They just have no clue how to start the conversation. So, you have to teach kids how to communicate. (Cindy)

This teacher gets students to make more connections by giving them lists of things to learn about each other. Without these lists, they would be too directionless to communicate at all. In relation to this, intercultural group work can benefit students, especially for newcomers with a second language background. Colin, an English language arts teacher, described his standpoint:

There is no benefit to working with your own ethnic background. If they are struggling with language and struggling with school with some difficult passage, the translation process is very important. . . . For example, all our work with the meaning of poems. They translate to their own language first in order to make sense of it, then translate it back now, all the work, the problem of vocabulary, and the soul; because of these aspects, they might work with someone who speaks the same language as them as they can work together in that translation process, but this is far from productivity in group work. (Colin)

This English teacher respondent discussed the importance of native language in understanding class content. She thinks that there is no benefit to working with students of one's own ethnic background, because although these peers can help translate, they both share a similar interpretation of the content, which does not aid in a heightened learning experience. There are also challenges that affect both teachers and students, when some individual students are reluctant to work with their assigned peers, likely due to laziness and low marks. Leila, a science teacher, commented on this issue:

Choosing groups for lots of students can cause a lot of anxiety and you need to make sure that you're minimizing that as much as possible. . . . Some may argue that you asked them to choose their own partners because they maybe think some of the students are

very lazy and they won't do anything. . . . I often let them choose their partners, . . . but the chances are it's going to be from the same cultural background. I assigned other students to work with, and you know sometimes they might end up working with another student who was part of their culture, but not always. . . . Sometimes I generate the groups to make sure stronger students makes ways for weaker students. I guess we could set up our classes differently, and that way we could force students to work together, I don't think it's fair. (Leila)

This quotation raises the issues that arise when some students are paired with other students with a different work ethic. Independent of ethnic similarities or differences, hard-working students often do not want to work with lazy students. Because of this, many teachers might allow students to find their own groups, so that they cannot be held accountable for the failure of the group due to one of its members. Teachers must be careful if they choose groups for the class, because they need to choose compatible students while also attempting to achieve any goals they might have for broadening student horizons. Teachers must consider other methods to solve these problems, rather than simply offering students freedom to choose their partners so as to evade the personal responsibility of guiding their students effectually. Furthermore, if groups are divided based on learning levels, students of the same level should be placed together. I disagree with the point of social Darwinism in the context of schools. Should a teacher emphasize marks and competition over students helping each other in the classroom? If not, is it proper to create an atmosphere of social Darwinism? Can youth benefit more and contribute more to our future society if they must compete for survival in a classroom shaped by the concept of "survival of the fittest?" What, then, is the role of the spirit of teamwork? Jim, an English teacher, spoke about his teaching experience:

In the case of group work efficiency, I don't think it is based on ethnicity. You know the leaders within the classrooms, take charge of all their people in groups and everything is planned by them. Now IB [International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme] [students], they are all leaders. The problem becomes splitting control. They all want to be in charge and spend a lot of time about the direction. And that's the learning process as well. They

all want to be the CEO of the company, right? How about the vision of such? But for my experience that those divisions are not based on ethnicity, [but] whether they are being followers or being excluded, the conversation might be based on students' strengths, whether I am assigning a group or they choose their own group. If they are choosing their own group, it's more democratic, because they were working with people they feel more comfortable talking with. If I am assigning groups, especially early in the semester, they might not be [on the same] comfort level. So I usually don't assign groups until later when they know each other better, and are more ready to talk. In a high school, students form cliques. If you get three people who are friends and anyone isn't, there might be some divisions, right?

This teacher did not believe that ethnicity plays any role in the forming of groups for projects. He felt that group formation is more based on whether the students are leaders or followers, and who their friends are. He noted that groups do not work as well when all the members are leaders, or when most members are in the same friend group, but one is excluded.

When considering group work and seating plans, allowing students to have total freedom is not absolutely moral, as it is important that groups are not only divided into lazy students and diligent students or strong students and weak students. When working with young students, teachers often highlight marks, sense of comfort, productivity, and efficiency, but they have to also realize their initiative to create more opportunities for students to interact interculturally, and consider the balance between freedom and guidance. So how can teachers guide immature learners to learn from each other, to learn how to handle conflicts, and to learn how to negotiate different opinions and ways of thinking during the process of group work? Under the guidance of teachers, youth with mixed ethnic backgrounds can sit and work together, and in the process, get to know each other, talk to the people around them and realize there is nothing to be afraid of. During this same growth process, students can learn how to work with different types of personalities, and just try to know themselves and build their confidence, while negotiating their cultural clashes and conflicts while learning how to accept their differences and develop

themselves.

In conclusion, the realities of hidden curriculums require educators across all borders to look at the related factors surrounding the establishment of intercultural interaction strategies. They must do so in order to achieve outcomes such as the development and implementation of “practices that maintain a strong focus on safe, respectful and caring learning environments for all” (p. 8) as stereotypes are only perpetuated by ignoring them. It is also imperative to recognize the hidden curriculum as “the whole environment and culture within which schooling takes place” (Dei et al., 2003, p. 175) and to keep biases out of the classroom. The best way for teachers to draw out their students’ individual personalities is to talk to them about their non-academic interests. By doing this, attention is drawn away from anything that might pertain to their ethnicity (and its associated expectations), leaving students free to be themselves. Other teaching methods which address the hidden curriculum include creating a diverse classroom culture, allowing all students to ask questions, and implementing seating plans and group work are also areas worth emphasizing to teachers during teaching workshops and seminars in order to create a better understanding of the connection between creating inclusive classrooms and the development of intercultural friendships.

**Challenges of immigrant parent–teacher communication.** During the course of this study, there were increasing social pressures on teachers and immigrant parents regarding whose duty it is to take on the responsibility of filling the intercultural friendship gap between immigrant youth and their host peers. An English teacher, Colin, argued about the parent–teacher partnership:

I think not being able to have the relationship with the parents, particularly in a time when the student needs as much support as they can get, causes a real problem. And I do think that it probably results in elements of failure for the student. . . . That’s a massive

roadblock to the success of those immigrant students. (Colin)

According to my interview data, the duty of teaching intercultural social skills and providing social support to immigrant youth who lack intercultural knowledge is often debated by both teachers and Chinese immigrant parents. As noted in Chapter 5, some immigrant parent respondents expressed that they seldom interact with host parents (often White Caucasian parents) and that they expect their children's teachers to act as role models for intercultural friendship-making. Conversely, some teacher respondents argued that intercultural friendships are not a related or mandated part of their job, and that it is the parents, or the community's, responsibility to help students cope. For example, Dorian stated:

Well, I don't think it's my job to help them make interracial friends. Would I encourage it? Yes. It's not one of my duties, I would say. But that being said, I mean, in Canada, it's so easy to do it because there are some different cultures all existing here. But I mean if it is something that the parents are concerned about, they should open them up to some different perspectives and different people. The parents should illustrate that through their friendships. Who are your parents' friends? . . . That's what your child will probably also do. . . . If that's your emphasis, then you need to work with your child to make that happen. . . . It doesn't need to be in school. (Dorian)

Dorian's viewpoint was that intercultural friendship building between immigrant youth and host peers is the duty of the individual and the family. Banks and McGee Banks (2010) have argued that parents should be responsible for assisting their children to develop intercultural competences and make intercultural friends; however, research regarding parent and family involvement in the process of socialization has shown that "not all parents know how they can support their children's education or feel they have the time, energy, or other resources to be involved in schools" (p. 434). Therefore, it is my contention that there are many advantages to be had from teachers working as social role models, and that both schools and families should provide more joint venture support to teachers who create classrooms that allow students to

connect interculturally.

Chris and David proposed the following points:

But I think it's a joint venture, and I don't think that it is the teacher's sole responsibility to be the only good role model for their child. I think if you do it in partnership, between the parent and the school, then you have a really good mix to have a person who has those appropriate social skills and moral compass. But if you recognize a kid who doesn't have a good family background, maybe from the wrong side of the track, do you want to keep an extra eye on that kid, and help him through things? Of course you do. That's the nurturing part of teaching. Working together is the best policy. . . . Just on a basic human level, feeling like you're needed and wanted is a good thing. If you notice things or changes, or signs, then it is a part of your responsibility to act on that. (Chris)

All of us adults, we have responsibilities to teach the next generation how to behave, and if we set a good example, then we hope that the kids will do well, but if they had poor models in high positions in life, then you know it's not for kids to see that. I show them a lot of grace and space, and I think that how you learn about moral and social issues is by interacting with others. (David)

As illustrated above, a joint venture partnership could be an ideal way for parents and teachers to work together to support immigrant youths' integration into warm school communities. Furthermore, given that communication between immigrant parents and their children's teachers is an intercultural interaction, it can serve as a model for bridging the gap between families and schools. However, some teacher respondents expressed their concerns about tough issues such as language barriers, closed communication, and miscommunication regarding intercultural interaction with immigrant parents. For instance, James, an English teacher, discussed his thoughts on the issue:

I think that the relationship between teachers and immigrant parents is very difficult, particularly if those immigrant parents don't speak English. We find that all the time, so you're bringing in interviews, speaking to the student, you're speaking to a translator, and then they're speaking to the parent. Which is fine, but it's very difficult to build any sort of relationship because part of my job, if a student is doing well or not doing well, is to contact the parents. . . . The search for commonality becomes increasingly difficult. Where with non-immigrant parents, I can probably banter and chat just like in my classroom setting. Immigrant children generally, from my experiences, speak the language better than their parents. With that being the case, it makes it very difficult to

build a relationship. And I think that is detrimental to the student. (James)

Dorian, a social studies teacher, added:

The biggest thing is communication, having that open communication. In that regard, it's up to the parent to reach the teacher. It is an unfair expectation for the teacher to contact every family, especially in high schools. If you want to bridge that gap, that's the way to do it. . . . A parent needs to come to the teacher and say, "Here is my issue, here is what I have been struggling with in terms of these two different worlds my child has been living in. What are your expectations at school that I can reinforce at home? Here are the expectations that I have at home which you can reinforce at school." (Dorian)

Olivia, a foods teacher, echoed:

Teachers do not have opportunities to get to know parents. It is the parents' responsibility to actively contact teachers. I get to know very few of the parents. . . . In high school, we don't have as close of a relationship with the parents as they do in elementary schools. The only time I really even get to know the parents is at parent-teacher interviews, or if someone is having a particular problem in class. (Olivia)

Another social studies teacher further explained:

I think that there is some miscommunication between some of the parents and the teachers and it's both people's faults. . . . They come and don't get what they want at parent-teacher interviews with some parents. How can I approach some parents? . . . How can I tell them about how their sons or daughters are doing? It's a bit of cultural awareness because knowing that for some of the Chinese parents, they can put a lot of pressures on their kids, and part of the interview then, at parent-teacher interviews, is to be more on the kid's side, saying you need to lighten up on the kids. I can see how much pressure they are under and trying to convince the parents, they're doing fine and, you know, lighten up a little bit that way. . . . I think for some of the immigrant parents, they will come in because the school system is different too, they don't fully understand how it works. They often quite like class ranking, which is something we don't do here. . . . I think from the perception of some teachers, they're more worried about that than they are about that Johnny is doing this in class and that in class. (David)

As shown by the quotations above, some teacher respondents argued that the language barrier, immigrant parents' lack of intercultural experience, and a lack of opportunities for open communication lead to some obstruction of intercultural relationship building between parents and teachers. Understanding the challenges of the relationship between immigrant parents and their children's teachers in relation to intercultural communication could inspire both parents and

educators to step into the other's shoes. School is life, and education is not preparation for life, but life itself. Therefore, it is vital to consider "how intercultural education becomes implemented. Schools must provide an inclusive curricula and environment" (Dei et al., 2003, p. 271). It is critical to point out that local teachers and students have a tremendous influence that allows them to help immigrant students with the transition to their new culture and new rules, and that influence should be used accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter focused on interviews with teachers and discussed the challenges of establishing intercultural communication between host students and their immigrant counterparts, between immigrant youth and their teachers, and between teachers and immigrant parents, all through the lens of the social studies curriculum and the hidden curriculum. Current teachers' perceptions and perspectives not only seek "harmony and acceptance through prejudice reduction" (Lund, 2014, p. 13), but also encourage educators to "impact more systemic educational reform through multicultural education" (Lund, 2014, p. 13), for the creation of a better intercultural school community. In terms of the intersection between the content in the social studies curricula and teaching issues and intercultural barriers, this chapter shed light on the teaching discourse and teacher knowledge and practice. This chapter also revealed how more intercultural support could be provided for teachers by education boards through implementation of intercultural hidden curriculum, more flexible regulations, and a more diverse classroom dynamic. It emerged that teachers' perceptions, perspectives, and attitudes about the level of diversity within the school and classroom environment affect their ability to provide opportunities for intercultural friendship building between immigrant and local students.

Although teachers have acknowledged that parents influence friendship building, I think



intercultural education should be one of the highest priorities for public education due to the nature of Canada's diverse society. With this study, I hoped to identify the educational reforms that would "foster greater acceptance of other cultural perspectives" (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 386), and help to prepare host students and immigrant students for better intercultural understanding and acceptance. Moreover, "quality education is better and more important than equity education" (Dei et al., 2003, p. 95). People's preconceived beliefs and ideas need to be challenged, and they need to have a common ground within society in terms of communication with people from all over the world. In the long term, issues such as little isolated cultural ghettos are detrimental for a strong society. Ideally, individuals want to be able to integrate the best parts of each culture into society and have people and cultures coexist peacefully, all while they grow through interactions with others who hold multiple perspectives. This approach would foster open minds, make life more meaningful, and make Canada stronger and more prosperous.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **Summary of Findings**

Working within a critical theoretical perspective, which stresses social justice, and within the social context of the historical and contemporary impacts of Chinese immigration in Canada, this study focused on the experiences of some of today's Chinese immigrant youth (Generation 1.5, newcomers, and Generation 2) in senior high schools in South Alberta in Canada.

The work showcases the types of obstacles to intercultural friendship that exist between Chinese immigrant youths and their mainstream Canadian peers. Analyses of the interviews revealed some of the negative social experiences and weak positions of immigrant youths in schools, the complex and negative experiences of their immigrant parents in workplaces and communities, and challenges in parenting. Unfortunately, the weak positions may become internalized over time. They may create potential social barriers for immigrants' future educational friendships and occupational successes.

This study encourages the rethinking of the invisible and visible barriers that restrict building intercultural friendships. Such friendships are important processes that facilitate the creation of immigrant youths' identities, and new mindsets and ways of being and living in Canada. I suggest that the formation of kaleidoscopic identities allow immigrant youths to move effectively within and between two different worlds. Accordingly, youths with kaleidoscopic or hybrid identities challenge notions of fixed, hyphenated identities as they learn to navigate the worlds of Western hegemony (Mahtani, 2002).

The comprehensive research identified the following factors:

- polite exclusion, lack of acceptance, ignorance due to a lack of contact, jokes and teasing to hurt, gossiping and judging, academic bullying, diverse ideologies,

dissimilar social circles and status on the school ladder, comfort zones, different interests, and intangible psychological distance with local peers that can occur in school contexts;

- the resultant impacts of internalized oppression and local cultural superiority;
- the background of technologically minded parental influences in ideologies and educational beliefs, and values and survival pressures;
- parents' lack of social and intercultural competencies as role models; and
- curricula content, teaching strategies, and hidden curriculum that may impact intercultural relationships.

The research participants shared their experiences and challenges in regard to all of these important factors, and the results reveal the various perceptions of children, parents, and teachers with regard to Chinese immigrant youth exploring barriers and establishing intercultural friendships in their adolescence. Chinese immigrant youths' reflections describe and highlight the multi-layered, fluid, and multi-faceted challenges they face in different social networks at school, at home, and in friendship building. The immigrant students have to challenge stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in an ongoing process of transformation along a perceived one-way adaptation track. Given the ethnic and racialized diversity of Canadian classrooms, a better understanding of intercultural youth friendships from a critical perspective is crucial to "ensuring the continuing success of Canada's multicultural mosaic" (Costigan et al., 2010, p. 224). Therefore, this research project offers positive insights towards fostering intercultural communications, understanding, and respect.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

This study expands postcolonial and cultural acculturation understandings on barriers to

intercultural friendships through the lens of critical pedagogy. These perspectives from the sociology of education, psychology, and anthropology are woven together to explore the ongoing and open-ended challenges of intercultural interaction discourse and the renewable mindsets of identity creation. The theoretical framework advances an innovative way of researching about immigrant youth who are diverse, contradictory, dynamic, and challenging in their intercultural school social practices, and within their family and peer relationships. All of these strands and perspectives draw more attention towards the importance of relationship flows, emotions, and interconnections encountered by immigrant youths.

Conducted in the context of senior high schools, this study contributes to the research understanding of intercultural friendships by widening understanding and developing some important concepts including kaleidoscope identity, internalized oppression, cultural superiority, diverse classroom culture, and teachers serving as intercultural role models. The theoretical frameworks adopted allow for exploration of the unpleasant and difficult truth and complexity of the reality of daily life for Chinese immigrant youth and point out the shallow version of multiculturalism that exists in Canada. The study framework also helped youth to know themselves; to map the dynamic and unpredictable connections between intercultural friendships, students, and teachers; and, as importantly, to consider immigrant family-to-teacher relationships that occur out of their comfort zone. These findings may also be extended to other minority contexts beyond cultural differences in school settings. My findings regarding the hidden forms of stereotypes, polite racism and discrimination are applicable to other individuals of various minority identities to explain the phenomenon of racialized division in real-life contexts.

### **Practical Implications**

This study has several key implications. First, it recommends educational reforms that

“foster greater acceptance of other cultural perspectives” (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012, p. 386).

This research disrupts hidden forms of racism with the intent of building bridges to facilitate sociocultural integration in schools. It also addresses the education and preparation of host students and immigrant students to achieve better cultural understandings and acceptance, not only of Asian students, but of all immigrant students. Silenced and excluded newcomer students should be better socially integrated into the education system.

Second, this study calls for changes to school curricula, especially social studies, and offers the possibility of informing and transforming social studies pedagogies with diverse values, ideologies, and ways of thinking within multicultural classrooms and programs. Current social studies programs and teachings do not adequately demonstrate or reflect the diversity of culture in Canada. The research also provides empirical evidence for the continuing significance of intercultural education, especially within the social studies curriculum. Emphasizing the study of intercultural adaptation and mental health has practical value for the healthy, holistic growth of youth in school systems.

Third, culture defines Canada’s pluralistic society. The current dominant ideology justifies its position and makes cultural hegemony seem natural and reasonable. In such an environment, mixed-ethnic schools should strive to accommodate individual uniqueness and multicultural characteristics in classroom diversity. The vision of education already underlines notions such as respect, caring for one another, and collaboration. A critical look at ethnic divisions among youth groups may encourage educators to take responsibility for and have a critical awareness of the issues beyond cultural differences.

Fourth, the results of this investigation will be helpful for marginalized students who need support and encouragement from teachers. Teachers and students need to be open to discuss

difficult issues. Various subtle forms of racism and exclusion in Canadian school settings become invisible obstructions to establishing intercultural friendships for immigrant youth under the pressure of one-way adaptation, despite a multicultural policy and discourse.

Fifth, this research shines a spotlight on the struggles against bullying and provides a roadmap for educators. Bullying is the subject of much current media focus. Bullying affects self-esteem, academic performance, and sentiments in regard to confidence in life. It can result in terrible consequences, such as in Port Coquitlam, BC, where the October 2012 teen suicide of Amanda Todd was a tragedy. Bullying prevention is extremely important for youths, and especially for vulnerable young immigrants in schools.

Sixth, the findings of my research call for further attention to be given to the connections between parental expectations, associated parental messages (Edmonds & Killen, 2009), and subsequent impacts on their children. The feelings of a lack of intercultural understanding and inability to make intercultural friends could be obstacles to self-confidence building, acculturation, or integration of young people from immigrant backgrounds.

To sum up, recognizing high school Chinese immigrant youths' lived experiences and their perceptions about intercultural friendships is crucial to explore the barriers to intercultural interactions in multicultural classrooms and schools. By expanding the research concerning intercultural friendships in terms of the historical impacts of social inequalities, cultural hegemony, and linguistic dominance through the lived experiences of marginalized youths in schools, I hope that Calgary and Canada will, in the words of Oxman-Martinez and Hanley (as cited in Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012), "adjust to the relatively new Canadian demographic profile challenged by the presence of otherness" (p. 386). I hope that one day, policies and practices that foster educational unfairness, inequity, and hidden types of racialized

discrimination can be eliminated. All children can learn better in safe and caring school environments.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

While collecting data, I found host students' thoughts and perceptions on intercultural friendships with Chinese peers were closely related to the success of two-way adaptation. Given that finding, a shift needs to occur for host students to bear some responsibility to be more inclusive and accepting of immigrant students. A future study could explore the factors that may lead to such resistance from the host students, hear their voices, and examine their perceptions on intercultural friendship barriers.

Regarding the interviews with parents and Chinese immigrant students, some respondents noted that the challenges they faced when making intercultural friendships were often impacted by media, including TV, films, newspapers, social media, and magazines. Therefore, the influence of media is a rich topic for potential future research.

Future research could also explore the nature of intercultural peer support and mentorship in undergraduate and graduate education, and work to determine how schools and universities could further develop these relationships. The interrelated topics of intercultural ethnic studies, identity studies, and intercultural interactions with an emphasis on social justice and equity in the sociology of education could also be considered for future studies.

As this study included teachers' perspectives and experiences, future research could encourage teachers to rethink ways in which they may unintentionally foster stereotypes of others. The future studies should also examine the key assumptions and values of school principals and their policy-making processes, with a focus on the implications and impacts on immigrant students.

This study explored social studies as the curriculum pertinent to examining history, current events, and sociopolitical topics. A future study could conduct intercultural education integrating into social studies curriculum and teaching practice.



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## Appendix A: Tables

Table A1

*Participants' Student Profiles*

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Grade	Birthplace	School	Years in Canada	Identity	Single Child
Cason	M	17	11	Shanghai	C	3	Newcomer	Y
Lisha	F	17	11	Beijing	B	10	G1.5	Y
Lily	F	17	11	Hongkong	A	17	G2	Y
Steven	M	17	11	Xinjiang	A	5	Newcomer	Y
Sherry	F	17	11	Macao	A	3	Newcomer	Y
Wesley	M	18	12	Ha'erbin	C	15	G2	Y
Wang	M	18	12	Shenyang	D	10	G1.5	Y
Zihao	M	17	11	Xi'an	A	11	G1.5	Y
Ningyu	M	18	12	Zhengzhou	B	10	G1.5	Y
Guo	M	18	12	Nanjing	D	10	G1.5	Y
Ziwen	F	17	11	Changsha	A	4	Newcomer	N
Salina	F	16	10	Yinchuan	A	6	G1.5	Y
Anna	F	16	10	Shanghai	A	15	G2	Y
Weike	M	18	12	Guangzhou	B	10	G1.5	Y
Kitty	F	16	10	Hongkong	A	5	Newcomer	Y
Eva	F	17	11	Taiyuan	A	9	G1.5	Y
Maxiu	M	16	10	Zhuhai	D	8	G1.5	Y
Tracy	F	18	12	Canada	A	18	G2	N
Lujie	F	16	11	Wuhan	A	9	G1.5	Y
Rena	F	17	11	Tianjin	B	8	G1.5	Y
Panson	M	16	10	Tianjin	D	2	Newcomer	Y
Matthew	M	16	10	Taiwan	D	8	G1.5	Y
Yani	F	18	11	Beihai	D	5	Newcomer	Y
Mary	F	18	12	Zhengzhou	B	10	G1.5	Y
Michael	M	18	12	Canada	C	18	G2	N
Nancy	F	17	11	Beijing	A	5	Newcomer	N
Helen	F	16	10	Jinan	C	10	G1.5	Y

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Grade	Birthplace	School	Years in Canada	Identity	Single Child
Wen	M	18	12	Beijing	B	11	G1.5	Y
Wendy	F	17	11	Taiyuan	B	7	G1.5	Y
Yuqian	F	18	12	Beijing	D	6	G1.5	Y
Yahe	F	18	12	Xi'an	A	13	G2	Y
Hao	M	18	12	Nanjing	D	6	G1.5	Y
Warren	M	17	11	Chongqing	D	15	G2	Y
Julia	F	17	11	Shijiazhuang	A	6	G1.5	Y
Irene	F	17	11	Shenyang	C	15	G2	N
Kong	M	16	10	Guangzhou	A	3	Newcomer	Y
Hetty	F	16	10	Hongkong	A	2	Newcomer	Y
Ancy	F	17	11	Zhuhai	C	12	G2	Y
Shiruan	F	17	11	Nanjing	D	12	G2	N

*Note.* All students spoke both English and Mandarin. G1.5 = Generation 1.5; G2 = second generation.

Table A2

*Participants' Parents' Profiles*

Name (pseudonym)	Mother	Father	Years in Canada	Occupation
Suzan	√		15	Engineer
Terry		√	9	Engineer
Lina	√		10	Massage Therapist
Victor		√	15	Technician
Chenjie	√		5	Worker
Qiong	√		12	Insurance Staff
Zhijun	√		10	Legal assistant
Tianyi		√	11	Accountant
Maria	√		2	Assistant in logistic
Zhang		√	6	Airport Staff
Reba		√	8	programmer
Lianna	√		6	Paramedic
Laochen		√	5	Electrician
Huang		√	10	Estimator
Shan	√		13	Teacher



Yingyong		√	17	Self-employed
John		√	10	Technician
Jing	√		15	Engineer

Table A3

*Teachers' Profiles*

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Teaching Subjects	School program	School A or B
Leila	Female	Science	AP/Regular	B
Mike	Male	Biology/Physics/Chemistry	AP/Regular	B
Deborah	Female	Physics	Regular/IB	A
William	Male	Science	Regular/IB	A
Dorian	Male	Social Studies	Regular/AP	B
Sean	Male	Social Studies	Regular	A
Cindy & Emily	Female	Social Studies focus group	Regular	B
David	Male	Social Studies	Regular/IB	A
Colin	Female	English	ESL	A
Jim	Male	English	Regular/AP	B
Olivia	Female	Food study	Regular	A
Elizabeth	Female	Cosmetology	Regular	A
Mason	Male	CALM (Career and Life Management)	Regular	A
Diane	Female	International student Coordinator	Regular	A
George	Male	Math	Regular/IB	A
Carter	Male	Physical Education	Regular	B

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### With Chinese Immigrant Youth

1. Who do you make friends with? Why?
2. What, do you think, makes you become friends?
3. How do you think of the barriers of intercultural friendship?
4. What are the difficulties in social life that you experienced in high school? To what extent do these difficulties affect your intercultural friendship (local White peers) and sense of belonging to Canada?
5. Do you use dress, hairstyle, and other cultural symbols (such as music) to distinguish you from Canadian White peers? why? How do you think of the “difference” as barriers of intercultural friendship in values, beliefs, parenting style, hobbies, food, dress, physical appearance, way of thinking, social manners, or other factors?
6. Do you experience any stereotypes, bias, prejudice and discrimination in high school? In which form?
7. How do the remaining cultural traditions of families influence your friendship?
8. Do your parents’ parenting style affect your intercultural friendship? If yes, How?
9. Do you identify yourself as a Chinese Canadian, or a Canadian? Or a Chinese? How your identity influences your intercultural friendship?
10. What teachers should do will be helpful in intercultural friendship building?
11. How do you see the racist comment? “During the raucous mayoral debate, an audience member who told the National Post he was a Ford supporter shouted at Ms. Chow, who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong when she was 13, to “Go home, Olivia! Back to China!”

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/doug-ford-denounces-racist-comment-by-supporter/article20777913/>

### **With Chinese Parents**

1. Tell me about your challenges of Chinese parenting comparing with the Canadian way of parenting (Tell me your fear, pressure, confusion, contradictory thoughts or others)?
2. What barriers do you think for Chinese immigrant youth to make intercultural friends with local peers?
3. How do you perceive your immigrant background influence your child's intercultural friendship?
4. How do you perceive your survival pressures influence your child's intercultural friendship?
5. How do you perceive your traditional values and education belief influence your child's intercultural friendship?
6. Do you have White parents (your child's local peers' parents) or friends for your social circle or intercultural friendship experiences in Canada? If yes, tell me more details.
7. How do you perceive your intercultural competency and intercultural social circle?
8. Do you experience any stereotypes, bias, prejudice and discrimination? If yes, how does it affect your attitude on intercultural friendship?
9. What do you think of the role of teachers to help new immigrant students to build intercultural friendship?

### **With Teachers**

1. Tell me how you feel the common phenomenon "ethnic division" in high schools. Do you think it is normal or abnormal? Why?

2. What do you think of the barriers that immigrant students have in making friends with host students, especially Chinese newcomers?
3. I wonder about your perceptions on the role of teacher in supporting immigrant students to build intercultural friendships, in and out of classroom.
4. How do you think of the intercultural education and social studies?
5. How do you think of class interaction (such as opportunities of asking questions, group arrangement with local peers), can be helpful for immigrant students esp. newcomers to build intercultural friendship?