

**BECOMING CANADIAN: EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RECENT  
ADULT CHINESE IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA**

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## Abstract

The 2021 Census reported that immigrants with a Chinese ethnic background take up 4.7% of the Canadian population. Although Chinese immigrants represent a significant part of the Canadian population, how they understand their relationship with Canada has not been studied directly in educational research. In response, this manuscript-based thesis examines the lived experiences of six adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada and obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship after 2010. Adopting Connelly and Clandinin's narrative inquiry, this study presents stories of participants with the hope to shed light on the process of Chinese immigrants becoming Canadian. Through these presentations, this study attends to the complex relationships participants have gone through in the process of negotiating their acceptance in Canada. Data gathered from two rounds of semi-structured interviews with six recent adult Chinese immigrants living in Ontario and Quebec were interpreted and discussed using Berry's acculturation framework, a critical multiculturalism framework and a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework in three individual research articles. Findings reveal that Chinese immigrants actively participate in social, cultural, political and economic affairs in Canada. Their participation in Canadian society exhibits their acceptance of Canadian cultures and values while living in Canada. Based on these understandings, they offer their suggestions to make Canada a more democratic, just and livable place. Racism, discriminations and stereotypes received from some members of the host society have created tangible damage to their relationship with Canada. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrants express their desire to be included and integrated into Canadian society. These narratives from recent adult Chinese immigrants supplement literature in citizenship education. Policy makers, scholars, educators and the general public should listen to their stories and find more ways to include Chinese immigrants in the building of democracy and multiculturalism in Canada.

*Keywords:* Chinese immigrants; Canada; lived experiences; narrative inquiry; acculturation; multiculturalism; critical race theory; citizenship education

I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my grandfather, Dr. Defa Liu (刘德发). I am sorry I did not get the chance to say goodbye when you left the world. I hope you are doing well in heaven. I love you and I miss you.



To my grandmother, Defang Zhang (张德芳), a strong-minded, powerful and courageous woman in her time. You taught me to be a person with honesty, integrity, resilience and determination. And I will always live with these values, regardless of where I am in this world. If there is another life, I want to be your grandson again. A better one this time.



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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CBIE	Canadian Bureau for International Education
CLIC	Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CRT	Critical Race Theory
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
GMA	Greater Montreal Area
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Peoples' Republic of China
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
OXFAM	<b>O</b> xford Committee for <b>F</b> amine Relief
PR	Permanent Resident/residency. A permanent residency card is sometimes referred to as a green card.
PRC	The People's Republic of China, also referred to as Mainland China
SLE	Second Language Education
UK	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
USA	The United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This manuscript-based thesis contains five chapters. Chapter One is a comprehensive introduction to the thesis. In this chapter, I first address the need for the current study; that is, to update academia with Chinese immigrants' experiential knowledge on their relationship with Canada and to contribute to the integration of Chinese immigrants into Canada. Then, I present some historical background of Chinese immigration to Canada. Within the scope of this thesis, I am unable to present all significant moments of Chinese immigration to Canada. I highlight some relevant information to help readers understand the connection between Chinese immigration in Canada and the current thesis. Then, I discuss my personal motivation to conduct this research. In presenting some personal narratives, my hope is for readers to understand why this topic is important to me.

Next, I talk about the objective of this thesis. Following the objective statement, I talk about my positionality in this thesis, both as an insider and outsider. This doctoral thesis is manuscript-based, in which three individual research articles are included to report findings, respectively. Though each article might reveal distinctive findings, all three articles are within the domain of citizenship education research. Additionally, all three articles employ narrative inquiry as their research methodology. Due to the space limit for manuscripts, it is impossible to include a comprehensive literature review to define citizenship and citizenship education, as well as narrative inquiry in them. As a solution, I include this literature review in the introduction of this thesis. This literature review may help readers visualize the connection between the current thesis, citizenship education and narrative inquiry. Then, I introduce the research questions this thesis aims to answer. Notably, each manuscript addresses some research questions on its own. These research questions in the manuscripts were prepared based on the overarching research question and specific research questions of this thesis. After introducing the research questions, I briefly discuss the research context, participants, data collection and data analysis. To conclude this chapter, I share my plans to publish all three manuscripts.

To help readers understand the structure of this thesis better, it is important to note that each chapter contains its own reference list. To make each chapter submission ready, tables and figures are presented in the appendices of the individual chapter. In Chapter Two, Chapter Three and Chapter Four, individual abstract is prepared to summarize each research article, respectively.

Chapter Two of the thesis is the first research article for my doctoral research. The title of this article is “Dynamic Acculturation Profiles: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants’ Understanding of Their Relationship with Canada.” Using Berry’s (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation framework, namely assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization, I examine how participants compare and contrast the cultures from their home nation, China and the cultures in the host nation, Canada. Using narrative inquiry as the methodology for this article, I present my research participants’ narratives in four thematic topics; their first impression of Canada, their understanding of Canadian cultures through study and work, their understanding of their relationship with China and Canada, respectively, and suggestions they have for Canadian society.

These topics were created according to the common themes I have identified from the interview data. Notably, I also attend to the singularities of each participant’s profile in this article. In presenting and discussing the narratives of research participants, this article answers the following research questions, 1) What are recent adult Chinese immigrants’ understandings of their relationship with Canada? 2) How does the lived experience of Chinese immigrants inform literature in acculturation? The findings of this article showcase a dynamic acculturation profile, which means participants do not fit in only one of the acculturation profiles in Berry’s (1980, 2019) framework. Their knowledge of Canada, as well as their connections with people in the host society can be fluid. Nonetheless, a common finding of all stories shared by the participants is that additional exposure to the host society will contribute to their understanding of it. In addition, Chinese immigrants are actively accepting Canada and Canadian cultures. They express their hope and desire to be integrated into the Canadian society.

The second research article, titled as “Multiculturalism and Bilingualism from the Perspective of Six Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry,” is presented in Chapter Three. In this article, I use a critical multiculturalism framework to examine recent adult Chinese immigrants’ understanding of the two federal policies in Canada, multiculturalism and bilingualism. Both policies connect with their life and wellbeing in Canada. Acculturation theorists such as Berry (2017), Hou et al. (2018), and Noels and Berry (2016) conclude that integration is a desirable acculturation profile for immigrants in their host society. Multiculturalism encourages immigrants to maintain their heritage culture while at the same time celebrating Canada’s diversity and learning Canada’s culture (Brosseau & Dewing, 2018). As such, multiculturalism is often considered to be an example of the integration acculturation profile. In this logic, the second research article of this thesis is well connected with the previous chapter.

This article adopts narrative inquiry to present Chinese immigrants’ stories and how they came to understand multiculturalism and bilingualism through these stories. The findings reveal that Chinese immigrants have valuable insights to explicate the connotations of Canadian multiculturalism. They associate thematic topics such as diversity, mutual understanding and democracy with Canadian multiculturalism. At the same time, they also present their critiques to multiculturalism in Canada. The second finding of this study suggests that Chinese immigrants critically assess and compare their current experiences of living in Canada with their prior experiences of living in China. Through this critical comparison, they have formed some in-depth understanding about the Canadian society. Lastly, participants in this study also give their thoughts on bilingualism through their language learning experiences. These thoughts validate some scholarly criticism against the language training programs for new immigrants in Canada.

The third article, presented in Chapter Four, uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework to critically examine Chinese immigrants’ lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. The title of this article is “Becoming Justice-Oriented Citizens in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants’ Lived

Experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” In this chapter, I present counter-stories of research participants to challenge the dominant narratives’ portrait of Chinese communities in Canada. In doing so, I aim to embody the voices of recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada. This study answers the following two research questions 1) What are the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada? 2) How may recent Chinese immigrants’ lived experiences inform education, social and political changes in Canada? The study finds that racism and stereotypes targeting Chinese communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada were enhanced. As such, disseminating their stories and embodying their voices should become urgent tasks for researchers in citizenship education. During this trying time, Chinese immigrants in Canada still participate in Canadian society by offering their critical take on the COVID policies in Canada. Additionally, Chinese immigrants in Canada, as this study indicates, understand the root causes of many problems facing all Canadians. Based on their critical assessment of these root causes, they also offer solutions to alleviate these issues, accordingly. This finding reveals that Chinese immigrants are active participants in Canada. They are on their journey to become justice-oriented citizens in Canada.

Chapter Five is a final conclusion of this thesis. I first summarize research findings from all three studies in this thesis. Through synthesizing all narratives from the research participants, I discuss five key topics in the conclusion: 1) Chinese immigrants as active participants in Canada; 2) Chinese immigrants actively accept Canadian cultures while living in Canada; 3) Chinese immigrants offer their critical opinions regarding Canadian society, based on their in-depth understanding of it; 4) Discrimination, racism and stereotypes damage the relationship between Chinese immigrants in Canada and the Canadian society; 5) Chinese immigrants express their desire to be included and integrated into Canadian society.

Then, I discuss the knowledge contribution and implications of these major findings of this doctoral thesis. To answer the research questions of this doctoral study, I provide answers based on the research findings and implications as presented above. Next, I reflect on my experience of adopting narrative inquiry in this research. Following this reflection, I

discuss limitations of this thesis, as well as pointing out some directions for future research. I conclude this thesis with my plans after this doctoral research.

### **The Need for the Current Research**

Canada is one of the most popular destinations for immigrants around the world (Fleras, 2014; Kymlicka, 1998; Li & Halli, 2003). According to the 2021 census, immigrants represent approximately 23% of the total population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). This percentage was 21.9 in the previous national census in 2016 (Grenier, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2019). Among these foreign-born immigrants, those of Chinese ethnic backgrounds constitute 4.7 percent of the entire population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). These Chinese immigrants, together with other Canadians, have contributed significantly to the building of the country, the bettering of democracy and the upgrading of living standards (Li, 2006; Walker et al., 2011).

Although Chinese immigrants represent a significant part of the Canadian population, how they understand their relationship with Canada has not been studied directly in educational research (Guo, 2015). As a Chinese immigrant in Canada and a new scholar, I hope to contribute to this emerging research domain. Through my many interactions with individuals with Chinese background in Canada, both landed immigrants and Canadian citizens, I have benefited from their invaluable knowledge about immigration, racism, democracy, Canada and the world. Yet, their voices have always been minimal in the public sphere. In their everyday lives, stereotypes and racism have been the primary feedback they have received from the society at large (Furey, 2020; Guo & Guo, 2021; Heng, 2020; Hsu, 2017; Xu, 2020).

The COVID-19 global pandemic has further reinforced this stereotype, as many narratives in the West accuse China of being responsible for the outbreak (Klobucista, 2021; Wen, 2023). These negative attributes, unfortunately, were and are still being projected onto Chinese communities around the globe. Given such a background, the integration of Chinese immigrants to Canada appears to be an insurmountable task. Nonetheless, according to Guo

(2006, 2011, 2014), Chinese immigrants in Canada express a desire to be included within the mainstream society.

As such, this thesis aims to examine the lived experiences of adult Chinese immigrants in Ontario and Quebec to understand their relationship with the host society. More specifically, this thesis hopes to shed light on the process of Chinese immigrants becoming “Canadian.” Here, I use the term “becoming” to symbolize Chinese immigrants’ active and ongoing attempts to find their place in the process of negotiating their acceptance in Canada (McLean & Syed, 2015; Moffitt et al., 2020).

### **Historical Background of Chinese Immigration to Canada**

The first written record of Chinese in Canada was believed to be from 1788, when Captain John Meares hired 50 Chinese craftsmen to build a fortress at Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island (Chan, 2019). In the 1850s, increasingly more Chinese males migrated to North America to search for gold (Holland, 2009). The construction of railways on the west coast of North America was another factor that attracted more Chinese males to work and stay in the region. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) brought about 15,000 Chinese labourers to Canada between 1880 and 1885 (Chan, 2019; Holland, 2009). These Chinese males were predominately from rural areas in China, with very little education. They migrated to Canada in the hopes of getting more money to support their families in China.

Despite earning minimum wages, working in extreme weather, suffering from illness and malnutrition, along with hundreds of deaths due to accidents, the completion of the CPR did not win credits for Chinese labourers at that time (David Lam Centre for International Communication, n.d.). Instead, the Government of Canada enacted the *Chinese Immigration Act* in 1885, which enforced a head tax of 50 dollars on any Chinese coming to Canada (Chan, 2019; Cho, 2002). This tax was increased to 100 dollars in 1900, and 500 dollars in 1904 (Holland, 2009). By 1923, the Government of Canada ratified the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923* to ban all Chinese immigration to Canada (Morton, 1974). In Canadian history, the Chinese were the only group of people who were banned from coming to Canada, after Confederation in 1867.

Following the *Canadian Citizenship Act* in 1946, the *Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, was repealed by the federal government in 1947 (Ng, 1999). In 1967, Canada employed a point ranking system to evaluate all potential immigrants, which made it legally impossible to challenge the decisions as to who could migrate to Canada. In 1971, the liberal government adopted multiculturalism as a state policy in response to immigration and minority rights in Canada (Guo & Guo, 2011). Although these policy changes in the 1970s attracted additional immigrants to Canada, Chinese immigrants, especially those from Mainland China, were still a small quantity during this time (Holland, 2009).

A much larger wave of Chinese immigrants to Canada occurred in the 1990s, when the People's Republic of China (PRC, also Mainland China) opted to take control of Hong Kong in 1997. During this period, between 1990 and 1996, approximately 30,000 Chinese migrated annually from Hong Kong to Canada (Li, 2008). After 2000, Chinese immigration to Canada was primarily from Mainland China. Today, this wave of immigration from China to Canada is still increasing. Accompanying this rising immigration, Canada is beginning to see an increase in the number of international students from Mainland China. In fact, the Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE] (n.d.) stated that, in 2022, Chinese students studying in Canada accounted for 12% of the entire international student body in Canada. This rate of incoming Chinese international students is, in part, explained by favourable immigration policies towards international students (Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2021), which helps to attract and retain additional Chinese immigrants in Canada.

Through this immigration history, spanning many years, Chinese immigrants have now become one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Despite the once unfair treatment from the government, Chinese immigrants have contributed significantly to Canada's overall development (Li, 2006; Walker et al., 2011). However, as a significant composition of Canadian population, there is a dearth of research pertaining to Chinese immigrants' wellbeing, as well as their understanding of their relationship with

Canada. As such, through examining the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Canada, this study will contribute to this emerging field.

### **Personal Motivation to Conduct This Research**

While pursuing my master program in Canada, I took an educational philosophy course. My professor, Dr. Kevin McDonough asked a question to all students, “What is the ultimate goal of life?” I cannot recall all the answers my peers shared but that question has lingered in my head, ever since. I do not think I have the answer or the capacity to answer that question, until now. In fact, I am still quite confused about everything in my life, my education journey, my career aspirations and the ways I want to live my life. Rest assured, I am not going to begin this thesis with that long-standing conundrum that has haunted philosophers around the world, past, present and future. Associated with that question is a key term, mentioned by Dr. McDonough, “personal autonomy” is another captivating concept that remains with me.

Reflecting on my educational journey, I think I would respond to Dr. McDonough’s question by saying that life is a journey towards gaining more autonomy, in terms of what I want and what I can do. I studied English literature in my undergraduate program out of my personal interest in learning English language and cultures. This interest has remained consistent throughout my educational journey. While studying in Canada, I realized the uniqueness of this country from a variety of aspects. To name a few, its bilingual official languages, its openness towards immigration, as well as its diversity and inclusiveness.

As a person born and raised in China, a country with very different cultures and languages compared to Canada, I was able to find my communities in Canada easily, both on and off campus. However, it was equally effortless for me to notice many misunderstandings between the Chinese communities and non-Chinese communities in Canada. As a novice scholar, I realized the responsibilities on my shoulders to bridge the understanding between the Chinese communities with the multicultural Canadian family.

This sense of responsibility was partially my motivation for conducting the following study. Through my interactions with many people around me, while living in different cities

in Canada, I felt the weight of the misunderstanding some have about China and Chinese immigrants. Personally, I was asked questions such as, “Can you leave the country safely?” “Do you eat dog meat?” “You speak very good English, where did you learn it?” “Will you go back to China after your study?” etc. I do not have the appropriate vocabulary to describe my feelings when being asked such questions. Nonetheless, these questions constantly reminded me that I am considered to be a foreign and temporary individual in Canada.

I am not the only one with this realization. I still recall a conversation I had with a Chinese father who owns a few small businesses in Ontario. Having lived in Canada for more than two decades, he still felt that he didn’t belong here, “No matter how hard you try, how much money you have, and how that green card or passport say, you are still a foreigner in this country.” Conversations like this could go on. As a curious person, I cannot help myself but to ask a lot of “whys?” Why is it so hard for Chinese immigrants to integrate into Canadian society? Why would our appearance be the first and, probably, the only thing some people in Canada notice? Why is there such misunderstanding of Chinese immigrants within Canadian communities? I turn to scholarly literature to find potential answers. However, it yields very little results as very few research studies focus on Chinese immigrants’ understanding of themselves as well as their relationship with their new home, Canada. Consequently, I decided to find the answers to my questions through my PhD project.

I came to Canada primarily for the pursuit of higher education. Despite the uniqueness of Canadian society, as mentioned above, I had many unpleasant experiences while studying and living in Canada, primarily in terms of the ways in which people treated me due to my appearance, background and language abilities. While working at a large telecommunication company in their customer service team, I had to use an English name just to avoid potential troubles. It turned out that an alias offered insufficient protection from all the issues. One time, I was yelled at by a customer who commented on my accent when the real source of his problem was that I could not issue a credit to cover his bill, due to multiple late payments. When I asked the customer very politely which part of the

conversation was confusing to him, he disconnected the call with a question, “Why can’t your company hire people who speak proper English?”

I consider myself to be a resilient person who thrives on setbacks in my life. However, I underestimated the power of racism. I had to quit the job after a customer told me, over the telephone, that I should not work in Canada if I was not born and raised in Canada, all because I asked her what a 411 directory was. Due to company policy, I didn’t even have the power to end racist conversations with customers by disconnecting the call. As a result, I was attacked, based on my heritage, for more than ten minutes. If ever anyone were to ask me to describe the experience of racism, I would describe it as an immense self-doubt of your very existence in the world. It is a feeling of vulnerability and being inferior and useless. But, none of these feelings are justified because I do matter and I am here. After reaching out to the management team to take over the call, I had a major mental breakdown and cried out loud in front of my co-workers for fifteen minutes. Leaving that job was the first time, ever, in my life that I quit anything voluntarily. Even today, I still believe that it was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life, so far. The most frustrating part for me was how little support I received from the company. The message they were trying to tell me was that it was part of the job.

While working in a Chinese restaurant part-time, I was confronted in an extremely unpleasant tone by two customers, “DO-YOU-SPEAK-ENGLISH?” as if I am mentally challenged. Stories like this could go on and on. But, then I began to think, if I experience all these episodes in my life in Canada, what about other Chinese immigrants across the nation? Once again, I turn to the literature in the field, but find very little information regarding the lived realities of Chinese immigrants in Canada. It is therefore safe to say that another motivation for me to conduct this study is to use an educational lens to help Chinese immigrants share their stories and voice their opinions about Canadian society.

I was born in a small village in Northwestern China. Located in a small valley inside one of the biggest mountain ranges in China, life there was self-sufficient but isolated. When I was little, the road system in my hometown was poorly built. To get to the nearest city, it

took more than three hours by bus, even though the physical distance between the two points was less than 40 kilometers. As a curious youngster, I was very interested in maps, especially the different landscapes of the world. Looking at the map of China, I wondered, why would my ancestors settle in a place surrounded by mountains instead of choosing other places? This question always amazes me. During the pandemic, I visited my hometown and had a long conversation with my oldest uncle. Through oral stories, he gave me some clarity regarding our family history.

The earliest timeline we can trace our family roots back to is the 14th century. During that time, in 1368, the Ming dynasty took power, after many years of chaos and war (Hucker, 2020). Following this, China finally entered a relatively peaceful period of her history. My ancestors used to live in a place with vast flat lands. However, that place gradually became over-populated in the early years of the Ming dynasty. The government then organized a massive migration movement from that region to alleviate issues caused by over-population, hunger, shortage of land, etc. (Wang, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

However, the government only took responsibility for issuing the migration order, leaving individuals on their own to find places to settle in. To avoid hunger and war, my ancestors, at that time, were mostly looking for places within the mountain ranges. The reasons were simple; such places offer natural protection against war and a self-sufficient way of living. With their bare feet, my ancestors walked over 600 kilometers and finally decided to settle in the place that I call my hometown, now. It was probably a perfect choice for them at that time, deep inside the mountains, isolated, far from the reach of government control, lots of vacant land, an abundant water supply and less density in population. Ever since then, our family has lived in this place and has never moved. I told my family story in this thesis not to entertain, but to showcase how (im)migration was common and prevalent throughout human history (Manning & Trimmer, 2020).

My ancestors migrated to an isolated valley to hide from wars and hunger. Six hundred years later, I made the decision to pursue my studies and to gain a new life in Canada, a country that is literally more than 10,000 kilometers away from home.

Nonetheless, unlike my ancestors, my decision to immigrate to Canada was not to hide from anything. I made this choice with autonomy. With that autonomy, I have to bear the newness, adaptations, adjustments, challenges and resolutions of this country, while living up to that decision. I know I cannot speak for other immigrants, but I am certain that they all have their stories to share in regard to their immigration journey. I turn to literature again to see if I can find these stories, only to be disappointed all over again. As such, I am motivated to be the storyteller of Chinese immigrants to record important moments in their life, and to situate these moments with the social, cultural and political context in Canada. In doing so, I hope I can mobilize their experiential knowledge with regard to their understanding of their relationship with their new home, Canada.

### **Objective of This Thesis**

This thesis focuses on Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, as they represent a large population in Canada. Amongst those numbers, we are seeing an increasing number of Chinese students studying in Canada, who represent an important source of immigration to the country. Currently, Canada uses a point ranking system to evaluate all applicants for Canadian permanent residency (Government of Canada, 2021). Among the different criteria for immigration points, Canadian education takes a significant share, closely followed by one's employment record abroad and within Canada. Additionally, an open work permit is usually granted to students who have successfully graduated from a Canadian higher institution, making it legally possible for them to win additional points for their immigration application while working in Canada (Government of Canada, 2023a). As a result, many international students choose to immigrate to Canada after their study, which is the case for several participants in this study.

In educational research, scholars have studied international students' educational experiences (e.g., Scott et al., 2015; Yang, 2016), immigrants' motivation to study the official language(s) of the host society (e.g., Darvin & Pierce, 2021; Gardner, 2007) and acculturation theories in relation to immigration (e.g., Berry, 1980, 2017; Hou et al., 2018). Nonetheless, few of the studies directly studied the lived experiences of immigrants, let alone

immigrants with a Chinese background. Guo (2013, 2014) examines Chinese immigrants' economic integration and volunteering experiences in Canada through questionnaires and semi-structure interviews. The findings of his research indicate that Chinese immigrants are active citizens with desires to participate and integrate into the Canadian society. However, a comprehensive study that focuses on Chinese immigrants' narratives and experiential knowledge about their relationship with Canada has yet to be done.

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, China was brought to the forefront of discussion in the international community. Chinese people around the world have received some negative feedback from other groups and communities during this global crisis. Taking myself as an example, a colleague of mine refused to shake hands with me "not because I am Chinese," at the beginning of the pandemic. It is as if my Chinese-ness was heightened with magnifiers, at that moment. Even at the end of last year, I received a comment that "it was you people who brought this virus to us" from a random person at a grocery store, simply because I was wearing a mask when it was no longer mandatory in most parts of Canada. Perhaps more problematic is the fact that stories and voices from Chinese immigrants were not commonly heard and reported in news reports or academic studies, which further silenced their voices. In their everyday lives, stereotypes and racism have been the primary feedback they have received from the society at large (Furey, 2020; Guo, 2011; Heng, 2020; Hsu, 2017; Xu, 2020).

The COVID-19 global pandemic has further reinforced this stereotype, as many narratives in the West accuse China of being responsible for the outbreak. These negative attributes, unfortunately, were and still are being projected onto Chinese communities around the globe. Given such a background, the integration of Chinese immigrants to Canada appears to be an insurmountable task. It is, therefore, more than necessary to include stories and voices from Chinese immigrants in educational research to mobilize their experiential knowledge about their relationship with Canada. The hope is that this knowledge mobilization will update Canadians' understanding of Chinese communities in Canada.

As a Chinese immigrant in Canada, it is my hope that other Chinese immigrants will integrate into Canadian society and contribute to the building of Canadian multiculturalism and democracy. One goal of this thesis is to understand the obstacles hindering Chinese immigrants' integration within Canada and to find some solutions to ameliorate such issues. At the same time, this thesis also aims to understand the affordances of Chinese immigrants' stories/experiences in their integration in Canada. More specifically, my doctoral research will openly examine the lived experiences of recent (since 2010) adult Chinese immigrants (age 18 and above) with either a permanent residency or Canadian citizenship in Ontario and Quebec, as well as to see how these experiences shape the way they understand themselves and their relationships with their new home, Canada.

### **My Positionality**

As a Chinese immigrant in Canada since 2015, my personal experience is a huge aspect of how I understand Canada and navigate my life in this country. The people, the culture, the language, the social and political infrastructure, the food and the education are all different compared to my prior experience in China. Through my experience, I have come to notice the subtle but tangible changes of how I understand my relationship with Canada, China and the world, respectively. These changes made me ponder who am I and what role do my experiences play in my understanding of who I am? Perhaps this question may be too philosophical in asking who I am. That is not my intention in this thesis. To put this question into a more concrete context, I would then ask, who am I in my life in Canada? Am I that Chinese person who is hardworking, well educated, always silent but competitive, or am I more than just these labels and stereotypes?

I think about these questions very often. However, it is very hard for me to give specific answers to them. But, it is safe to say that I am constantly trying to understand my relationship with Canada. While living in Canada, I met many Chinese immigrants and benefited a lot from their experiential knowledge about Canada and the world. I worked in a Chinese fast-food restaurant in Montreal for three years and I became very close to the owner, the manager, the chef and other employees in the restaurant. We hang out and

celebrate Chinese New Year, we cook Chinese food together and we provide that emotional support to each other when we are homesick. Although some of them hold Canadian passports and have lived in Canada for more than a decade, I noticed that, when they use the word “domestic,” they were exclusively talking about things happening in China. Owning three restaurants and having lived in Canada for more than 15 years, the owner of the restaurant said something that I still remember vividly,

It is never about the money you have and the success you made. You are always considered as a foreigner in this country, regardless of how many years you live here. It is almost impossible to fully integrate into Canadian society. You just can't.

To me, the owner of the restaurant was successful in many ways. Naturally, when I heard him commenting on the difficulty of integrating into Canada, I was truly surprised. From that moment, this topic of Chinese immigrants' lived experiences in Canada became a research interest of mine. I wanted to understand why a successful, hard-working and well-off Chinese immigrant, like the owner of the restaurant, finds it “impossible to fully integrate into Canada.”

While working on my master's thesis on the comparison between moral education programs in Quebec and China, I realized some tangible differences between the two programs. For instance, moral education in China focuses on promoting “good” virtues such as love of the nation, working hard and respecting senior members of the society. The program in Quebec puts its emphasis on an understanding of cultural and religious diversity in Quebec, among students (Cao, 2018). Such distinctive thematic topics, in some ways, reflected the different cultures and political philosophies in both societies. Using an educational lens, I presented the differences between the two moral educational programs with a philosophical debate on collectivism and liberalism. This debate was brief, but it captivated my mind, as I have realized that educational research is a viable choice for me to answer the questions I hold about Chinese immigrants' integration in Canada. Naturally, when I started my PhD program, I want to conduct an educational research study to present

recent adult Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with their new home, Canada.

As a Chinese immigrant in Canada, I am both an insider and outsider in this research. I share the same excitements, struggles and challenges as other Chinese immigrants do, while living in Canada. These shared emotions made it possible for me to relate to my research participants' experiences. Consequently, I was able to build trust between us, which potentially helped me provide a safe and worry-free environment for my research participants to share their stories. As a Mandarin speaker myself, I offered the option for participants to be interviewed in Chinese. The rationale of including this option in the research process was to ensure that participants share their authentic experiences in a comfortable environment. As a narrative inquirer, I trust the experiential knowledge of participants. To mobilize this experiential knowledge, I attend to the complex relationships and negotiations participants went through (Caine et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, each individual has their own stories, which represent their unique meaning making about the questions researchers ask. Given the uniqueness of narrative data, I am also an outsider in this research because I need to position myself as the storyteller for the participants, rather than a participant within their stories. Additionally, after I wrote the interview data in the format of stories, I invited participants to review, modify and edit the narrative data. In the co-construction of the narratives for each participant, I need to, once again, position myself as an outsider because the data/narratives I present in this dissertation should centralize on participants' understanding of their relationship with Canada. Being both an insider and outsider of this research offered me invaluable perspectives to view and review the data and research findings.

As a Critical Race Theory (CRT) researcher, I value the importance of including the "voices" of the underrepresented population in our society. CRT scholars advocate for the "voices" of people of colour, reflecting the formers' epistemological belief in experiences in shaping how we come to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Taylor, 2023). This belief aligns with social constructivism's emphasis on human experiences as

essential medium in understanding how we come to know, in this ever-emerging world (Davis, 2004; McKinley, 2015).

Personally, my epistemological belief in human experiences and voices from underrepresented populations justify my employment of the research methodology in this study, upon which I will elaborate more, later. My epistemological belief also positions me as the recorder and presenter of participants' stories. Given that some participants shared their stories in Chinese, I need to position myself as the translator, rather than the interpreter of their stories because participants in my study are the owners of the stories. To ensure an objective stance while translating the interviews to English, I invite my participants to review, modify and verify the English texts upon completion. I will talk about my plans regarding the research texts of this study in detail later. When I discuss the themes arising from their stories using relevant theoretical perspectives in each research article, I also need to maintain an objective stance to avoid my personal biases. In writing and presenting stories of the participants, I try to showcase how we understand our experience and knowledge – as evolving – with the help of narrative data.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review consists of two major parts; a critical definition of citizenship and citizenship education, and a review of scholarly perspectives on the research methodology this thesis employs – narrative inquiry. In defining citizenship and citizenship education, I connect and situate the current thesis with educational research. The review on narrative inquiry provides an extensive summary of the research methodology for this thesis. As this thesis is in a manuscript-based format, I talk about details regarding the participants and study design in each individual article, as well.

### ***Defining Citizenship***

It is a challenging task to define citizenship in one paper, as there are many perspectives represented in the research literature. The conception of citizens and citizenship trace their philosophical roots to ancient Greece. Plato (386/1999) wrote, in *The Republic*, that an education matched to individuals' abilities would create good citizens – individuals

whose actions maintained a just society. However, Plato's emphasis on education was for the elites, which is not the same as the promotion of education for all, in today's sense.

Plato's student, Aristotle, believed that politics pertained to learning to live a good life. As such, Aristotle's vision of citizenship was about living a good life and promoting the common good (Morrison, 1999). Notably, Aristotle's conception of citizenship excluded some groups, such as women and slaves. Both Plato and Aristotle had in their time doubts about democracy. Nonetheless, democracy became a favourable concept after the American Revolution and French Revolution in the late 18th century (Edelstein, 2016).

Modern forms of citizenship began with the 1789 French Revolution, "which established the authority of the state to define who a citizen was and who was not" (Fleming, 2015, p. 44). *Jus soli* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood) are two major historical frameworks relating to conceptions of citizenship (Fleming, 2015; Solodoch & Sommer, 2018). *Jus soli* (right of the soil) aligns with French philosopher Ernest Renan's definition of citizenship in legalistic terms. Under Renan's definition, "one could still be a full citizen of France without belonging to the cultural or linguistic group historically associated with being French" (Fleming, 2015, p. 44). Underpinning this definition is the notion that citizenship is framed legalistically rather than culturally.

*Jus sanguinis* (right of the blood), which owes credit to the German philosopher Johann Fichte, is a much older framework than *jus soli*. Whether one has been born or assimilated into a particular society are the deciding factors for *jus sanguinis*. Citizenship in the *jus sanguinis* framework highlight a "normative culture and sets of associated symbols and behaviours" among citizens (Fleming, 2015, p. 44). A good command of a particular national language is an important indicator used in a *jus sanguinis* framework (Fleming, 2015). In fact, notions of citizenship in many countries today contain both *jus soli* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood) frameworks. In Canada, for example, the acceptance of bilingualism and multiculturalism encourages new citizens of Canada to learn Canadian values (however problematic the definition might be) and one of the official languages, which embodies the *jus sanguinis* framework. On the other hand, bilingualism and

multiculturalism are also legalistic concepts (as in the *jus soli* framework) in interpreting Canadian citizenship (Fleming, 2015).

Before we move on to other nuances of citizenship, we also need to understand the connotations of a nation-state, due to its connection with citizenship and citizenship education. Marxist's views of the state offer some perspectives regarding the definition of the state. To begin with, Marx and Engels (1848) wrote, in *The Communist Manifesto*, that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Chapter I). Underlying such a definition is the idea that the state is an instrument for the bourgeoisie class to exploit the common people (Dyer, 1972). Marxist's definitions of state described conflicts between people who owned properties and people without property. Property owners wanted to subjugate, control and dominate the other classes. Such a conception analyzed the origin of a state from a materialistic point of view (Hay, 1999). Marxist theory of state includes an instrumentalist model (also called the elite model), which views state as an instrument for the fulfillment of interests of a particular class or section of the society, as well as a relatively autonomous model, which refers to the independent functioning of the state, free from the influence of the bourgeoisie (the economically dominant class) (Dyer, 1972).

Anderson (1991) defined a nation as an imagined community in which one particular cultural group lives. A state, according to Broom (2012), is "a structural form of governance that is demarcated through spatial boundaries" (p. 9). Hence, a state normally confines itself within a political boundary, but a nation connects to cultural boundaries. In light of this, Paleri (2014) defined a nation-state as a sovereign state in which most of its subjects are united by factors which define a nation, such as language or common descent. This definition resonates with the *jus soli* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood) frameworks.

The 20th century American philosopher and educator, John Dewey, also contributed significantly to the conceptualization of citizenship and citizenship education. Dewey (1916) wrote, in *Democracy and Education*, that all education contributes to democratic citizenship,

provided it is inclusive and equally accessible to everyone. Democracy, in Dewey's conception, was a process of collaborative social and political decision-making that is achieved through inclusive dialogue, public reasoning and careful and sustained deliberation (Stitzlein, 2012). Furthermore, Dewey (1922) noted that students should become responsible citizens willing to question the status quo and promote social justice. He maintained that "training for citizenship" is the ethical obligation of education, which "develops the power of observation, analysis, and inference with respect to what makes up a social situation and the agencies through which it is modified" (Dewey, 1903, p. 24). His views on nationalism were cautious and critical, especially after World War I (Cohan & Howlett, 2018). In his promotion of a social science approach to education, Dewey valued history and geography's roles in fostering a more tolerant and inclusive view on nationalism among students (Dewey, 1916). Dewey believed that we might be able to foster a global understanding by drawing upon historical events and geographical, cultural, social and political knowledge that contribute to a national and international consciousness (Cohan & Howlett, 2018). Dewey (1940) argued that, "the peculiarity of our [USA] nationalism is its internationalism" (p. 116).

This belief was consistent with his promotion of peace education. Dewey supported American military involvement in World War I with aims to "make the world safe for democracy" and as a "war to end all wars" (Cohan & Howlett, 2017, p. 60). However, after the war, his thinking gradually shifted to peace education that aimed for "international friendship, amity and good will" (Dewey, 1923, p. 514). This re-centring reflected his thoughts on the role of the United States during and after World War I. Following, Dewey noted that establishing lasting peace was the work of education, as peace education promotes mutual understandings and appreciations of all cultures, races and ethnicities (Cohan & Howlett, 2017).

Fleming (2003, 2010, 2015) noted that citizenship is a relatively new field in academic studies despite its long history and philosophical and political foundations. Marshall (1950) developed a model of civil, political and social citizenship in his *Citizenship and Social Class*, which was considered as one of the first theoretical works in citizenship

research. According to Marshall (1950), the civil element of citizenship involved the rights necessary for individual freedom, such as freedom of speech, the right to own property and the right for justice. On the other hand, the political part of citizenship referred to “the right to participate in the exercise of political power” (Marshall, 1950, p. 11). Finally, social citizenship pertained to individuals’ rights to be educated and to their entitlement to social services and welfare (Marshall, 1950). Marshall also argued that, before 1789 (French Revolution), citizenship was better understood as a form of immutable social rank or order.

Although his conception of citizenship was an influential framework, however, problematically, Marshall also argued that modern citizenship is based on social class, an economically based conferring of status that is changeable and temporal (Marshall, 1950). Marshall further argued that the very concept of citizenship, in fact, obscures economic inequality (Morgan & Fleming, 2009). These arguments probably explained Turner’s (1997, 2009) suggestions to Marshall’s classifications of citizenship. Turner (1997) maintained that Marshall’s account of citizenship suggested that modern societies are homogenous in ethnic, cultural and in other forms because he did not address issues of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. Furthermore, Marshall’s early theory did not consider feminist perspectives, as it is implied that Marshall’s civil, political and social citizenship are for working class white males in England (Turner, 2009). In later years, Marshall acknowledged the role of various other identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, etc. in his writings (Marshall, 1975, 1981). That being said, Turner’s suggestions offered a more inclusive definition of citizenship that included different ethnicities, genders, sexualities and social classes.

Similar to what Turner has suggested, Giddens (2009) noted that citizenship theory, following Marshall’s conceptualization, began considering group rights, identity politics and the construction of subjectivity. To illustrate, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) advocated a justice-oriented citizenship in their three-fold classifications of citizenship, which included personally responsible citizens, participatory citizens and justice-oriented citizens. Such a categorization of citizenship was influenced by Parker’s (1996) classification of democratic

citizenship into traditional, progressive and advanced categories. Traditional citizens understand the functions of a government and they commit to democratic values, such as freedom of speech. Progressive citizens place a greater emphasis on civic participation, whereas advanced citizens not only focus on civic participation but they also care about justice-oriented issues, such as minority rights (Parker, 1996).

To further elaborate on Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) classification of citizenship, personally responsible citizens are law-abiding individuals who understand their rights and fulfill their responsibilities as community members and taxpayers. Participatory citizens are also active members of the community, but they would go beyond the responsibilities of personally responsible citizens. If personally responsible citizens are the ones to participate in a charity, participatory citizens are the ones to help organize these activities. Finally, justice-oriented citizens "critically assess social, political and economic structures and explore the root cause of problems" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240). In so doing, justice-oriented citizens aim to "change established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240). This critical definition of citizenship was used by many scholars in their research (e.g., Ferreras-Stone & Demoiny, 2019; Fleming, 2012, Schutte et al., 2017).

In outlining different conceptions and classifications of citizenship, we should understand that defining citizenship is a very challenging task because of the various perspectives represented in this notion. Today's definitions of citizenship call for the removal of barriers of exclusion from citizenship and mutual understanding among all citizens. Whether this definition is mirrored in practice or not is one of the questions I would like to ask in my thesis. Nonetheless, I align with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) promotion of justice-oriented citizenship and use this concept to define citizenship education in the next section.

### ***A Critical Definition of Citizenship Education***

To define citizenship education is another challenging task, in that citizenship education has a plethora of equivalent names, such as civic education, social studies or even

politics. In some cases, subjects like history or language are deemed as potential supplements for citizenship education (Broom, 2011). Citizenship education, Kymlicka (2003) argued, has a long tradition in public education. Kymlicka believed that “it is widely accepted that a basic task of schooling is to prepare each new generation for their responsibilities as citizens” (p. 293). Handel (2009) suggested that public school has traditionally been a site of civic education, while Broom (2012) confirmed a long and close association between citizenship education and public schools. If citizenship education is the reason that we have a public school system, as these authors contend, then what are we talking about when we talk about citizenship education?

To answer this question, we should first think about the purpose of citizenship education. In the early stages of public schooling, cultivating good citizens was the primary goal of education. For instance, Prussia was the first nation-state to adopt a public-school system aimed at creating good citizens to support the government (Boyd & King, 1975). With the same logic, the French philosopher Durkheim (1956) argued that the purpose of education was to build citizens loyal to the (French) nation-state. Osborne (1985) noted that early schools hoped to indoctrinate values in children that transformed them into good workers and passive citizens. Later on, Carr et al. (2014) also argued that one denotation of citizenship relates to the acquisition of civic virtues that are often associated with being a good citizen. As such, within this Western conceptualization, morality, nationalism and Christian values became the content of many textbooks in early citizenship education programs (Broom, 2011).

However, nowadays, citizenship education has shifted its focus from such values to ones centred upon critical thinking, and from nationalism to an understanding of diversity. For instance, MacMullen (2011) argued that civic education should not only teach content that seeks to arouse pride among students, but it should also introduce topics that are shameful in a nation’s history to create space for critical reflections. He divided the love of a nation into “patriotic love” and “civic identification” (MacMullen, 2014, p. 74), and advocated for civic identification. Within this context, patriotic love refers to the love of the

polity, whereas civic identification refers to a certain felt relationship to the agency of the polity in question (MacMullen, 2014). A civic identification centralizes critical thinking, which has been a significant trend in contemporary citizenship education practices.

Recognizing pluralism and cultural diversity has been another emerging theme in today's citizenship education. Kymlicka (2001) wrote that citizenship education is “not simply a matter of knowledge of political institutions and constitutional principles; it is also a matter of how we think about and behave towards others, particularly those who differ from us in their race, religion, class etc.” (p. 304). McDonough (2003), however, justified a conception of multinational civic education. For him, understanding cultural diversity is crucial to resolving potential conflicts between majority and minority groups in a multinational state, such as Canada. Broom (2011) also noted the complexity of citizenship education today, as pluralism, multiple identities and multiculturalism have become key concepts.

Related to my research, which links citizenship education and immigration, the necessity to address diversity in multinational states calls for a bolder action in citizenship education – Global Citizenship Education (GCE) – an educative goal that opens up the nation-state and its borders. Indeed, as a result of globalization and international migration, demographics in almost all nation-states have changed in such a way that no single ethnicity, cultural or religious group dominates the population (Banks, 2009, 2017). Moreover, in response to issues such as climate change, poverty, terrorism and many other problems facing humanity, global citizenship and global efforts become desirable and indispensable. To build on a previous perspective, Dewey's promotion of peace education resonates with GCE's belief in global efforts (Cohan & Howlett, 2018). OXFAM, named after **O**xford Committee for **F**amine Relief, is a major non-profit group with an extensive collection of operations focusing on the alleviation of global poverty. According to OXFAM (n.d.), global citizenship is the belief that we can all make a difference. Similarly, Banks (2009) asserted that citizenship education should help students to develop a commitment to act with the aim of changing the world in a way that is more just and democratic.

To make our world more just and democratic, problems of inequality and injustice must first be addressing around the globe. In this logic, Andreotti (2006) argued that GCE should view global issues from the perspective of social justice and critical literacy, rather than charity. This account of GCE is regarded as an example of a critical global citizenship education. A softer view of GCE, in contrast, recognizes global issues as problems of inequality and injustice, nothing more (Andreotti, 2006). Applying Westheimer and Kahne (2004)'s classification of citizenship, a soft global citizen is a personally responsible citizen, as they acknowledge inequality and injustice as a global issue. But we need more justice-oriented global citizens, i.e., critical global citizens to pinpoint the root causes of the problems we face and to find solutions accordingly. This critical perspective of global citizens was also affirmed by Shultz et al. (2011), as they supported a transformative model of global citizenship that is based on social justice.

In short, GCE addresses inequalities and injustices with joint efforts from the entire human race. This nature of GCE has made it a desirable goal of the educational agenda in many nations (Pluim, 2020). For instance, a report commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education confirms the need for global citizenship education in K-12 classrooms in the province (Mannion & Weber, 2018). Similarly, in Quebec, global citizenship is also discussed in the subject area of the Contemporary World (Ministère de l'Éducation, n.d.).

To sum up, citizenship education is distinctive, compared to its many seeming equivalencies, such as history, literature and politics. Using Kymlicka's (2001) terms, citizenship education "requires cultivating the habit of civility, and the capacity for public reasonableness, in our interactions with others" (p. 304). As such, citizenship education centralizes on an understanding of our relationship with the people and the environment surrounding us. Furthermore, as Banks (2017) argues, if citizenship education were to provide the foundation of national unity, educators should find ways to cultivate a sense of shared identity among citizens. This shared identity, again, is based on an understanding of our relationships with others. In conclusion,

Citizenship education not only teaches facts about a nation-state, it also aims to empower students to understand their relationships with the environment and the people around them both in and beyond the nation-state's border. Citizenship education also entails individual's abilities to pinpoint the root causes of many environmental and societal problems we face and to find according solutions to make our world more just and democratic. (Cao, 2021, p. 6).

In this thesis, recent adult Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada entails their interpretations and critical assessments of historical, cultural, political, social, economic and environmental factors in Canada. These interpretations and assessments, in turn, assist Chinese immigrants to understand their position and find their place in Canada. Moreover, while accepting and understanding more about Canada, Chinese immigrants will also apply their experiential knowledge to pinpoint the root causes of many problems and issues facing all Canadians and may propose solutions to amend them. By this reasoning, the current thesis is well situated in the domain of citizenship education research.

### ***A Review of Literature on Narrative Inquiry***

This thesis chooses a manuscript-based format. Three individual research articles are included to report findings. I discuss the research context and participants, data collection and data analysis in each article. Nonetheless, due to the space limit in individual research articles, it is challenging to integrate a comprehensive review of literature on the methodology for this thesis, narrative inquiry. To tackle this issue, I present scholarly perspectives to elucidate narrative inquiry in this chapter of this thesis.

### ***On Narrative and Story***

A first and foremost point I want to highlight in this section is that this thesis uses the term narrative and story interchangeably. As such, when I am referring to the data for the current study, I might use story or narrative depending on the collocations and phrases, accordingly. Nonetheless, I use the term "narrative inquiry" exclusively to refer to the methodology this study adopts. Although narrative inquiry is a relatively young

methodology, the use of narrative data has a long tradition in qualitative research. For instance, Berk (1980) points out that autobiography was one of the first methodologies in the study of education. Indeed, an autobiography contains detailed, personally documented information. This information offers enlightening, reflective explanations of an individual's actions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987). In the context of education, a teacher writing an autobiography not only records personal reflections in a class, but could also shed light on the deconstruction of students' motivations, performances and achievements. No wonder Grumet (1978) and Pinar (1981) also include autobiography as a data source in their educational studies. Moreover, Mitchell writes, in his influential book, *On Narratives* (1981), that "the study of narratives has now become a positive source of insight for all branches of human and natural science" (p. ix).

The reasons for researchers' interests in narrative data vary. Carter (1993) believes that "story represents a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which we deal" (p. 6). On the other hand, Bruner (2002) argues that humans are a species whose "main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell" (p. 8). With this logic, individual and collective experiences of conceptions such as "democracy" and "justice" can be presented in the form of stories to create relatable interpretations for us to understand these topics. Furthermore, Labov and Waletzky (1997) assert that narrative provides "a method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred" (p. 12). Additionally, Watson (2012) argues that the rise of narrative in social and educational research is in connection with "a widespread recognition of the fundamental importance of narrative to the organization of human experience and our understanding of how lives are lived" (p. 460). The fundamental importance of narratives, based on all the scholarly points above, is to help researchers understand the "ins" and "outs" of our social, cultural and political life through characters and incidents with which we become familiar. In light of this, telling relatable stories to help readers understand ideas and concepts becomes a desirable way to produce and reproduce knowledge.

But exactly what are we talking about when we talk about narratives or stories? Stories often consist of “events, characters, and settings arranged in a temporal sequence implying both causality and significance” (Carter, 1993. p. 6). Labov and Waletzky (1997) propose that a fully formed narrative usually consists of the abstract (a summary of what the story is about); the orientation (setting the scene); the complicating action (the narrative core – what happened); the evaluation (the significance of the story to the narrator); the resolution (how the situation pans out); and the coda (how the narrator moves out of the story-world and back into the here and now). Both Carter's (1993) and Labov and Waletzky's (1997) frameworks highlight the relationship among different stakeholders in a story and the temporary nature of a narrative. However, their frameworks do not present ways to inquire into or to analyze narrative data in a study.

In response, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) introduce a narrative inquiry framework where “scene” and “plot” are the two major components in structuring a narrative (p. 8). Furthermore, Clandinin et al. (2007) identify three commonplaces to inquire into narratives, “temporality, sociality, and place” (p. 23). Since “events under study are in temporal transition,” when we look at narrative data, it is important for us to understand “people, places and events as in process, as always in transition” (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 23). It is equally important for us to understand the social conditions associated with a story. We cannot detach a story from its relations with environment, surrounding factors and forces, and the people involved in it. As such, understanding the relationship within a story is crucial (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). A place in a narrative inquiry refers to “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the event takes place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Without a specific place for a story, we could lose track since we do not have all the necessary information to determine the “temporality” and “sociality” of a narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) not only define narratives, they also showcase ways to deal with narrative data. For novice researchers in education, their framework offers invaluable information to work with narratives.

### ***Narrative Inquiry and Its Application in Educational Research***

Narrative inquiry was first introduced by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as an individual research methodology in educational research, though it is noticeable that they have adopted the term multiple times in their earlier projects (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Connelly & Clandinin, 1987). Before the 1990s, MacIntyre's (1981) conception of narrative unity, Mitchell's (1981) narratology, Polkinghorne's (1988) narrative analysis, and Coles' (1989) literary ideas of narrative all contributed to the establishment of narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin, the first two scholars who established and contributed significantly to the building and enrichment of narrative inquiry, would undeniably be the "movers and shakers" of this methodology.

To begin with, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) establish narrative inquiry as a research methodology that presents "theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on education experience as lived" (p. 3). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). Underlying this claim is that narrative inquiry centralizes the role of experiences in shaping how we come to know. Clandinin's (2006) argument on experience derives from John Dewey's (1938) pragmatic philosophy. Dewey (1938) defines experience based on two criteria: first, continuity, that "all experiences are carried forward and influence future experiences" (p. 35); and interaction between "the objective and internal conditions of an experience" (p. 42). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) focus their narrative inquiry on continuity. Building on Dewey's theory of experience, narrative inquiry is "a way of understanding experiences. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46).

In carrying out a narrative inquiry in educational research, narrative inquirers engage with participants, often teachers and students, through telling stories or through coming alongside participants in the living out of stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). In the early

stages of narrative inquiry, this methodology focuses on “ways in which classroom actions are meaningful to a teacher” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987, p. 132). The application of narrative inquiry in educational research, at present, does not confine research to understanding classroom actions. Instead, narrative inquirers negotiate “relationships, research purposes, transitions, as well as how we are going to be useful in those relationships” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). These negotiations are constant, as narrative inquiry requires researchers to oversee the dynamic relationships between individuals and social, cultural, educational and political contexts. Narrative inquirers record these negotiations in the form of field texts. Photographs, field notes, journal records, autobiographical writings, conversation transcripts, interview transcripts, textbooks, personal philosophies and so forth are some examples of field texts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). To analyze field texts, narrative inquirers begin to compose research texts. In composing narrative research texts, researchers attend to the fluidity and recursiveness of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006). In doing so, researchers visit and revisit their data, then compose further field texts and recompose research texts (Clandinin, 2006). As such, narrative inquiry is not just about writing stories; it pertains to how we understand our experience and knowledge as evolving, with the help of narrative data. Researchers need to understand the complex relationships and negotiations experienced by both participants and researchers when they are writing and analyzing narrative data.

The intricacy of narrative inquiry in educational research needs some additional explanation. One way to problematize this complexity is to highlight the importance of listening and attending to people’s stories. Narrative inquiry engages with the study of people’s experiences and tries to understand “the narrative structures that characterize ours’ and others’ lives” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 51). In doing so, stories become tangible vehicles for us to see the complex relationships between individuals’ experiences and the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives within which those individuals live and have lived.

Another perspective on the complexity of narrative inquiry is to acknowledge its fundamental differences with other research methodologies. Yardley (2008) believes that a

narrative is dependent on one's point of view, rather than the "recording of facts" (p. 4). The writing of narratives justifies individuals' own meaning making, which is their particular kind of truth. Narrative researchers aim to unveil these truths in the format of stories. When a narrator tells and retells personal stories, meanings are shared and recreated by them and the participants (Yardley, 2008). Applying this in educational research, stories from different stakeholders would reveal their particular 'truths' in understanding education and the education system. Narrative inquirers tell these stories and use these particular truths to inform us about issues regarding justice, equality, teaching and learning in schools.

### ***Application of Narrative Inquiry and Its Limitations***

Historically, applications of narrative inquiry were mostly about representing teachers' voices in schools to enrich educational theories and practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). More recently, narrative inquiry has expanded its application to fields such as nursing, feminism studies, law and so forth (Clandinin et al., 2017; Green, 2013; Liew, 2011; Smith, 2010). Traditional employment of narrative data relies on storytelling, autobiography and biography, which limits the power of narrative data to represent the complex relationships and negotiations participants experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987). Contemporary narrative inquirers take responsibility to represent these relationships and negotiations in their creative writings of data.

For example, critical race theory (CRT), an epistemological worldview that centralizes the experiential knowledge of people of colour in combating race and racism, often adopts narrative inquiry as a methodology. The wide acceptance of CRT scholarship is possibly due to CRT researchers' ability to tell touching and relatable stories from people of colour (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2018). CRT scholars often employ a creative counter-storytelling in their studies to intentionally challenge the narratives of those in power with narratives from people of colour (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). For example, a majoritarian story might say, there are very few professors of colour in academia simply because there are fewer qualified candidates of colour. A counter-storyteller, in this case, would include a story from an objectively qualified professor candidate of colour who was

rejected by three universities for vague and obscure reasons, while a White candidate was hired instead. A counter-story, by its nature, challenges the majoritarian story in a powerful first-person narrative (Miller et al., 2020; Samuels-Wortley, 2021; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT scholars also use parables, chronicles, poetry, fiction and revisionist histories as ways to pinpoint issues on race and racial injustice (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In addition, contemporary application of multi-media technologies such as video interview, documentary, graphic animations and music showcase some additional possibilities in using narrative inquiry (Krieken, 2018).

To summarize, narrative inquirers use a variety of ways to share their participants' stories, experiences and opinions of the world. In doing so, researchers represent their participants' experiential knowledge of lived realities which, in turn, expand our knowledge. Ultimately, King (2003) and Clandinin (2006) hope that, by engaging in narrative inquiry, researchers may change the world, even in a small way, such as making schools more welcoming places for all.

Narrative inquirers value every single story from their participants (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Yardley, 2008). Therefore, a large sample would not be desirable in carrying out this methodology. Moreover, narrative inquirers devote a tremendous amount of time to visit and revisit their field texts, as well as to compose and recompose their research texts. Hence, "the time commitment required makes it unsuitable for work with a large number of participants" (Bell, 2002, p. 210). Meanwhile, narrative inquirers use a small portion of their field texts in their writing in order to create a narrative text that would address individual sense making. Thus, narrative inquirers have to be selective in their production of research texts. At first glance, it indeed seems that narrative inquiry pays little attention to its sample size. However, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue, what is needed in a narrative inquiry is "a sense of the entire inquiry" and a "descriptive overview" (p. 11). After all, what stories the researchers present directly "respond to each and every situation, to each and every person participating as one defines

the ethical boundaries of any collaborative work” (Yardley, 2008, pp. 8–9). Therefore, narrative inquiry, by its nature, is not suitable for work with a large sample.

As a subjective view of people’s experience, narrative inquiry, like many other qualitative methodologies, cannot shy away from criticism about trustworthiness. Watson and Watson-Franke (1985) assert that the “usefulness of life history analysis is difficult to see from either a scientific or humanistic perspective” (p. 16). Such a critique is not surprising to narrative inquirers because, as a methodology within the large domain of qualitative research design, narrative inquiry naturally inherits criticisms regarding qualitative research, due to its interpretive and naturalistic nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). In addition, due to some similarity between narrative data and fictional writing, issues of validity are potential concerns for some researchers (Bridges, 2003). Narrative inquirers should acknowledge that, “every criticism is valid to some degree and contains the seed of an important point” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). For a person holding a different worldview on knowledge (e.g., positivists or post-positivists), it is quite upsetting for them to trust stories instead of quantifiable correlations and coefficients (Carter, 1993).

However, Barone (2007) argues that the aim of narrative researchers is “not to seek certainty about correct perspectives on educational phenomena but to raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich an ongoing conversation” (p. 466). While I second Barone’s perspective, I believe that narrative inquirers should also be open to different epistemological, ontological and methodological perspectives. After all, narrative inquiry only represents one way of knowing how we come to know. Nonetheless, I am by no means depreciating narrative inquiry’s trustworthiness.

On the contrary, I am requesting those with a different epistemological belief to consider the richness of narrative data in explaining the complex relationships and ongoing negotiations both researchers and participants experience. Using Carter’s (1993) words, “stories capture, more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences” (p. 5). Even when stories only represent a temporary “truth,” they are part of our experiential knowledge, addressing temporal matters within a

specific time. Narrative inquirers acknowledge this temporality feature at the very beginning of the theory building (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Clandinin et al., 2007). From a personal perspective, the temporariness of narrative inquiry makes it a sustainable framework because narrative inquirers constantly refine what we have known while discovering the unknowns (relationships and negotiations). In short, though limitations of narrative inquiry reflect some valid arguments, researchers should employ it with confidence because we need the experiential knowledge from individuals to constantly refine and expand our existing knowledge.

### ***Suggestions to Enhance Trustworthiness of Narrative Inquiry***

Researchers who choose narrative inquiry also present suggestions to enhance the trustworthiness of narrative data. For instance, Tierney and Clements (2012) suggest constant comparisons of data to other cases, as well as member checks as an initial step to enhance the accuracy, analysis and interpretation of data. Moreover, inviting peers and research participants to review the data also improves the trustworthiness of narrative data (Yardley, 2008). While I am content with this reviewing process, considerations for ethics should be added to protect research participants. In addition to collecting and analyzing narrative data, the way in which narrative data is presented also matters when it comes to trustworthiness.

Tierney and Clements (2011) propose a framework where researchers offer multiple interpretations of the data with a clear justification for the primary exegesis. They also suggest that researchers present their data in a compelling, appropriate manner (Tierney & Clements, 2011). However, Tierney and Clements (2011) did not elaborate on these matters. Clandinin et al. (2007) fill this gap by highlighting the importance of justifying narrative data from the personal, practical and social levels. In so doing, researchers ought to situate themselves in the study, to justify how the research project contributes differently to our knowledge, as well as to align the research within larger social and educational contexts (Clandinin et al., 2007). A clear documentation of each step in the research design also improves the trustworthiness of narrative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This documentation enables narrative researchers to trace the original data logically (Tierney & Clements, 2012).

As such, when narrative researchers are able to understand all the steps in their analysis and communicate them with others, they are considered to have completed a useful and meaningful narrative study (Langness & Frank, 1981). These scholars present practical ways for narrative inquirers to tackle issues concerning trustworthiness in their studies.

### **Research Questions**

The above literature review on narrative inquiry gives readers some theoretical perspectives of the research methodology for this doctoral study. I now turn to the research questions this thesis aims to answer. Becoming a permanent resident is the first step toward becoming a Canadian citizen (Government of Canada, 2023b). Obtaining Canadian citizenship recognizes immigrants as Canadian citizens legally, even though the process of becoming Canadian is ongoing for them (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Due to this ongoing nature, citizenship education researchers need to consider and include immigrants' voices and knowledge about how they understand themselves and their relationship with the host society to enrich citizenship education research. This doctoral research examines the lived experiences of adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010. It presents the experiential knowledge of Chinese immigrants with regard to how they understand themselves as immigrants in Canada, which would potentially supplement citizenship education research with immigrants' perspectives. The overarching research question for this study is, then, "How can lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants inform or supplement our current understanding of citizenship education for adult immigrants?"

The specific questions that guide this thesis are: 1) What are the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants? 2) How would a Chinese immigrant in Canada weigh their Canadian-ness versus their Chinese-ness? 3) What are the roles of education or citizenship education, in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada? 4) How may recent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences inform educational, social and political changes in Canada?

As I have mentioned before, this thesis consists of three individual manuscripts. Each manuscript addresses some research questions on its own. These research questions in the manuscripts were prepared based on the overarching research question and specific research questions presented in the current section. The conclusion chapter of this thesis will answer all the research questions with findings from the three manuscripts.

### **Methodology**

Through this doctoral thesis, I aim to examine the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants to Canada. I do so through the use of narrative inquiry as the qualitative research methodology to present the experiential knowledge of participants regarding how they understand their relationship with their host society, Canada. As discussed previously, the employment of narrative inquiry reflects my epistemological beliefs that a) human experiences are essential in understanding how we come to know, in this ever-emerging world; and b) voices from underrepresented populations enrich our knowledge of the world. In this sense, CRT is the epistemological framework by which I justify my employment of narrative inquiry.

Research methods, on the other hand, involve the techniques to collect, present and analyze data for the research project. The use of semi-structured interviews is one method for data collection. My plan is to present the data through storytelling and I discuss the data using three pre-selected theoretical frameworks, namely, Berry's (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation framework, a critical multiculturalism framework and CRT. Given that I have already presented some literature on narrative inquiry and the use of narrative data, I will not repeat the theoretical perspectives about the methodology for this thesis in this section of the introduction. I will start with a review of the research context and participants of this study. Following this background information, I describe the data collection and data analysis processes. Lastly, I address ethical considerations.

### ***Research Context and Participants***

This thesis focuses on Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010 and their understanding of being Chinese immigrants in Canada. Chinese immigrants, Hsu

(2017) argued, are often regarded as the model immigrants to North America. Following the establishment of a point system to attract additional skilled workers to Canada since 1967, recent Chinese immigrants from Mainland China (officially the People's Republic of China), Hong Kong (officially Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, or Hong Kong SAR), and Taiwan (officially the Republic of China) are among the most educated (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006; Li, 2008; Wang & Lo, 2005). Most of immigrants with a Chinese background come to Canada for economic reasons. Being the so-called model immigrants, the majority of Chinese immigrants tend to concentrate on economic success instead of social and political participation in Canadian society (Wang & Lo, 2005). This, however, can be problematic because, by holding back social and political appeals and concentrating on moneymaking, Chinese immigrants' voices and perspectives are not heard by the public. Their relatively weak social and political participation further problematize the notion of model immigrants because it is as if good immigrants are those who focus only on economic integration rather than social and political participation in the host society (Shih et al., 2019). Moreover, lack of English or French proficiency further distances the Chinese community from the nation as a whole (Derwing & Waugh, 2012). In addition to lack of language proficiency, the constant racial prejudices and discriminations against the Chinese community shuts another door for effective communication (Hou et al., 2018).

For instance, while the COVID-19 pandemic created tremendous threats to the world, it also placed the Chinese community, as well as members of the Eastern Asian community, at the forefront of the debate. In Canada alone, racial attacks against Eastern Asian communities have increased significantly since the pandemic (Furey, 2020; Heng, 2020; Xu, 2020). Such attacks create and will continue to create tangible damage to Chinese immigrants, as well as to entire Eastern Asian communities in Canada. Consequently, the integration of Chinese immigrants into Canadian society remains a problematic matter. This continued racial discrimination may force many Chinese immigrants into a separationist mindset, or it may create a more marginalized status for them in Canada (Berry, 1980, 2019). This thesis aims to reveal such damages to inform policy makers and educators, as well as the

general public with the aim of finding ways to re-include marginalized Chinese immigrants into the multicultural Canadian family. Delgado (1995), and many other CRT scholars (e.g., Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2021) underline the experiential knowledge of people of colour in helping us to know the world we live in. Inspired by the CRT framework, my research employs narrative inquiry to present stories from Chinese immigrants to embody their voices within the public sphere.

This study recruited adult (aged 18 and above) immigrants from Mainland China. The rationale for including Chinese immigrants from Mainland China are: 1) they represent a large proportion of the Chinese communities in Canada; 2) immigration from Mainland China to Canada is currently still growing; and 3) research on Chinese immigrants from Mainland China is an emerging research area. I recruited six adult (18 and older) Chinese immigrants from Mainland China who have arrived in Canada after 2010 and who have since obtained either a permanent residency or a Canadian citizenship. Here, the number of participants in this thesis is well aligned with the purpose of narrative inquiry – to attend to each participant’s life experiences (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin et al., 2017; Yardley, 2008). Additionally, considering that the qualifying time and application processing time for a foreign national to obtain permanent residency and Canadian citizenship are relatively long (Government of Canada, 2023b), this study set 2010 as the benchmark in the hope of recruiting qualified participants. Overall, this study aims to understand how the transformative process of Chinese immigrants’ legal status informs citizenship education study.

After obtained ethics approval for this study in February 2022, I started collecting data for my research project in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the Greater Montreal Area (GMA). The logic of including these two regions was based on the fact that both regions host relatively large populations of Chinese immigrants. For instance, the city of Toronto has a total population of 332,830 immigrants with Chinese ethnicity, which takes up 12.4% of the city’s entire population, according to the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2017). The 2021 census reports 679,725 Chinese in the GTA, making it the second largest Chinese

community in North America (Statistics Canada, 2023a). In the city of Montreal, 3.3% of the total population have Chinese ancestry, as of the 2021 Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Although this percentage is smaller than the GTA area, given the unique political, cultural and linguistic environment in the province of Quebec, as well as its independent immigration selection process, I believe it is imperative to include participants from Montreal in this study to gain additional perspectives from Chinese immigrants regarding their understanding of becoming Canadian. Notwithstanding the two cities, I am aware and acknowledge the presence of Chinese immigrants across the nation. However, on account of the feasibility of this project, I only recruited participants from Toronto and Montreal as examples to represent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences.

I recruited participants for this study through social network forums among Chinese immigrants in the GTA and GMA. There are a few popular social network sites, such as Jiaguowuyou, Mengchenghui, and SinoQuebec in both regions that are frequently browsed by Chinese communities. To reach to a broader audience, I posted a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) in both English and Chinese on these websites. A total of six participants were recruited for this study, three from the GTA area and three from the GMA area. This study recruited three male and three female participants. Participants are adult (aged 18 and above) immigrants to Canada, since 2010, with either a permanent residency or citizenship status.

### ***Data Collection and Data Analysis***

My doctoral thesis is guided by the research questions, as noted above. To answer my research questions, I conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with six participants who were able to provide their consent to participate in the study (see Appendix B for the consent form). Participants were given the option of conducting the interviews in English or Chinese. I thought about offering a French option for the interviews. However, after consultations with the research participants who also speak French, they prefer to use either Chinese or English for the interviews. Each interview was audio recorded and lasted around one hour.

Semi-structured interviews ask probing, open-ended questions to understand participants' perspectives and thoughts on the topic (Adams, 2010, 2015; Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Moreover, the conversational feature of semi-structured interviews allows researchers to hear what participants have to share, while exploring issues that are important for the study (Drever, 1995). Although unstructured interviews also help researchers to understand participants' lived experiences and the sense-making of these experiences (Husband, 2020; Seidman, 2006), employing semi-structured interviews with both prepared and real-time interview questions would better centralize my participants' experiential knowledge in the data collection phase.

In the first round of interviews, I first initiated a conversation to gather demographic information of the participants, such as their age at landing, time lived in Canada, reasons to choose Canada, etc. After ensuring the comfort level of participants, I used an interview guide with guiding questions to elicit answers and stories from participants, relevant to each specific research question (see Appendix C). For instance, to answer the research question regarding the meaning of being a Chinese immigrant in Canada, I asked an open-ended interview question, "How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada?" to invite participants to share their stories. This interview guide was designed with reference to the literature on citizenship education. I also prepared some potential follow-up questions in the interview guide to give additional space for participants to share their stories.

During the interview, I made field notes to capture key ideas and themes that participants shared. The second round of interviews took place after I reviewed the field notes taken during the first interview. I identified themes that needed additional clarifications or elaborations. This round of interviews supplemented the first interview with additional narratives from the participants. I schedule this interview approximately one month after the first interview, based on mutual availability of each participant and me. I asked question such as, "In the first interview, you have mentioned [the theme of the topic]; would you let me know what you mean by that?" to get perspectives from participants. Field notes were also

taken during the second interview. In the second interview, I also asked real-time follow up questions based on the field notes.

Following Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) narrative inquiry framework, I transcribed, translated, organized and constantly revisited the interviews to write/rewrite them in the form of stories. As a narrative inquirer, I focused on communicating participants' stories as vehicles for their lived realities. I engaged in close readings of the interview transcriptions, translations and my field notes before writing them as stories. These written stories became the research texts of the current study. Upon the completion of research texts, I invited each participant to review their narratives and to have them provide suggestions to add, modify or delete the narratives or portions thereof. Participants were also invited to verify if the translation texts depicted their stories accurately. This process helped me maintain an objective stance in presenting narratives from the participants. Modifications from research participants were to be included in their narratives to generate the final research texts for this study. All participants were content with the narratives I wrote for them; thus, no major modifications were made. Nonetheless, through this process, participants of this study attended the co-construction of the research texts which are based on their stories. These stories were mined in search of common or distinctive themes and topics.

As mentioned in the literature review, narrative inquirers attach attention to the "scene" and "plot" when presenting narratives from research participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). The three commonplaces, "temporality, sociality, and place" were also important frameworks in a narrative inquiry study (Clandinin et al., 2007). The consideration of these elements of narrative inquiry gives researchers enough information and space to attend to the complex relationships and negotiations experienced by the participants. No wonder many doctoral candidates considered narrative inquiry in their monograph thesis as a viable research methodology to explicate abstract, sophisticated and profound scholarships (e.g., Huang, 2017; Jones, 2018; Myers, 2022).

Given the space in a monograph thesis, it is relatively easier to let narratives from participants unfold in a natural way without jeopardizing scene and plot, as well as the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry. A manuscript-based thesis, however, requires careful planning beforehand to ensure effective and sufficient presentation of research findings due to space limitation.

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2023) have identified a six-step thematic analysis framework; familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Inspired by this research methodology of organizing research findings by themes, the current thesis attempts to follow the abovementioned six steps to present key themes from the research data. My plan to present findings in each manuscript is to organize and re-organize narratives from participants based on themes emerging from data collection and data analysis. A thematic analysis is thus applied in this doctoral study to assist the presentation of research findings.

An example is here to showcase how I applied thematic analysis in this doctoral research. During the first round of interviews, I asked an open-ended question, “what do you like about Canada?” Participants shared many thoughtful ideas such as the simple interpersonal relationship, the various holidays celebrated in Canada, the work-life balance, the diverse cultures in Canada and many more. I took field notes during the interviews to capture these key ideas. After the interview, I transcribed the interviews and started to create follow up questions for the second interview. This time, I asked participants to unpack what they have shared in the first interview in detail. Following the transcription and translation of all interviews, I started to familiarize myself with all stories from participants in this study. This familiarization process allowed me to revisit the interviews and start to search for themes to organize the interview data.

With reference to scholarly literature in citizenship education, I began the task of generating themes. For instance, “the simple interpersonal relationship” and “the various holidays celebrated in Canada” seemed irrelevant at a first glance. After a closer scan of the transcription and translation of all interviews, a commonality between these two ideas were

that participants learned about them while making contact with people at school or at work. I then use a preliminary theme “participants understand Canada by initiating contact with people around them in the host society through work and study” to organize participants’ stories. As narrative inquiry requires researchers to constantly visit and revisit the data (Clandinin et al., 2007), I then reviewed this preliminary theme to see if it applies to all participants’ stories. After a few rounds of visiting and revisiting the data, I realize that “cultural contact” was a more generalizable theme to regroup similar sharing from participants. I then name this theme as “cultural contact through study and work”. In the process of inquiring into the narratives, of which I will be talking about in the next section, I verify to see if any changes to the themes are necessary. In the case of this study, the themes I have identified require little to zero modifications as each theme was carefully chosen, worded and verified. I then write the themes in each research article. The first and second research article present common themes arising from participants’ narratives, whereas the last research article presented distinctive themes. Detail of the themes will be introduced and discussed in each manuscript, respectively.

Nonetheless, I would like to clarify that my employment of thematic analysis focuses more on finding and finalizing the themes to present participants’ narratives in the current study. I am aware that a thematic analysis study involves concrete steps such as presenting major themes, sub-themes, as well as articulating the codes that are supported by verbatim quotations from participant (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A more succinct description of my employment of thematic analysis is that I adopt thematic analysis loosely to bring about key themes to inquire into participants’ narratives.

To inquire into these narratives, Berry’s (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation model, a critical multicultural framework and CRT are referenced and used to review and discuss themes in the three individual manuscripts, respectively. I select these frameworks with reference to scholarly literature in citizenship education. More importantly, I connect this literature to the lived realities of new immigrants in their host society. To begin with, an acculturation framework connects immigrants with the host society as this framework

examines how immigrants compare and contrast their home culture(s) with/to the new culture(s) in the host society. In his four-fold acculturation framework, Berry (1980, 2019) suggests that integration is a preferable acculturation profile since immigrants stay close to both their heritage culture(s) and the culture(s) in the host society. Multiculturalism is often regarded as an example of an integration acculturation account (Hou et al., 2018). This justifies the employment of a critical multiculturalism framework in the second research article of this doctoral research. Lastly, factors such as racism, stereotypes and discriminations play a significant role in understanding immigrants' relationship with the host society (Berry & Hou, 2017, 2021; Berry & Sam, 2016). As such, a CRT framework is needed to not only examine the role of race and racism in immigrants' lived experiences, but also to give voices to the underrepresented population in the Canadian society.

Notably, acculturation and critical multiculturalism focus on the cultural aspect of citizenship education, whereas CRT examines citizenship education from the perspective of race and racism. Such a shift is not abrupt as the very notion of citizenship, according to CRT scholar such as Ladson-Billings (1998, 2021), is rooted in the social construct of race and racial inequity in North America. Given this, examining how participants understand race and racism in their lived experiences is equally important as the investigation of how they understand, negotiate, accept or reject cultures in the host society. These theoretical frameworks were selected before the data collection process and will be introduced in each manuscript with more details. It is therefore safe to say that this doctoral thesis is one study with three carefully pre-chosen theoretical frameworks to present, review and discuss narrative data from participants.

Finally, while presenting and discussing findings in each individual article, I also situate participants' narratives within the complex relationships and negotiations they have experienced (Clandinin et al., 2017). Participants were invited to read and make suggestions to the discussion of findings in each individual study, upon the completion of the first draft of the thesis. Their suggestions helped to verify the findings of the study and are included in the final version of the thesis. In summary, every story from participants in this study will

contribute to our understanding of immigration, multiculturalism and (citizenship) education in Canada. Additionally, these stories will reveal the obstacles Chinese immigrants have faced in their integration into Canadian society, which will hopefully motivate researchers and policy makers to refine notions of Canadian citizenship.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This doctoral study considers ethical issues in every phase of the project. I obtained ethical approval from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity before collecting data for this project. I also secured participants' consent to participate in this research project, which was based on being well-informed. As this study collected data in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, online and phone interviews were conducted to gather research participants' stories. I obtained their verbal consent in the beginning of the first interview and made sure they had a copy of their consent form. I ensured that participants understood their rights before, during and after the research process. In examining and understanding the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Canada, I may have asked questions that probe difficult and challenging experiences for participants. As such, I was very sensitive to the wellbeing of each participant. I ensured that participants in my study shared their experiences and stories in a comfortable environment. I attached great attention to protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' identity by using pseudonyms for their names. The interview recordings and transcripts are secured safely in an encrypted folder in my password-protected computer. In addition, given my own experience of becoming a landed immigrant in Canada, I attempted to minimize my personal judgments or biases that may interfere with participants' sharing in this research.

### **Presentation and Publication of the Articles**

I will submit the first article, "Dynamic Acculturation Profiles: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants' Understanding of Their Relationship with Canada" to *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. This journal publishes studies in intercultural and acculturation studies. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* is also a viable choice for this article. Additionally, I will submit this article to the American

Education Research Association (AERA) 2024 conference to get feedback from scholars in this domain.

I have presented the second article, “Multiculturalism and Bilingualism from the Perspective of Six Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry” at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) 2023 conference in Toronto. I hope to submit this article to the *Educational Review* for publishing. Additionally, *Canadian Journal of Education* and *International Journal of Leadership in Education* are also choices for this article.

I consider submitting the article “Becoming Justice-oriented Citizens in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants’ Lived Experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic” to the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. I will also consider *Citizenship Education Research Journal* or *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*. I will seek opportunities to present this article in academic conferences both in Canada and internationally.

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## Appendix A Recruitment Letter

English version

Hello,

My name is Xingtan Cao, I am from Faculty of Education at University of Ottawa. I will conduct a research project to examine the lived experiences of adult (18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010 and have since obtained either a permanent residency status or citizenship in Canada. This study will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chitpin at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I intend to collect stories from you by conducting interviews. These stories are collected for the purpose of my Ph.D. dissertation in citizenship education and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

There will be two interviews in this study. Each interview should last about 1 hour. You can choose to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. The interview will be scheduled for a date and time that are convenient for you. I will conduct the interview virtually using software such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams. If you prefer, the interview can be conducted over the phone or through Wechat. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded in order for me to review and transcribe for research purposes. I would like to emphasize that your participation, that is, agreeing to allow me to use the recording of our interviews is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time. Also, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to withdraw from the study and prefer that I do not use your interview data, I will remove it from the research. I will offer you opportunity to review the narratives I write based on our interview. You are more than welcome to make suggestions to add, modify, or delete these narratives.

Now, if you agree to participate, please review and sign the consent form and return it to me. The form has contact information of myself and my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Chitpin, if you ever had any questions about this study.

Sincerely,

Xingtan Cao

Chinese version

您好！

我叫曹兴潭，是渥太华大学教育学院的一名博士研究生。在我的导师 **Stephanie Chitpin** 博士的指导下，我即将展开一项关于成年华人移民人生经历的研究。这项研究旨在了解自 2010 年以后移民至加拿大，并且获得永久居民身份或者加拿大国籍的华人移民的人生经历。通过访谈的方式，我希望可以收集您的故事。这些故事会被用在我的关于公民教育的博士论文以及相关的文章发表里。

本研究涉及两次访谈。每次访谈大约需要一个小时。您可以选择用英文或中文参与访谈。访谈的时间和日期会根据您方便的时间安排。我会使用 **Zoom** 或者 **Microsoft Teams** 来进行访谈。如果您愿意，我也可以通过电话或者微信进行访谈。在您的同意基础上，我会对访谈进行录音用以转录、回顾等研究目的。我想特别指出您的参与，也就是同意我访谈您并且录音，是完全自愿的。您可以选择随时停止访谈。同时，您不需要回答您不想回答的问题。如果您选择中途退出这项研究，并且希望我不使用您的访谈内容，我会删除相关信息。访谈之后我会将您的分享以故事的方式呈现出来。我会和您分享写好的故事，您可以增加、删改我写的内容。

如果您同意参与这项研究，请您在阅读后签署知情同意书，并且将签好的文件返送与我。知情同意书内附有我和我导师的联系方式，如果您对这项研究有任何问题，欢迎随时联系我们。

感谢！

曹兴潭

## **Appendix B Sample of Consent Form**

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Telephone: 613-562-5804

145, Jean-Jacques Lussier

Ottawa ON K1N 6N5 Canada

**Title of the study:** Becoming Canadian: Examining the Lived Experiences of Recent Chinese Immigrants in Canada

**Name of Professor:**

Dr. Stephanie Chitpin

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

**Name of Student:**

Xingtian Cao

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

**Invitation to Participate:** I have been invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Xingtian Cao in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

**Purpose of the study:** I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010. The methodology centres on the use of my life stories to help the researcher to understand recent Chinese immigrants' relationship with their new home, Canada.

**Participation:** My participation will consist of two audio-recorded interviews. Each interview last around 1 hour. The interview will be scheduled for a date and time that are convenient for me. I agree that the researcher may contact me, via email, to ask any follow up questions or to review and verify content from the interview.

**Risks:** There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study; however, my participation in this study will entail that I share my lived experiences as a Chinese immigrant in Canada and this may recall stories that may cause me to feel emotional. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. I can refuse to answer any questions or to end my participation in a research activity if I become uncomfortable. I may choose to cease participation in the study as a whole at any time for any reason and in such a case any data that I have provided will be shredded.

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will add perspectives on how Chinese immigrants understand themselves, as well as their relationship with Canada. The opportunity to co-construct the narratives of my life in Canada could provide space for me to reflect on my own lived experiences.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I share will remain strictly confidential. No data, such as legal or preferred names, age, city of residence will be used that might identify me. The researcher will use pseudonyms in the study to represent my stories. The contents of the interview will be used for the proposed research study as well as future research articles in the area of citizenship education. My identity will be protected in this research.

**Treatment and conservation of data:** The audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in an encrypted folder on a password protected computer. Hard copies of the transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Back up files will be stored on an external password protected hard drive at Xingtian Cao's home. Data will be kept for ten years after the completion of the study, after which paper records will be shredded and digital files will be deleted and electronically shredded using security software.

**Voluntary Participation:** I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data obtained from me until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

**Acceptance:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Xingtian Cao of the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chitpin. I AGREE to have the data used for completion of the proposed doctoral study and any future research writing by the student researcher.

I understand the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Review Board has approved this research. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5387. Email: [ethics@uottawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uottawa.ca)

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Xingtian Cao and/or Dr. Chitpin at the numbers mentioned above.

There are two copies of this consent form, one of which I may keep. If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researchers.

Participant Name                      Signature                      Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name                      Signature                      Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C Interview Guide

### First round of interview

#### **Questions to start the interview:**

When did you come to Canada?

Did you come to Canada alone, or with your family?

What was your first day in Canada look like? How would you describe that day?

Why did you choose Canada?

Why did you choose [the specific cities where the participant lives]?

#### **1) What does it mean to be a Chinese immigrant in Canada today?**

How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada? Are there any stories you would like to share regarding this question?

How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada during COVID-19 pandemic? Are there any stories you would like to share regarding this question?

What are some other stories you want to share regarding your experience as a Chinese immigrant in Canada?

#### **2) How would a Chinese immigrant in Canada weigh their Canadian-ness versus their Chinese-ness?**

Reflecting on your experiences, what do you like about Canada?

Reflecting on your experiences, what do you not like about Canada?

Reflecting on your experiences, how would you describe your relationship with China?

Reflecting on your experiences, how would you describe your relationship with Canada?

#### **3) What are the roles of education, or citizenship education in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada?**

[For immigrants who have taken LINC/CLIC/Courses offered by Quebec Government]

How did you know [name] program that is available to new immigrants in Canada?

Why did you choose to take this program?

Can you share your overall experiences of the program with me? What do you like/dislike about the program?

Reflecting on your experiences, how does this program help you with your life in Canada?

If this program is not helpful, what were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

[For participants without any experiences with LINC/CLIC/Courses offered by Quebec Government]

If participants are aware of the program but choose not to take it:

What are your objections of the program?

What are some of the education resources you would like to get to help you with your life in Canada?

What were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

If participants are not aware of the program:

What are some of the education resources you would like to get to help you with your life in Canada?

What were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

**4) How does recent Chinese immigrants' lived experience inform education, social and even political changes in Canada?**

Reflecting on your experiences as a Chinese immigrant in Canada, what are things you wish that could be changed in Canada?

**Exit question**

Is there anything you would like to share before the end of this interview?

## Second interview

*(These question structures will be applied accordingly to the topics that need clarification)*

- Last time, we talked about \_\_\_\_\_, and you said \_\_\_\_\_. Could you tell me more about this?
- When we talked about \_\_\_\_\_ last time, what did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Exit question**

- Is there anything you would like to talk more about before the end of the interview?

### A Sample Second Interview Guide

You mentioned "diversity" a few times to describe your impression of Canadian society from a general perspective. In Canada, multiculturalism is a state policy that speaks to diversity. What's your understanding of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada?

You mentioned that before the covid-19 pandemic, you felt normal, you felt that you were just one of the many residents living in Montreal. But since the start of covid-19 pandemic, anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism made you feel that you are being alienated by others, it's as if all of sudden your background matters. What else do anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism made you feel in relation to your life in Canada?

You mentioned that the coronavirus, the geopolitical tensions between China and the US, and even Canada, as well as misinformation from media made you feel that you are being judged and suspected by others. Are there any other reasons that contribute to these judgements and suspicions? How do these judgements and suspicions make you feel in your life in Canada?

You mentioned a few times about the power relations between the western societies and Chinese society, such as the geopolitical tensions, misinformation from the media, as well as stereotypes and discriminations. How would you interpret these power relations? What do these power relations connect to your life?

You talked about cultural differences when it comes to the different understandings of wearing masks. What are other cultural differences you have noticed between Canadian culture and your own culture? How would you define Canadian culture? Do you think you are close to the Canadian culture? How would you position yourself between Chinese and Canadian culture?

You mentioned your concern over the division in the Canadian society. Specifically, you mentioned the example of people trying to figure out the position you are in, pro-China or pro-West. How do you view this division, or in another word, this mentality of choosing sides in the Canadian society? Any stories you would like to bring about this question?

Speaking of things that you like about Canada; you give some positive comments to students and employee rights protection in schools and the workplace. How do these protections of rights connect to your life in Canada?

You mentioned your concern over a political driven mentality, as well as an emotionally driven mindset among many people in Canada. Specifically, you shared your concern over a lack of scientific verifications among many people in Canada. Thus, people are easily being manipulated by their emotions instead of rational and scientific thinking. How do these concerns make you feel in your daily life?

## Chapter Two:

### **Dynamic Acculturation Profiles: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants' Understanding of Their Relationship with Canada**

#### **Abstract**

The study of Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada is an emerging research domain. Few educational researchers have reviewed the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants comprehensively. Using Berry's acculturation framework, this study examines the lived experiences of six recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada. Specifically, this study focuses on the discussion of the acculturation profiles of each participant, based on their unique stories. The current study employs narrative inquiry, a research methodology that focuses on disseminating the stories and the meaning making process of these stories to inform readers about recent adult Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with their new home, Canada. The research was conducted through two rounds of semi-structured interviews to ask probing and open-ended questions for participants to share their stories openly. Using literature on acculturation, a dynamic acculturation profile was identified in most participants' narratives. Additionally, Chinese immigrants display their understanding and acceptance of Canadian cultures, while living in Canada. These findings inform and update our understanding of immigrants' acculturation process with their experiential knowledge.

*Keywords:* Chinese immigrants in Canada; narrative inquiry; acculturation; experiential knowledge

## Introduction

Ever since the adoption of the Reform and Opening-up policy in the 1980s in China, immigrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC, often referred to as Mainland China) to other parts of the world has continued to increase (J. Gao, 2022; W. Gao, 2017). In Canada, Chinese immigrants from Mainland China represent a high percentage of the Chinese communities (Statistics Canada, 2022). Chinese immigrants, together with other Canadians, have contributed significantly to the building of the country, the bettering of democracy and the upgrading of living standards within Canada (Li, 2006; Walker et al., 2011).

Although Chinese immigrants represent a significant part of the Canadian population, how they understand their relationship with Canada has not been studied directly in educational research. As such, this study aims to examine the lived experiences of adult Chinese immigrants in Ontario and Quebec to understand their relationship with the host society. More specifically, this study uses Berry's (1980, 2019) acculturation framework to examine, discuss and interpret the lived experiences of six adult Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada after 2010. Through the process of examining the lived experiences of recent adult Chinese immigrants in this study, I hope to strengthen the mutual understanding between Chinese immigrants and the multicultural Canadian community. This mutual understanding would also contribute to furthering the integration of Chinese immigrants into Canadian society.

To situate the current study within theoretical perspectives, I first present relevant literature on acculturation to delineate the connections between acculturation and immigrants. This study adopts narrative inquiry as its research methodology. After an introduction of the research methodology and study design, I present narratives of all six participants using four timestamps I have created, based on common themes in the stories they have shared. I then use Berry's (1980, 2017, 2019) acculturation framework to discuss and interpret the narratives of participants. Following this discussion of narrative data, I summarize key findings of this study in the conclusion. Overall, this study aims to answer the following

research questions: 1) What are recent adult Chinese immigrants' understandings of their relationship with Canada? 2) How does the lived experience of Chinese immigrants inform literature in acculturation?

### **Acculturation: Connecting Immigrants with the Host Society**

This study focuses on the notion of acculturation in understanding the lived experiences of recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada. The definition of acculturation, according to Berry (2005), pertains to “the set of cultural and psychological changes that follow the contact between two cultural groups and their members” (p. 698). Immigrants in their new society inevitably engage in comparisons between their home culture(s) and the new culture(s). Chinese immigrants to Canada are no exception. Kymlicka (2001) stressed that “a shared history and a common language are the two factors that make citizens in a liberal state feel that they are members of the same nation” (p. 312). Typically, immigrants migrate from another nation-state to the host society. As such, they may have different understandings of the shared history pertaining to the host society, compared to those who were born and raised there. Thus, the significance of a shared language is important to the process of acculturation.

Perhaps this significance of a shared language explains why many scholars (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Norton Pierce, 1994; Schumann 1986) would connect Second Language Education (SLE) with immigrants' acculturation in a country, like Canada, that has a large immigration component. Indeed, the hope is that, by learning the official language of the new society, immigrants will have access to the social, civic, cultural and political life of their new society (Darvin & Norton, 2021; Norton Pierce, 1994). This access, in turn, assists newcomers in integrating into the host society. However, scholars appear to have different understandings about how this access should be gained and about the factors facilitating it.

Gardner (1985), for example, developed a framework highlighting the importance of motivation in language learning. Gardner (2007) believed that both educational and cultural contexts ought to be considered when discussing the roots of motivation in acquiring languages. To him, educational contexts influence individuals' attitudes toward the learning

situation; cultural contexts refer to socially relevant variables, such as interactions with members of other communities, an open interest in other cultural communities and so forth (Gardner, 2007). For new immigrants, learning the language and using it for communication is an important aspect in their life in the host society. Meanwhile, cultural contexts, such as new immigrants' openness to the new culture in the host society (provided the environment is friendly and welcoming), also play a role in immigrants' acculturation in their new home.

Motivation is certainly influential in SLE and acculturation. However, Norton (2020) believes that "investment" should be another way to think about the socially and historically constructed relationship between immigrants and the target language/host society. In her extensive study of immigrant women as second language learners in Canada, Norton Pierce (1994) realized the importance of questioning structures of power in understanding SLE for newcomers. She preferred "investment" because such a notion "conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires" which, in turn, help learners in "constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (Norton Pierce, 1994, p. 4).

Questioning power relations seems to be an omission in much acculturation literature. Schumann (1986), for instance, identified some social variables (such as social dominance of the second language, attitude in learning the second language, intended length of residence in the target language area, etc.) and affective variables (such as language shock, cultural shock, ego-permeability, etc.) in acculturation and SLE. Social variables, such as social dominance of the second language/L2 (when compared to the first language/L1), the three integration strategies (assimilation, preservation and adaptation), enclosure (shared social, cultural and religious venues between the L1 and L2 group), cohesiveness and size, congruences or similarities (between the culture of L1 and L2), attitude towards learning the L2 and intended length of residence in the target language area are all believed to exert some influence on individuals' L2 learning and acculturation (Schumann, 1986). Schumann (1986) also recognized several affective variables such as language shock, cultural shock, motivation and ego-permeability in the process of acculturation. This work helped to deconstruct

acculturation and SLE from social and psychological perspectives. In this sense, Schumann's views are similar to Berry's (2005) regarding how they both defined acculturation. Though Schumann's (1986) variables were important in SLE and acculturation, they did not, as Norton Pierce (1994) argued, question the fact that "such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual" (Norton Pierce, 1994, p. 2).

In comparing the power relations between the host society and immigrants, Berry (1980, 2019) developed a four-fold acculturation model, namely assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. This model was widely applied in studies examining immigrants' wellbeing in their host nations (Berger et al., 2005; Berry & Hou, 2016, 2017, 2021; Hou et al., 2018). According to Berry (1980, 2019), assimilation refers to the ways in which non-dominant individuals detach from their original cultural background and interact with, and become members of, the larger society. This acculturation strategy is often called a "melting pot" (Berry & Sam, 2016; Guo, 2017; Kymlicka, 2011). Integration refers to the voluntary acceptance of the dominant culture by members of a non-dominant culture, while maintaining their original cultural identity (Berry, 2017). Multiculturalism may represent an example of integration (Berry & Sam, 2016; Freire, 1970/2005; Kymlicka, 1998). In Canada, for instance, multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates Canada's cultural diversity while, at the same time, encouraging immigrants to accept Canadian cultures (however problematic this notion is) and to learn one or both of the official languages of Canada.

For Freire (1970/2005), integration should be a participatory action that requires efforts from both the immigrants and the host society (see also, Thomson & Derwing, 2004). Separation, the third aspect of Berry's (1980) acculturation model, means that individuals may choose to remain close to their original culture while declining to participate in the dominant culture (Berry, 1980). However, when the dominant group imposes separation, it becomes segregation (Berry & Sam, 2016). Finally, marginalization references the acculturation model wherein an individual is distant from both the heritage culture and the culture of the host society (Berry, 1980; Hou et al., 2018). When the dominant culture

imposes marginalization, it becomes exclusion (Berry & Sam, 2016). Berry and many of his colleagues' studies concluded that integration was typically the most preferred acculturation profile because individuals stay close to both their heritage culture and the new culture (Berry & Hou, 2016; Berry & Sam, 2016; Hou, et al., 2018; Noels & Berry, 2016). Figure 1 (see Appendix A) is created to help readers visualize the different acculturation profiles, according to Berry (1980, 2019).

In order to measure the wellbeing and sense of belonging of immigrants, Hou et al. (2018) employed “four sets of determinants: source-country socio-economic and cultural characteristics, immigrant entry status, post-migration experiences, and demographic characteristics” (p. 1614) to analyze their quantitative research data. Underlying each of these determinants, Hou et al. (2018) identify specific variables such as “index of civil liberties” (developed by Freedom House), “average level of life satisfaction” and an “individualism-collectivism scale” (developed by Geert Hofstede, 2001, 2011) to understand immigrants' knowledge of their home society (p. 1620).

Immigrants' admission class (e.g., family class, economic class, refugee class etc.), age at immigration and ability to speak English or French at the time of landing are variables that may be employed to measure immigration entry status. Then, they look at factors such as “host society receptivity” (perceived discrimination by the host society), “exposure to the host society” (tenure of immigration; language spoken at home; interaction with and exposure to own-immigrant enclave), “economic outcomes” (employment status and family/individual income), and “social capital” (bonding and bridging social networks) to understand post-migration experience (p. 1621). Finally, information such as “gender, visible minority status, marital status, and education” (p. 1622) is used to measure the demographic determinant. These variables offer perspectives and insights for the design of interview questions and data analysis in the research process of this study.

### **Methodology and Study Design**

This is a qualitative study focusing on the narratives from participants to showcase recent adult Chinese immigrants' acculturation profiles. Mitchell writes, in his influential

book *On Narratives* (1981), that “the study of narratives has now become a positive source of insight for all branches of human and natural science” (p. ix). Watson (2012) argues that the rise of narrative in social and educational research is in connection with “a widespread recognition of the fundamental importance of narrative to the organization of human experience and our understanding of how lives are lived” (p. 460).

The significance of narrative data motivated me to employ Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) narrative inquiry as the research methodology for this study. Yardley (2008) believes that a narrative is dependent on one’s point of view, rather than on the “recording of facts” (p. 4). The writing of narratives justifies individuals’ own meaning making, which is their particular kind of truth. Narrative researchers unveil these truths in the format of stories. Using a variety of field texts such as journal records, autobiographical writings, interview transcripts, personal philosophies and so forth, narrative inquirers negotiate “relationships, research purposes, transitions, as well as how we are going to be useful in those relationships” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47).

To analyze field texts, narrative inquirers begin to compose research texts while attending to the fluidity and recursiveness of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006). In doing so, researchers visit and revisit their data, then compose further field texts and recompose research texts (Clandinin, 2006). Through visiting and revisiting, composing and recomposing data, narrative inquirers enhance the trustworthiness of narrative data. As such, narrative inquiry is not just about writing stories; it pertains to how we understand our experience and knowledge as evolving, with the help of narrative data. In short, narrative inquiry focuses on individuals’ sense-making process and associates this process with the social, cultural, educational and political contexts in which individuals live and have lived. Consequently, narrative inquiry explains the complex relationships and ongoing negotiations that individuals experience and have experienced in their lived realities.

### ***Participants and the Research Context***

To attend to each participant’s life stories, this study did not recruit a large number of participants (Clandinin et al, 2016; Yardley, 2008). Additionally, considering that the

qualifying time and application processing time for a foreign national to obtain a permanent residency and Canadian citizenship are relatively long (Government of Canada, 2021), this study set 2010 as the benchmark year, in the hope to recruit qualified participants. As a result, this study recruited six adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants from Mainland China to Canada, who have lived in Canada since 2010, with either a permanent residency or Canadian citizenship.

I recruited participants for my research project in Toronto and Montreal, as both cities host relatively large segments of Chinese immigrants. For instance, immigrants with Chinese ethnicity take up 10.7% of Toronto's population, according to the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2023a). In Montreal, 3.3% of the total population have Chinese ancestry, as of the 2021 Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 2023b). On account of the feasibility of this project, I only recruited participants from Toronto and Montreal as examples to represent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences. After sending the recruitment letter (see Appendix B) on social network forums among Chinese immigrants in both cities, six adult (aged 18 and above) immigrants from Mainland China agreed to participate in this study. All participants arrived in Canada after 2010 and have since obtained either a permanent residency (PR) or Canadian citizenship. Currently, three participants are living in Toronto and three reside in Montreal. In terms of demographic information, three participants self-identified as male and use he/him pronouns, and three participants self-identified as female and use she/her pronouns (see Appendix C for Table 1).

### ***Data Collection and Data Analysis***

To answer the research questions, as presented previously, I conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with all six participants. Semi-structured interviews ask probing, open-ended questions to understand participants' perspectives and thoughts on the topic (Adams, 2010). Moreover, the conversational feature of semi-structured interviews allows researchers to hear what participants have to share while exploring issues important to the study (Drever, 1995). As all interviews took place during the COVID-19 global pandemic, online or phone interviews were proposed for the safety of both the participants and myself.

Verbal consent was obtained from each participant in the first interview. All interviews were audio recorded and securely saved in a password protected drive in my computer. All participants of this study were well informed regarding the research process and details of their participation, as well as their rights with respect to and contributions to the study. Participants were given the option of conducting the interviews in English or Chinese. A French option is offered, but all participants chose either English or Chinese for the interviews. Each interview lasted around one hour.

In the first round of interviews, I used an interview guide (see Appendix D) with guiding questions to elicit answers and stories from participants, relevant to each specific research question. For instance, to answer the research question regarding how recent adult Chinese immigrants understand their relationship with Canada, I asked an open-ended interview question, “How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada?” to invite participants to share their stories. During the interview, I took field notes to capture key ideas and themes that participants shared. After I have reviewed the field notes taken during the first interview, I identified themes that need additional clarification or elaboration. I scheduled the second interview with each participant, based on our mutual availabilities. This round of interviews supplemented the first interview with additional narratives from the participants. I asked question such as, “In the first interview, you have mentioned [the theme of the topic]; would you let me know what you mean by that?” to get perspectives from participants.

Following Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) narrative inquiry framework, I transcribed, translated, organized and constantly revisited the interviews to write/rewrite them in the form of stories. As a narrative inquirer, I focused on communicating participants’ stories as vehicles for their lived realities. Berry’s (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation model, as I have introduced previously, was referenced and used to present, review and discuss participants’ stories in this study. For example, to help readers visualize how participants compare their heritage culture with the culture in their host society, Canada, I introduced a section “Chinese-ness versus Canadian-ness” in the findings. I also applied

Berry's (1980, 2019) acculturation framework to interpret the acculturation profile for each participant in the discussion section of this study. While discussing findings arising from participants' stories in this study, I also situated participants' narratives within the complex relationships and negotiations they have experienced. Every story from participants in this thesis will contribute to our understanding of immigration, acculturation and (citizenship) education in Canada. Additionally, these stories will hopefully motivate researchers and policy makers to refine notions of Canadian citizenship with the experiential knowledge from the participants.

## **Findings**

This section unfolds the stories of the six participants. As this study collected data through individual interviews, each participant shared their stories at a separate time and location. The uniqueness of the stories from every participant provides an added value to this study because every story represents their experiential knowledge. Nonetheless, it also presents some tangible challenges for me to share their stories in this paper. To tackle this challenge, I imagine four timestamps to capture their stories in chronological order. I start with their first impression of Canada while landing at the border; then, I move to their understanding of Canadian cultures through study and work, their understanding of their relationship with China and Canada, and the suggestions they have for Canadian society. The rationale of reorganizing their stories according to the four timestamps mentioned above is to present all stories in a coherent and consistent way.

### ***At the Border and First Impression of Canada***

Excitement mixed with stress were the general feelings of all participants in this study when they arrived in Canada. For both Lingling and Wenbin, travelling to Canada was their first international trip. Both of them were excited while, at the same time, they were worried about the trip because of their unfamiliarity with the language and the people in Canada. However, when they arrived at the border, they were impressed by the hospitality from the officers. "They knew my English was not good, so they even offered translation help for me," said Wenbin, who arrived in Canada as a landed immigrant.

Yixuan and Shilun came to Canada to pursue their master's degree. They both pre-arranged pick-up service at the airport and they already had living arrangements for their first year. For them, the process to enter Canada was smooth and, the next day, they started exploring the city where their universities were. Nanzhe and Huiru had both traveled to Canada before. Nanzhe was on an internship program hosted by the Quebec and Chinese governments in 2014 before he continued his journey in Canada, the following year, as an international student. Huiru was an international student in a French university in Quebec a few years ago. This time, she came back as a landed immigrant after working in France and Los Angeles. To them, Canada was not unfamiliar and they settled in fairly quickly after their arrival.

Speaking of their first impression of Canada, all participants were generous in their praises. Yixuan was amazed at how diversified the student body was at her university in Montreal. Immediately, she decided to join the student association because everyone was so nice and willing to offer help to new students. Huiru was surprised that people were extra nice to her because she was able to speak French. Nanzhe and Shilun were content with their master's program and they both found the staff at their universities supportive and helpful. Wenbin loved the natural environment, the parks, the rivers and the lakes near his new home in Canada. Having lived both in Toronto and Montreal, Lingling enjoyed the good vibes both cities offered. She preferred Montreal because of the scholarly atmosphere, which reminded her of the very reason she chose Canada – to study. After their excitement of arriving at their new home, all participants started their work and study routine in Canada. Their new routines in Canada enabled them to engage with Canadian cultures.

### ***Cultural Contact through Study and Work***

A majority of the participants in this study came to Canada as international students. To them, Canadian universities and colleges were the first avenue to get to know the people, as well as the cultures, in Canada. After joining the student association, Yixuan was actively involved in student-led activities in her university. She enjoyed being a part of the community and she quickly expanded her social circle in Canada. Even after graduation, she

still participated in alumni events and served the community. Nanzhe and Shilun also acknowledged that they made lots of friends at their university. Both of them favoured the research-oriented education approach in their universities. Lingling took a variety of classes while she was on a student visa and after she had obtained her permanent residency. She described her classmates and professors as caring and supportive. Huiru who studied at a French university, had to cope with the dual stress of learning French and her academic program. She took a long time to finally graduate from her master's program, after which she described suffering from severe depression. Although Wenbin didn't attend a Canadian university, he went to the ESL classes offered by the Ontarian provincial government for new immigrants for a brief period of time. He enjoyed the class but also found the content a bit easy for him. Additionally, he didn't receive his driver license until the second year after his initial arrival in Canada, making it challenging for him to commute to class, especially during winter. All factors combined, he decided to spend time on his own to improve his English.

The comparison between education in Canada and China was a topic that all participants were interested in. Shilun preferred the way in which research was conducted at Canadian universities. To him, having the autonomy to choose a topic of your interest was precious. This was in contrast to his previous experience in China, where most research projects conducted by students lacked originality. Similarly, Lingling also shared her preference for the Canadian education system. She realized that it is never too late to pursue higher education in Canada; you can always take time to think about your real passion. The flexibility students enjoy in their educational journey in Canada was surprising to Lingling:

In China, you are expected to finish each phase of the education in a consecutive way. Taking a break is nearly impossible. You risk your chance for education because coming back to school after a break might not be that easy due to the exam-oriented selection method in China.

Nanzhe did his clinical research at a top-notch institution in Montreal. He really liked the design of his research program, in which a variety of subject areas were included and available for them to choose from. While speaking highly of the program at his university in

Canada, Nanzhe also expressed his gratitude for many values and virtues he had adopted in his educational experience in China. Hard work, perseverance and empathy were some examples Nanzhe provided. Yixuan reflected on her educational experiences both in China and Canada. She agreed with Nanzhe that values like hard work were gains from her education journey in China. Nonetheless, she also compared the K-12 education between the two countries.

In Yixuan's opinion, Chinese education focused on factual information, such as a historical event or a geological location, whereas Canadian classrooms highlight critical thinking skills and experiential learning. She explained that class size was a potential factor for this comparison, given that a regular classroom in China would have a minimum of 50 students, compared to the significantly smaller class size in Canada. While expressing her preference for a small-sized classroom where questioning and discovering truth on your own would be possible, Yixuan also believed that education from both sides emphasize teaching students to be better persons.

Work-life balance was another topic most participants shared when they compared life in Canada with China. Having worked both in China and Canada, Shilun and Huiru coincidentally used a trending phrase in Chinese social media – a rat race – to describe their working experience in China. Everyone was always in a rush; they got more jobs done by working overtime, and the line between work time and personal time could be blurry. Shilun enjoyed working in Toronto because he got more personal time after work. He would spend time with friends hiking or going to a concert during a weekend; things he could not have done when he was working in China.

Similarly, Wenbin and Lingling loved the fact that they could do more things that they liked, after work. Wenbin would spend his spare time learning English, whereas Lingling usually hung out with friends and family. Yixuan made a comparison between working in Montreal and Toronto. To her, Montreal was more laid-back and relaxing, as many companies have casual Fridays. After relocating to Toronto for career advancement, Yixuan realized the extra workload when you want a breakthrough in your career goal. Even

though working in Toronto seemed more stressful than in Montreal, Yixuan was able to enjoy her personal time. As a clinical researcher, Nanzhe commented on how the workplace in Canada always places employees' safety and rights as a priority. To him, this was one of the things he truly likes about Canada.

### ***Chinese-ness versus Canadian-ness***

Yixuan had worked in the student association and in many non-governmental organizations during and after her master's program. She enjoyed expanding her social network through various events and activities. For her, stepping out of her comfort zone and making friends out of her known group were crucial for her to get to know the various cultures in Canada. As such, she actively took part in outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, skiing and skating with her friends in Canada. She described herself as an observant person who seeks options to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and to engage in conversations with them to know more about Canadian cultures. She sees the benefits of expanding her social network in her new home. "I don't feel lonely or bored. If we don't try to blend in or connect with people who are from this place, it is very difficult to fully thrive in this environment," Yixuan said. Considering Canada to be her new home, Yixuan shared the same emotions that most Canadians have towards various aspects of life here, ranging from inflation to health care system reform. China, to Yixuan, represents a place where she was born and raised. She also retains a strong emotional bond with China and, when good things happened there – such as the winter Olympics – she would be proud; if bad things happened there, she would empathize with the people there, too. She does not believe that the two cultures are mutually exclusive.

Nanzhe also sees the importance of friends in his life in Canada. He acknowledges that his friends assisted him to navigate life in Canada. He considered diversity in Canada a strength, which motivated him to open his eyes and to hear about people's values, thoughts, and their mentality from their own life experiences outside of Canada. With confidence, he asserted: "Eventually, what makes Canada Canada is whatever [is]coming [from] outside [of] Canada. Canada is built by whatever it absorbed from outside. We learn from each other,

from other people's experiences.” He considers Canada to be his second home; a new place where he absorbs new things that he was unable to obtain in China, where he can establish a life that he can integrate into.

When asked about things he doesn't like in Canada, Nanzhe was not happy with how media amplified the geopolitical tensions between China, the US and Canada in their news coverage. Such news reports made many Canadians suspicious of the Chinese community, whereas they were more curious about China and Chinese culture before the COVID-19 pandemic. He maintained that some scientific verification would be necessary in eliminating these unwarranted biases. Speaking of his relationship with China, he considers himself to be a part of the society, the culture and the country. He values his Chinese educational experiences because he adopted virtues such as hard work, respect for the elders and life-long learning. He also admitted that he learned the importance of respecting every individual, being culturally sensitive, and appreciating and accepting diversity in his life in Canada.

Shilun felt alone in Canada. He described himself as an immigrant with little connection to, or an immigrant who found it difficult to integrate into, the local culture. Having lived in Canada for seven years, he believed that he understood 5% of Canadian cultures. He confessed that he tried multiple ways, such as visiting local museums, to understand the past events that happened here, hiking with friends to appreciate nature, as well as to follow the local news; however, the process of understanding Canadian cultures remains slow for him. He communicates with his Canadian colleagues very often, but he sensed that these communications did little to help him to integrate into Canada. He considers himself as a Chinese citizen living in Canada. Nonetheless, he also admitted that, the more he gets to know about Canada, the more distant he becomes with China. At times, he found himself aligning with some values in Canada, more. For instance, he enjoyed the governments' liberal approach towards public opinion and expression. In this way, he gets to view things in a more critical way, with various, sometimes opposing perspectives. In terms of his position between Chinese and Canadian cultures, he said he aligned 80% with Chinese culture and 20% with Canadian cultures. Nonetheless, he is confident that the percentage of

Canadian cultures that he understands will increase over time. He has strong thoughts regarding the labour market and health care system in Canada, both of which should be improved, in his opinion.

Shilun was not the only one feeling alone in their life in Canada; Lingling and Wenbin also used aloneness and boredom to portray their lives in Canada. Additionally, both Lingling and Wenbin felt a distance toward Canadian cultures. Lingling believed it was because she was not exposed to Canadian cultures that much, due to the limited time she has spent in Canada. Arrived in Canada in 2014, she is still learning about every aspect of life, here. Lingling enjoys the simple interpersonal relationships in Canada. This simpleness contrasts with her experiences in China, where she had to deal with lots of social events, even when she didn't want to. In Canada, she can be assertive in giving a "no" answer without worrying about hurting other people's feelings, though she misses the convenience of life in China, such as commuting via the high-speed railway, a much more efficient way of travelling. Talking about her relationship with China, she believes that relationship never ended because she is still Chinese, ethnically. She considers her departure from China to be the same as a decision to relocate to another city in China. To her, she is a Chinese person living elsewhere on this planet.

Wenbin attributed his unfamiliarity with Canadian cultures to his language ability. Nonetheless, living in Toronto, where there are some big Chinese communities around, he was able to navigate his life even without English. Most of his friends are Chinese immigrants. He has intentions to communicate with people from a non-Chinese background, but he also thinks that he would not know how to initiate the conversation. Working in the service industry, he speaks highly of the politeness and respectfulness of Canadians. He thinks the public transit system is not very efficient in Canada, compared to China. Wenbin described himself as somewhere in between a local resident and an outsider, in terms of his position in Canada. To him, the more integrated you are with the local culture and lifestyle, the more local you become. However, he also believes that it is not necessary to abandon your home culture and lifestyle: "Everyone has [a] different lifestyle, you have yours, I keep

mine. You cannot say a lifestyle is good or bad, it is just personal preference.” Also, “It [Canada] is a multicultural country, you can find your place here regardless of where you are on the spectrum, from a local to an outsider,” Wenbin added, with a smile on his face.

Huiru has been involved in a legal case with her ex-husband for some time and her understanding of Canadian and Quebec society was influenced by this. In her description, she had some quarrel with her ex-husband, but she was being charged with harassment. To her, this charge was unjust because she was the victim in the case. In a recent trial of her case, her ex-husband’s lawyer portrayed her as someone who does not understand a word of French or English. Having obtained a master’s degree from a French university in Quebec and worked in France for a few years, she was both astonished and frustrated that the prosecutors would buy the narratives from her ex-husband’s side. She felt that she was manipulated and discriminated against by the legal system in Quebec because of her being a Chinese immigrant. She concluded that the very reason the prosecutors would believe the assertion of her inability to speak a word of French or English was that she is an immigrant, someone with limited language abilities, who can be picked on. As a single mother, she had to work multiple jobs to support herself and her child. On top of this financial burden, she had spent more than 50,000 dollars in hiring lawyers and other expenses for her lawsuit. Nonetheless, she is affirmative that she won’t stand down and will fight to the last minute to get the justice she deserves. “Even if I have to sue the government to get justice served, I will do that,” Huiru said with passion. “And that’s one thing I appreciate here, you can actually sue the government,” she added. This ongoing legal case made her realize the challenges in integrating into Quebec society. Nonetheless, she considers Canada as her home, where she received higher education, and built her career and family. Although she believes that she is still Chinese deep inside her heart, she also acknowledged the distance between her and the Chinese society. She doesn’t appreciate how everything is a race and competition is rife within Chinese communities. Additionally, she does not understand the logic that some Chinese people would question her Chinese-ness, due to her green card (Permanent

Residency Card) in Canada. She considers herself as a person who is neither Chinese nor Canadian, just someone in an awkward position.

### ***Suggestions for Canadian Society***

All participants in this study shared their viewpoints regarding some of the changes they would like to see in Canada. Health care system reform was mentioned by most participants. To begin with, Nanzhe, a health profession worker in Quebec, hoped that the government could make health care more accessible to newcomers. “We have a pretty good health care system. But it was difficult for newcomers to navigate the system because we do not have multilingual resources to help them,” Nanzhe said. Shilun also shared his concern in accessing medical care in Toronto, due to his lack of medical vocabulary. Additionally, he commented on the efficiency of the health care system: “I was due for an abdomen scan, but I am still waiting for an appointment after eight months.” Yixuan shared the same sentiment: “I have heard stories that people had to wait for a couple of years to get cancer surgeries done. It is a problem. I think policy makers have to think about that.” Lingling often discusses the health care system in Canada with her boss. She believes that her experiences of and exposure to the medical care system would impact her understanding of it. For instance, engaging in conversations with her friend, who is expecting a baby next year, she gets to know more about medical care for pregnant women in Quebec.

When asked about the changes they would like to see to help new immigrants navigate their lives in Canada, participants of this study shared many valuable perspectives. Shilun, Wenbin and Yixuan believe that second language programs will help immigrants orient their lives in Canada, but they also offer some personalized suggestions. Wenbin suggested that the provincial or federal government could offer online ESL programs so that he could take the classes without worrying about commuting to the class location and schedule conflicts with his work. Shilun, a civil engineer with experience in both China and Canada, suggested an integrated language program for professionals like him to help them understand relevant regulations and standards in their profession, so they can find jobs faster. Lingling and Shilun hope the public service sectors could improve their efficiency. Lingling

thinks that sending physical letters is less effective in informing residents about their service requests. While she understands accessibility issues for citizens who are not comfortable with technology, making public services digital would be more convenient and efficient in her viewpoint.

Besides language education and public services, many participants also wish the economy in Canada could be improved. Yixuan and Huiru think that the middle class in Canada encounter difficulties in thriving, given the high tax and inflation. They both hope the government would come up with better plans to help middle class. Lingling also noticed the influence of inflation in her daily life and she thinks the government should focus on revitalizing the economy in post-COVID era. Wenbin and Shilun wish that housing prices in Canada could be more affordable. Yixuan believes the housing affordability is another reason the middle class cannot achieve their full potential. “But everything comes down to a trade-off,” Yixuan shrugged: “[If] you want the enjoyable, laid-back lifestyle in Canada, then you need to bear the high taxes and housing prices.”

### **Discussion of the Narratives**

In this section, I discuss the findings of this study, using Berry’s (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation framework. As a reminder, I have included a diagram (see Appendix A for Figure 1) to showcase the different acculturation profiles that are based on a comparison between immigrants’ home cultures and the cultures in the host society. A notable finding of this study is that all participants showcase a dynamic acculturation profile, meaning that they do not rigidly fit into one category. Instead, their acculturation process shift is based on a variety of factors, such as the different timeline of their life in Canada and their knowledge about the host society, as well as their connections with people in the host society. Tierney and Clements (2011) suggest that narrative inquirers offer multiple interpretations of the data with clear justifications to enhance the trustworthiness of narrative data. With this logic, opening to the possibility of a dynamic acculturation profile enhance the credibility of the data in this research. With some critical assessment and understanding of the social, cultural and political context in Canada, participants also offered many insightful ideas to call for

changes in the Canadian society. This finding manifests Chinese immigrants' willingness to participate more and to integrate into Canadian society.

### *A Dynamic Acculturation Profile*

Participants in this study shared their honest opinions in their critical comparison between their heritage culture – the Chinese culture – and the culture(s) in Canada. At first glance, Yixuan and Nanzhe fitted the description of the integration profile. The two participants used “home” to describe Canada, which embodies their acceptance of Canada and Canadian cultures. This acceptance from both participants was displayed through their efforts in expanding their social network and willingness to learn from the multicultural Canadian family with an open mind, while studying and working in Canada. At the same time, both participants critically examined the aspects they value in Chinese culture. For instance, Yixuan mentioned the shared emotions she has with people in China, whereas Nanzhe appreciated the virtues and values, such as respect for elders, he adopted while living in China.

On a closer scan of their stories, however, there were elements which might steer them from the integration profile. Although Yixuan stressed her shared emotion with China, as well as the fact that Chinese cultures and Canadian cultures were not mutually exclusive, her strong preference for Canadian ways of living would likely place her in an assimilation mode. This, however, does not hold true for Nanzhe. In their extensive studies of immigrants' acculturation and wellbeing in Canada, Berry and Hou (2016, 2017, 2021) found that discrimination is likely to jeopardize immigrants' relationship with the host society, often leading them to remain within the separation or marginalization profile. Nanzhe's discussion of the suspicious feeling projected onto him and other Chinese immigrants during the pandemic displayed his aversion to the biases and discriminations against the Chinese community in Canada, which could lead him to develop a separation mindset.

Shilun and Lingling expressed their concern over the distance they have with Canadian cultures. Both participants considered themselves more as Chinese living in Canada. As such, they were unfamiliar with many things happening in Canada. On a surface

level, their newness to Canadian cultures, as well as their current inclination towards their home cultures seem to place Shilun and Lingling within the separation profile (Berry, 2019). Even Shilun, himself, used 80 percent to describe his alignment with Chinese cultures, whereas the percentage he understood about Canadian cultures was only 20 percent. Nonetheless, both participants enunciated their willingness to learn more about Canadian cultures. In Lingling's story, she learned more about medical support for pregnant moms, while helping her friend who was expecting. Moreover, her preference for the simple interpersonal relationship in Canada was a concrete example to prove her positive disposition toward Canadian culture.

When talking about things she does not understand about Canadian cultures, currently, Lingling believes it is due to her low exposure to the culture, as she had only arrived in 2014. Similarly, Shilun was also hopeful that he would understand more about Canadian cultures over time. The predilection he shared for the liberal political environment in Canada attested to this wishful thinking. Both participants' willingness to accept and learn more about Canadian cultures demonstrated traits for an integration acculturation model. Notably, Shilun also predicts an assimilation scenario, where he aligns more with Canadian cultures and becomes more distant to the Chinese cultures. Given all the factors presented here, it is not accurate to say both Shilun and Lingling stand only in the separation account of acculturation.

Wenbin's story can be interpreted within a separation acculturation account. As he shared, most of his friends are Chinese immigrants and he does not have many non-Chinese friends, despite his wish to initiate contact with them. The challenge for him to make friends outside of the Chinese community probably is due to his language ability. Hou et al. (2018) claim that, the language immigrants prefer to use and their interaction with their own immigrant enclave associate with their exposure to the host society. Based on this argument, it might be true that Wenbin's introduction to Canadian society and culture was somehow deficient, which justifies a separation profile. However, such a conclusion might be hasty, given that Wenbin also shared his critical take on the power dynamics between Canadian

cultures and his heritage cultures. In fact, his argument that keeping his own culture is logical and reasonable within the framework of multiculturalism showcased his insightful ideas about the social, cultural and political infrastructures in Canada. Additionally, his description of himself as a person in between an outsider and a local in Canada disclose integration attributes. This, again, substantiates a dynamic acculturation process.

Due to the legal case that bothered Huiru, her resistance to Quebec culture appeared to be visible. At the same time, she did not appreciate the emphasis on competitiveness, as well as the judgement of being “less Chinese” that she received from some members within the Chinese community. She described herself as a person who is neither Chinese nor Canadian, which potentially puts her in a marginalization portrayal. Nonetheless, she considers Canada as her home and she appreciates her work experience, as well as democracy in Canada. Although she acknowledges some distance between her and the Chinese society and culture, she believes that she is Chinese, deep inside. This information presents challenges in ascribing Huiru to only one acculturation profile because her story encompasses characteristics of marginalization, assimilation and integration, on occasions. Given that narrative inquiry trusts the experiential knowledge from participants (Clandinin et al., 2016), this study categorizes Huiru within the marginalization account of acculturation.

As the nature of this study is to focus on the individual stories and experiences, any finding is solely based on the narratives from participants. The dynamic acculturation profile in this study applies to all the participants. Here, the adjective “dynamic” symbolizes the fluidity of participants’ experiences, as well as how this fluidity influences the way(s) they compare their home culture(s) with Canadian culture(s). The specific contextual factors, such as the duration of their stay and the reception from members in the host society play a role in resulting this dynamic acculturation result. This dynamic acculturation finding also points out that the different acculturation profiles might not always be mutually exclusive. An individual, as this study showcased, can stay in more than one acculturation categories. Therefore, acculturation scholarship should consider individual experiences and understandings to enrich literature in this domain of research.

### *Chinese Immigrants Understand Canadian Society through Exposure*

A common perspective shared by all participants in this study is that, with more exposure to Canadian society and its cultures, they will learn and understand more about Canada. Such wishful thinking could contribute to their successful integration within the host society. Moreover, despite the dynamic acculturation profiles their stories indicate, all participants are willingly and actively accepting cultures in Canada. In his work on the critical evaluation of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program for new immigrants in Canada, Fleming (2015) rejects the idea that there is a dominant and singular culture in Canada. Being Canadian, as he argues, cannot be embodied in terms of some normative standards, such as various forms of social behaviours (Fleming, 2015).

It is indeed a challenging task to define what Canadian culture(s) is, given the multicultural, multilingual and multinational realities of Canadian society. Participants in this study, nonetheless, offered some perspectives to showcase their understanding of Canadian culture(s). Thematic topics such as mutual respect, politeness, diversity, cultural sensitivity, democracy and justice are among some of the core ideas that conceptualize Canadian cultures. Building on a previous quote from Nanzhe, Canada includes and accommodates various cultures, religions, languages and values brought by immigrants from all parts of the world. The inclusiveness of Canadian cultures potentially justified participants' motivation to gain more exposure within the Canadian society. Using the quote from Wenbin: "It [Canada] is a multicultural country, you can find your place here regardless of where you are on the spectrum, from a local to an outsider."

Related to the theoretical framework for the current study on acculturation, narratives from the participants validated some variables, as identified by Hou et al. (2018). To begin with, there is a potential connection between immigrants' language abilities and their exposure to the host society. Wenbin believed that his language skills were probably a reason why he is unfamiliar with the Canadian cultures. Nonetheless, his language abilities did not hinder his understanding of Canadian society. His comments on multiculturalism in Canada showcased his critical assessment of the social, cultural and political realities in Canada.

Secondly, the social network immigrants develop in the host society may influence the way they understand and accept Canadian culture(s). Yixuan and Nanzhe both value the importance of friends in their lives in Canada. With an open mind to connect and learn from others outside of their known groups, both participants got additional exposure to the host society, which potentially explained their inclination towards an integration acculturation profile.

Although this study collected some stories in terms of Chinese immigrants' understanding of Canadian cultures through their working experiences, these findings did not yield much information regarding economic outcomes, such as employment status and income level (Hou et al., 2018) in their acculturation process. Generally, participants shared their preference of the work-life balance and the protection of employee rights in Canada. This preference was mostly based on a comparison between their past working experiences in China and their current exposure to the Canadian labour market. Similarly, participants also critically examined the comparisons between the education systems both in Canada and China, and they justified their preference for the Canadian system. These comparisons presented their understanding of Canadian society through an educational lens. Nonetheless, the connection between their educational experiences and acculturation was not clear in the current study. On a positive note, while comparing their work and study experiences in China and Canada, immigrants generally try to understand and internalize more information about their host society, Canada.

Hou et al. (2018) attributes perceived discrimination in the host society as a variable to measure immigrants' sense of belonging. Furthermore, Berry and Hou (2021) assert that discrimination from the host society could potentially enhance immigrants' resistance to the host society, leading them to choose a separation or marginalization outlook. Huiru's story proved these arguments. Her frustration over the legal case was that the prosecutors based their decisions on her immigrant status instead of her language skills and educational credentials. The irony is that such an incident happened in an avenue where justice should be

served. No wonder Huiru deemed her integration into Quebec society a challenge even when she considered Canada as home.

The research participants in this study also shared many insightful suggestions to make Canada a more equitable and democratic place to live. The changes they want to see in Canada range from big initiatives such as health care and tax reform to day-to-day projects, such as improving public service efficiency. These suggestions and changes, put forward by Chinese immigrants, manifested their comprehensive understanding and evaluation of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada. More importantly, they pinpoint the root causes of many such issues facing all Canadians and offer their suggestions to tackle these issues, accordingly. Their in-depth knowledge about Canadian society, their willingness to participate more in public affairs, as well as their wish to make a change in Canada show, beyond doubt, that they are active participants and citizens in Canada (Guo, 2013, 2014).

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study focuses on telling stories from research participants and the meaning-making process of their stories. Employing Berry's (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation framework, this study critically examines, discusses and interprets narratives from six adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants in Canada. This study generated some captivating findings.

To begin with, stories from all participants showcase a dynamic acculturation profile. In other words, this study finds that the different acculturation profiles, as described in Berry's (1980, 2019) four-fold acculturation framework, are not always mutually exclusive. One connotation of this dynamic acculturation profile is that immigrants' relationships with the host society can be very fluid. As the very definition of acculturation pertains to the comparison between immigrants' home culture and the culture in the host society, experience is key in interpreting such a comparison. Nonetheless, each individual experiences things differently, based on their exposure to the specific environment. As such, we need more empirical data to understand the acculturation process of immigrants. Future studies might

consider a longitudinal approach to examine immigrants' acculturation over a longer period of time.

The second connotation of this dynamic acculturation profile is that recent adult Chinese immigrants actively involve themselves in the juxtaposition between their heritage culture and the culture in Canada. In doing so, they critically examine their understanding of the host society, Canada. It is noticeable that all participants have their in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada. They believe that the more exposure they have to the Canadian society would lead to additional understandings of Canada and Canadian cultures.

Participants in this study also offered some valuable perspectives to define Canadian cultures. They associate diversity, inclusiveness, politeness, sports, cultural sensitivity, mutual respect, democracy and justice with their interpretation of Canadian cultures, in their stories. At the same time, they are actively learning more about Canada and Canadian cultures, while living in Canada. Their willingness to accept Canada and Canadian cultures also displays their desire to be integrated into Canadian society.

Another important finding in this study is that Chinese immigrants are active participants in Canada. They care about things other Canadians care about, and they want to contribute their share to make Canada a more hospitable and equitable place to live. With their in-depth understanding and critical assessments of the social, cultural, political and economic circumstances in Canada, they also offer their suggestions to the Canadian society. As active participants in Canada, they want to see changes in the health care system, tax system, housing market, public service sectors in Canada. Researchers and policy makers should consider these voices and include Chinese immigrants in their decision-making.

Many acculturation studies conclude that integration is the most desirable acculturation profile, as immigrants stay close to both their home culture and the new culture in the host society (Berry & Hou, 2016; Berry & Sam, 2016; Hou, et al., 2018; Noels & Berry, 2016). Nonetheless, integration requires effort from not only the immigrants but also the host society. This study validates Hou et al.'s (2018) conclusion that discriminations from

the host society jeopardize immigrants' relationship with the host society. Recent adult Chinese immigrants, as this study showcases, express their wish and desire to be integrated into the multicultural Canadian society. Additionally, they are actively learning and accepting Canada and Canadian cultures. To facilitate recent adult Chinese immigrants' integration into Canada, Canadians should also do their part to welcome and accommodate them. This study hopes to contribute to the mutual understanding between Chinese immigrants in Canada and the multicultural Canadian family.

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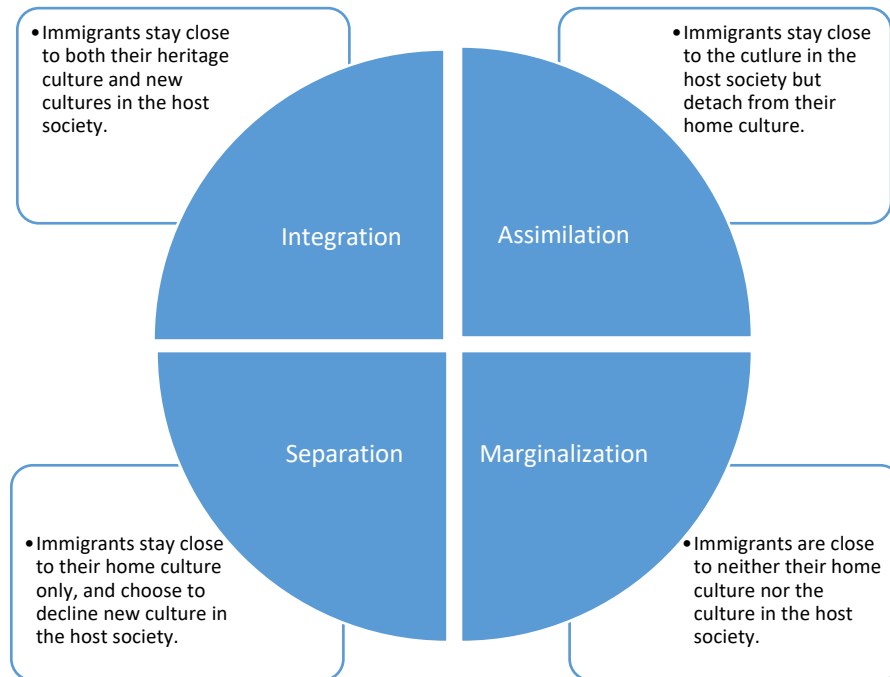
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## Appendix A Berry's (1980, 2019) Acculturation Framework

**Figure 1**

*Berry's (1980, 2019) Four-fold Acculturation Profile*



*Note.* When a dominant group imposes separation, it becomes segregation. When a dominant group imposes marginalization, it becomes exclusion.

## Appendix B Recruitment Letter

English version

Hello,

My name is Xingtian Cao, I am from Faculty of Education at University of Ottawa. I will conduct a research project to examine the lived experiences of adult (18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010 and have since obtained either a permanent residency status or citizenship in Canada. This study will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chitpin at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I intend to collect stories from you by conducting interviews. These stories are collected for the purpose of my Ph.D. dissertation in citizenship education and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

There will be two interviews in this study. Each interview should last about 1 hour. You can choose to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. The interview will be scheduled for a date and time that are convenient for you. I will conduct the interview virtually using software such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams. If you prefer, the interview can be conducted over the phone or through Wechat. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded in order for me to review and transcribe for research purposes. I would like to emphasize that your participation, that is, agreeing to allow me to use the recording of our interviews is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time. Also, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to withdraw from the study and prefer that I do not use your interview data, I will remove it from the research. I will offer you opportunity to review the narratives I write based on our interview. You are more than welcome to make suggestions to add, modify, or delete these narratives.

Now, if you agree to participate, please review and sign the consent form and return it to me. The form has contact information of myself and my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Chitpin, if you ever had any questions about this study.

Sincerely,

Xingtian Cao

Chinese version

您好！

我叫曹兴潭，是渥太华大学教育学院的一名博士研究生。在我的导师 Stephanie Chitpin 博士的指导下，我即将展开一项关于成年华人移民人生经历的研究。这项研究旨在了解自 2010 年以后移民至加拿大，并且获得永久居民身份或者加拿大国籍的华人移民的人生经历。通过访谈的方式，我希望可以收集您的故事。这些故事会被用在我的关于公民教育的博士论文以及相关的文章发表里。

本项研究涉及两次访谈。每次访谈大约需要一个小时。您可以选择用英文或中文参与访谈。访谈的时间和日期会根据您方便的时间安排。我会使用 Zoom 或者 Microsoft Teams 来进行访谈。如果您愿意，我也可以通过电话或者微信进行访谈。在您的同意基础上，我会对访谈进行录音用以转录、回顾等研究目的。我想特别指出您的参与，也就是同意我访谈您并且录音，是完全自愿的。您可以选择随时停止访谈。同时，您不需要回答您不想回答的问题。如果您选择中途退出这项研究，并且希望我不使用您的访谈内容，我会删除相关信息。访谈之后我会将您的分享以故事的方式呈现出来。我会和您分享写好的故事，您可以增加、删改我写的内容。

如果您同意参与这项研究，请您在阅读后签署知情同意书，并且将签好的文件返送与我。知情同意书内附有我和我导师的联系方式，如果您对这项研究有任何问题，欢迎随时联系我们。

感谢！

曹兴潭

## Appendix C

**Table 1**

*Participants in the Current Study*

Name	Years lived in Canada	Initial reason to choose Canada	Current city of residence	Legal status in Canada	Preferred pronouns
Wenbin	13	Work	Toronto	Citizen	He/him
Huiru	13	Study	Montreal	PR	She/her
Lingling	9	Study	Montreal	PR	She/her
Yixuan	9	Study	Toronto	PR	She/her/她
Nanzhe	8	Study	Montreal	PR	He/him/il
Shilun	8	Study	Toronto	PR	He/him

*Note:* To preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, all names are aliases. All participants obtained their PR through the skilled work program from either the federal or provincial government.

## **Appendix D Interview Guide**

### First round of interview

#### **Questions to start the interview:**

When did you come to Canada?

Did you come to Canada alone, or with your family?

What was your first day in Canada look like? How would you describe that day?

Why did you choose Canada?

Why did you choose [the specific cities where the participant lives]?

#### **1) What does it mean to be a Chinese immigrant in Canada today?**

How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada? Are there any stories you would like to share regarding this question?

How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada during COVID-19 pandemic? Are there any stories you would like to share regarding this question?

What are some other stories you want to share regarding your experience as a Chinese immigrant in Canada?

#### **2) How would a Chinese immigrant in Canada weigh their Canadian-ness versus their Chinese-ness?**

Reflecting on your experiences, what do you like about Canada?

Reflecting on your experiences, what do you not like about Canada?

Reflecting on your experiences, how would you describe your relationship with China?

Reflecting on your experiences, how would you describe your relationship with Canada?

#### **3) What are the roles of education, or citizenship education in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada?**

[For immigrants who have taken LINC/CLIC/Courses offered by Quebec Government]

How did you know [name] program that is available to new immigrants in Canada?

Why did you choose to take this program?

Can you share your overall experiences of the program with me? What do you like/dislike about the program?

Reflecting on your experiences, how does this program help you with your life in Canada?

If this program is not helpful, what were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

[For participants without any experiences with LINC/CLIC/Courses offered by Quebec Government]

If participants are aware of the program but choose not to take it:

What are your objections of the program?

What are some of the education resources you would like to get to help you with your life in Canada?

What were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

If participants are not aware of the program:

What are some of the education resources you would like to get to help you with your life in Canada?

What were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?

**4) How does recent Chinese immigrants' lived experience inform education, social and even political changes in Canada?**

Reflecting on your experiences as a Chinese immigrant in Canada, what are things you wish that could be changed in Canada?

**Exit question**

Is there anything you would like to share before the end of this interview?

## Second interview

*(These question structures will be applied accordingly to the topics that need clarification)*

- Last time, we talked about \_\_\_\_\_, and you said \_\_\_\_\_. Could you tell me more about this?
- When we talked about \_\_\_\_\_ last time, what did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Exit question**

- Is there anything you would like to talk more about before the end of the interview?

### A Sample Second Interview Guide

You mentioned "diversity" a few times to describe your impression of Canadian society from a general perspective. In Canada, multiculturalism is a state policy that speaks to diversity. What's your understanding of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada?

You mentioned that before the covid-19 pandemic, you felt normal, you felt that you were just one of the many residents living in Montreal. But since the start of covid-19 pandemic, anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism made you feel that you are being alienated by others, it's as if all of sudden your background matters. What else do anti-Asian and anti-Chinese racism made you feel in relation to your life in Canada?

You mentioned that the coronavirus, the geopolitical tensions between China and the US, and even Canada, as well as misinformation from media made you feel that you are being judged and suspected by others. Are there any other reasons that contribute to these judgements and suspicions? How do these judgements and suspicions make you feel in your life in Canada?

You mentioned a few times about the power relations between the western societies and Chinese society, such as the geopolitical tensions, misinformation from the media, as well as stereotypes and discriminations. How would you interpret these power relations? What do these power relations connect to your life?

You talked about cultural differences when it comes to the different understandings of wearing masks. What are other cultural differences you have noticed between Canadian culture and your own culture? How would you define Canadian culture? Do you think you are close to the Canadian culture? How would you position yourself between Chinese and Canadian culture?

You mentioned your concern over the division in the Canadian society. Specifically, you mentioned the example of people trying to figure out the position you are in, pro-China or pro-West. How do you view this division, or in another word, this mentality of choosing sides in the Canadian society? Any stories you would like to bring about this question?

Speaking of things that you like about Canada; you give some positive comments to students and employee rights protection in schools and the workplace. How do these protections of rights connect to your life in Canada?

You mentioned your concern over a political driven mentality, as well as an emotionally driven mindset among many people in Canada. Specifically, you shared your concern over a lack of scientific verifications among many people in Canada. Thus, people are easily being manipulated by their emotions instead of rational and scientific thinking. How do these concerns make you feel in your daily life?

**Chapter Three:**  
**Multiculturalism and Bilingualism from the Perspective of Six Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry**

**Abstract**

Multiculturalism, a federal policy that centralizes cultural, social and political rights for ethnic minorities in Canada, is an important aspect of immigrant life. Around the same time that multiculturalism was implemented by the federal government, Canada adopted bilingualism as its official language policy. Though the initial motivation of such a policy was to protect French language and culture, it is relevant to immigrant life in Canada, especially for those who reside in Francophone dominant areas, such as Quebec. This study presents the lived experiences of six adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada and obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship after 2010. Using narrative inquiry, this study presents stories from participants to showcase how recent adult Chinese immigrants understand Canadian multiculturalism and bilingualism. This study uses a critical multiculturalism theoretical framework to examine, discuss, and interpret the lived experiences of recent adult Chinese immigrants to Canada. Findings reveal that Chinese immigrants understand multiculturalism and bilingualism based on their experiences of both policies. Despite some concerns which participants have regarding multiculturalism and bilingualism, they demonstrate their nuanced perspectives and opinions regarding both federal policies in Canada. Participants use their experiential knowledge on multiculturalism and bilingualism to guide their new life in Canada.

*Keywords:* Canadian Multiculturalism; bilingualism; Chinese immigrants in Canada; critical multiculturalism; narrative inquiry

## Introduction

Immigration plays a pivotal role in Canada. As one of the most popular destinations for immigrants from all over the world, Canada's population is among one of the most diversified in the world (Statistics Canada, 2022a). In fact, the 2021 Canadian census reported that immigrants make up around 23% of the total population of Canada. Among the diversified population in Canada, immigrants with a Chinese background make up 4.7 percent of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a), representing one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Canada. Over the past few decades, immigrants with a Chinese background immigrated to Canada from all parts of the world. Today, we are still witnessing a large wave of immigration from China, in part due to the increasing numbers of Chinese international students who choose to pursue an education at Canadian institutions.

Diversity is a strength of Canada. Nonetheless, issues regarding immigration were and remain matters of contention within the Canadian political arena (Fleras, 2014). Take Chinese immigrants, as an example; despite being a significant part of the Canadian population, immigration policies were not always favourable for Chinese immigrants. The notorious head tax and the *Chinese Immigration Act* denied Chinese immigrants entry to Canada and provoked traumatic experiences for many Chinese immigrants in the past (Chan, 2019). Until 1967, when Canada employed a point ranking system to evaluate all immigration applications, it became legally impossible to challenge the decision as to who would be allowed to immigrate to Canada. Shortly after the establishment of this point ranking system, Canada adopted bilingualism and multiculturalism as her federal policies in response to issues regarding language rights, diversity, immigration and inclusion (Haque, 2014).

Currently, there are four major categories of immigration in Canada, namely the economic class, family class, humanitarian class and other immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In most cases, immigrants under any of these classes need to prove their language proficiency in either one or both official languages in Canada (Government of Canada, 2021). At the same time, multiculturalism is a state policy that safeguards immigrants cultural and

linguistic rights in Canada. It is therefore safe to say that both multiculturalism and bilingualism have profound connections with immigrants' life in their new home, Canada. Kymlicka (2020) highlights the positive connections among national solidarity, immigration and multiculturalism. Nonetheless, few studies in educational research reported immigrants' perspectives on the two federal policies in Canada.

This study reports narratives from six adult Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada after 2010, with a focus on how they connect, understand and negotiate multiculturalism and bilingualism in their new lives in Canada. This paper first situates multiculturalism and bilingualism within Canada's historical context. Then, I delineate the connections between the two federal policies and immigrants' lives in their new home. In doing so, I talk about citizenship education for new immigrants. Then, I highlight scholarly perspectives on the critique of both federal policies in Canada. These critiques portray a critical multiculturalism framework, which I adopt to interpret the narratives from the participants. Overall, this research answers the following three research questions: 1) What are recent Chinese immigrants' understandings of multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada, respectively? 2) How may these understandings inform education, social and political changes in Canada? 3) What are the roles of education or citizenship education, in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada?

### **Multiculturalism and Bilingualism in Canada: A Historical Perspective**

In 1969, the *Official Languages Act* granted French and English equal status as official languages of Parliament and the federal government. The purpose of the bilingualism policy is to maintain national unity in response to Quebec separatism (Esses & Gardner, 1996). The official policy of bilingualism not only "ensured equal access to government services and regulated labeling of consumer good in both languages" (Fleming, 2007, p. 189), it also financed the creation of English and French second language education programs in elementary and secondary schools across the nation (Fleming, 2007). Two years after the

adoption of bilingualism, Canada initiated a response to increased immigration and cultural by highlighting a multiculturalism policy.

Multiculturalism was developed within the framework of bilingualism (Derwing, 2017; Fleming, 2013). Multiculturalism was formalized in 1971 and Canada's official multiculturalism policy was written into the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. Canada's first *Multiculturalism Act* was passed in parliament in 1988. Immigrants' cultural, linguistic and social diversity are safeguarded through multiculturalism. At the same time, learning one of the official languages is required by this policy for newcomers to integrate into Canadian society (Guo, 2017). As such, language-training programs, both in French and English, have been introduced by both federal and provincial governments to promote immigrants' integration into Canada.

### **Educational Implications of Multiculturalism and Bilingualism**

Kymlicka (2001) argues that citizenship education in liberal democracy should focus on "how we think about and behave towards others, particularly those who differ from us in their race, religion, class, etc." (p. 304). Banks (2009) also believes that an important goal of citizenship education is to "teach toleration and recognition of cultural differences" (p. 11). Indeed, we are now in a time where most nation-states are not composed of a single ethnicity. Issues relating to minority rights, immigration and diversity require urgent solutions.

Kymlicka (1995) proposes a multicultural citizenship framework as an educational solution. He argues that ethnic and immigrant minorities should have the right to maintain their ethnic cultures and languages while participating fully in the national civic culture (Kymlicka, 1995). Similarly, Rosaldo (1997) in the US also proposes a "cultural citizenship" which contains the same appeal as Kymlicka's multicultural citizenship framework. Canada is among the first nations in the world to adopt multiculturalism as a state policy in response to immigration and minority rights (Guo & Guo, 2011; Kymlicka, 1998, 2003).

Multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates Canada's cultural diversity. As an example of integration, multiculturalism encourages immigrants to open themselves to the host nation's culture and language, while maintaining their original cultures and languages. In short,

multiculturalism safeguards minority rights from legal, political and cultural perspectives (Kymlicka, 2020).

The educational implications of multiculturalism and bilingualism to new immigrants in Canada pertain to their willingness and motivation to accept Canadian cultures and to learn one of the official languages in Canada. In doing so, immigrants ought to understand the fundamental landscape and structure of Canadian society. For instance, Kymlicka (1998) refers to Indigenous communities and French-Canadians as national minorities, in contrast to ethnic minorities, as a result of immigration after Confederation. Thus, immigrants should understand multiculturalism from various perspectives, according to different minorities in Canada. Quebec, for instance, has adopted an intercultural framework in response to immigration and minority rights (Maxwell et al., 2012).

Interculturalism shares the same commitment as multiculturalism to embrace cultural diversity and to promote immigrants' integration into the host society. However, interculturalism differs from multiculturalism, as it is seen as a way to "enable newcomers to participate in the co-construction of a common societal culture" (Maxwell et al., 2012, p. 432). In Quebec, for example, the common societal culture is the Quebecois culture, secularism and French language (Béland et al., 2021). Although this explanation of interculturalism may sound simplistic, within this paper I introduce interculturalism as an example to showcase the educational implications of such a unique model regarding new immigrants to Canada. New immigrants require knowledge of interculturalism to be able to interpret the uniqueness of Canadian multiculturalism. This, of course, requires some educational effort.

### **Citizenship Education for New Adult Immigrants in Canada**

Immigration to Canada began before Confederation in 1867. Despite the presence of Indigenous inhabitants in the land that would later become known as Canada, French and English Canadians were considered to be the founding peoples of Canada (Harris, 2020). Between 1867 and 1895, Canada opened immigration to people of European origin, with a strong preference for individuals immigrating from the UK and the USA. Restrictions were

placed on non-white immigrants, such as Chinese immigrants, due to their perceived inability to be assimilated into Canadian society. It was during this time that the notorious head tax was imposed only on Chinese immigrants (Brosseau & Dewing, 2018; Yu, 2022).

Between 1896 and 1914, Canada began to allow Eastern and Southern European immigrants, such as Ukrainians, Poles, and Doukhobors, because immigrants from the UK and Western Europe could no longer meet Canada's ever-increasing labour demands. However, Asians and other non-whites were still being excluded during this time. For example, the head tax imposed on Chinese was raised from \$50 to \$100 in 1900 and to \$500 in 1903 (Guo & Guo, 2021; Li, 2008). Between 1915 and 1945, Europeans were still favoured to immigrate to Canada. Even after World War II, immigration to Canada was still restricted and off-limits to non-Europeans. However, following a reform in 1967, a point system based on education, occupation, language skills and work experience was put into place. Thus, immigration to Canada was open to all eligible individuals, despite their ethno-racial backgrounds.

Although policymakers in Canada have a longstanding interest in citizenship for newcomers, researchers and educators seem to place little emphasis on this population (Joshee, 1996). Nonetheless, Joshee and Derwing (2005) discovered that citizenship education programs that aim to include democratic values in school children can be found in all provincial education programs (e.g., Appleyard & Lorna, 2011; Manion & Weber, 2018; Ministère de l'Éducation, n.d.). Despite the substantial work in citizenship education, no specific citizenship education program, which aims to educate new immigrants about Canadian society as well as their civic rights and responsibilities, exists to date (Joshee & Derwing, 2005).

Perhaps the closest educational program for new immigrants would be the Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (referred to as LINC, hereafter). In 1992, the federal government introduced the LINC program (its French equivalent is called CLIC) with the hope of assisting new immigrants' integration into Canada. Indeed, in an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, topics such as justice and inequality can promote an

understanding of democracy (Martin & Morgan, 2015; Morgan & Vandrick, 2009). However, as Joshee and Derwing (2005) argue, the LINC program focuses primarily on economic and linguistic integration over social and political integration. Similarly, Derwing and Waugh (2012) note that immigrants in the LINC program usually want to acquire some survival English to get a job. Therefore, it is difficult to integrate civic values into the teaching of LINC (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Given such a background, to attribute LINC as a citizenship education program for newcomers in Canada is problematic. Joshee and Derwing (2005) argue that, without adequate opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities, an immigrant may have a hard time becoming a part of the political life of the country. Notwithstanding, new Canadian citizens have a desire to think more in-depth about citizenship and to discuss these thoughts with others (Guo, 2011, 2014; Joshee & Derwing, 2005).

The current process to obtain citizenship status in Canada requires a written test of 20 multiple-choice questions that ask basic historical, cultural, social and political facts about Canada. It is debatable that passing this citizenship exam would give new immigrants adequate knowledge about Canada, especially about their roles and rights as Canadian citizens (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). We should also consider the fact that literature on citizenship education for adult immigrants in Canada is very rare and hard to find. As a result, there is a valid need for a citizenship education program to assist new adult immigrants in Canada with their social, cultural, civic and political integration.

### **A Critical Multiculturalism Framework**

A critical discussion of multiculturalism is crucial to understanding and answering the research questions of this study. Multiculturalism is a state policy that safeguards the cultural, social and political rights for ethnic minorities in Canada. Whether or not this policy fulfills its roles to protect immigrants' rights is open for debate. For instance, while multiculturalism in Canada ensures immigrants' rights to stay close to their home cultures and languages, bilingualism requires immigrants to learn at least one of the official languages, as if these represent the only dominant cultures and languages in Canada (Fleming, 2015).

Nonetheless, Canada is among one of the first nations in the world to adopt multiculturalism as a state policy in response to immigration and minority rights (Guo & Guo, 2011; Kymlicka, 1998, 2003). Kymlicka (1998) maintained, “Canadians do a better job of respecting ethnic diversity while promoting societal integration than citizens of any other country” (p. 22). Similarly, Brosseau and Dewing (2018) stated that, ideologically, multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates Canada’s cultural diversity. Such statements may be criticized by many scholars, as the very notion of multiculturalism is not immune to criticism.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) identified three positions of multiculturalism, namely; conservative, liberal and critical. Among them, conservative and liberal perspectives of multiculturalism are considered as practices that maintain the superiority of a dominant group’s culture and language (Guo, 2013; Kubota, 2004; Li, 2003). Critical multiculturalism framework, on the contrary, challenges dominant powers to remove barriers of inequality that discriminate against one group and enhance the privilege of another (Guo, 2013). Moreover, critical multiculturalism links “culture to power, and multiculturalism to anti-racism” (May, 2003, p. 211). Applying these scholarly perspectives in the Canadian context, Canadian multiculturalism might not be the best example for a critical multiculturalism. Indeed, multiculturalism in Canada allows for new immigrants to maintain their traditional cultures and languages, whereas bilingualism implies that immigrants should assimilate to the cultures of the two founding peoples, French and English (Cervatiue & Ricento, 2012; Fleming, 2015; Guo, 2013).

This account of multiculturalism requests that immigrants adapt or assimilate to the culture of the host society, whereas integration also requires efforts from the host society to accommodate newcomers (Thomson & Derwing, 2004). Relating to the conflicts between multiculturalism and immigrants’ rights – if multiculturalism were to safeguard immigrants’ rights, it should not favour one or a few dominant cultures in the society. Additionally, the host society needs to assist newcomers’ integration instead of demanding immigrants adapt

or assimilate into the dominant culture(s). The statement that multiculturalism celebrates Canada's cultural diversity is thus problematic.

In addition to the problematic nature of this "assimilationist" approach, for Bissoondath (2002), multiculturalism's protection of ethnic minority culture has encouraged ethnic "ghettoization" and separatism. Although Kymlicka (2016) attempted to resolve this concern by maintaining that ethnic groups actively participate in the political life of Canada, concerns for ethnic marginalization still exist (Guo, 2017). Moreover, the reception of multiculturalism by Quebecers and Indigenous populations is quite different from ethnic minorities (Fleras & Elliott, 2002). Indigenous peoples argue that multiculturalism does not help them with their treaty rights and land claims, while Francophones view multiculturalism as a way of minimizing the position of the French in Canada (Taylor, 1993). These criticisms are valid because the design and implementation of multiculturalism should indeed consider the dynamic and complex demographics in Canada. A critical multicultural stance that challenges all power brokers to remove barriers and inequalities would create a better notion of multiculturalism in Canada. Relating this point to the theme of this study, immigrants' perspectives on Canadian multiculturalism and bilingualism, as well as how such notions influence their understanding of their Canadian citizenship or permanent residency, would contribute significantly to the discussion of multiculturalism and bilingualism.

### **Methodology**

I employ narrative inquiry as the research methodology to present stories from the participants in this study. In doing so, my goal is to help participants in this study voice their invaluable perspectives and mobilize their experiential knowledge as to how they understand the two federal policies, multiculturalism and bilingualism, in Canada. Connelly and Clandinin poetically write (1990), "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). Narrative inquiry requires researchers to understand the complex relationships and negotiations experienced by both participants and researchers when they are writing and analyzing narrative data (Clandinin, 2006). As such, narrative

inquiry is not just about writing stories; it pertains to how we understand our experience and knowledge – as evolving – with the help of narrative data. In light of these arguments, when presenting stories from participants of this study, I am also actively engaging in the process of reporting how they justify their particular truths in terms of the connection between multiculturalism, bilingualism and their life in Canada, their new home. Through engaging in this process, I also enhance to the trustworthiness of participants' stories.

### ***Research Contexts and Participants***

To understand how recent adult Chinese immigrants understand multiculturalism and bilingualism, this study recruited three participants currently residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and three participants currently living in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA). All six participants are above the age of eighteen and are immigrants from Mainland China who have obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship after 2010. Among the six participants, three of them self-identify as female and three of them self-identify as male (see Appendix A for Table 2). I conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews for participants to share their stories and experiences living in Canada as Chinese immigrants.

For the purpose of this study, I asked open-ended questions surrounding how participants view multiculturalism and bilingualism in their new home, Canada. As this study took place before COVID restrictions were lifted in Canada, all interviews were conducted virtually via zoom or phone calls. Verbal consents were acquired before the start of the interviews and all participants were well informed about their rights, contributions and potential risks in participating in this study. For privacy and anonymity concerns, I use pseudonyms to refer to all participants. No conflict of interests was identified in the research process.

### ***Data Collection and Data Analysis***

After obtaining ethics approval for this study, I sent recruitment letters (see Appendix B) in both English and Chinese on social forums that are frequently browsed by the Chinese communities in both GTA and GMA. I selected participants based on the criteria in the recruitment letter: Chinese immigrants from Mainland China who have arrived in Canada

after 2010; who are above age 18; and have obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship. I then had an initial conversation with interested participants and gave them additional information about the study. Making sure these potential participants were able to participate in this study, I sent them the consent forms via email in both English and Chinese.

This study collected data through two rounds of semi-structured interviews. Each interview was audio recorded and lasted about one hour. I confirmed the date and time for the interviews, based on the availability of each individual participant. To ensure participants could share their thoughts in a stress-free environment, I gave them the option to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. I considered offering a French option for participants. In the end, two of the participants chose to be interviewed in English, while other participants did the interview in Chinese Mandarin.

During both rounds of interviews, I asked open-ended questions for participants to share their stories and experiences openly. Then, I transcribed and translated the data for the next step in narrative inquiry – rewriting the data into research texts. Here, I re-organized and re-structured the original data into the format of stories. While rewriting participants' narratives, I referred to Braun and Clark's (2006, 2023) thematic analysis to find common themes to further organize these stories. As an example, many participants shared their understanding of diversity in Canada; I then used this common theme as a coded label "embracing diversity in Canada" for me to use relevant theoretical perspectives to analyze these stories. As a thematic analysis study involves many concrete steps such as presenting main themes, sub-themes and supporting codes/themes with participants' verbatim quotations (Braun & Clarke, 2006), my employment of thematic analysis in the current study loosely followed this framework. My focus on thematic analysis is to search for the common themes for data presentation in this study.

After confirming the themes for data presentation, I use a critical multiculturalism framework, as presented above, to discuss narratives from participants. Despite researchers' interests in theorizing a critical multiculturalism framework, few studies apply it to examine Chinese immigrants' understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada (Chan,

2009, 2011). As such, I highlight participants' voices, often unheard and untold by the public, to report their perspectives on multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada. While applying a critical multiculturalism framework, it is the hope of this study to use the experiential knowledge from research participants to uncover their lived realities and to question and challenge the current power relations in Canada (May, 2003). While discussing these stories from the participants, I attend to the complex relationships and negotiations they experience. In turn, these stories further validated and potentially expanded existing theories in the domain of multiculturalism and citizenship education.

### **Findings**

Employing narrative inquiry as the research methodology, the current study reports stories from participants and uses these stories as vehicles to uncover recent adult Chinese immigrants' understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism, two of the federal policies in Canada. Narrative inquiry not only focuses on writing and presenting the stories from the participants, but it also attends to the complex relationship and negotiations the participants have gone through. In doing so, these stories become valuable media for researchers and readers to understand the experiential knowledge of the underrepresented population. In the context of this study, the experiential knowledge from the participants will also help researchers verify and expand our current understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism, both of which represent fundamental theoretical and practical underpinnings in understanding citizenship education for new immigrants in Canada. Although participants in this study never met before, I connect their narratives, based on similar or contrasting themes of their stories with the focus to address the complex relationship and negotiations they have gone through. These common or contrasting themes will be further discussed using the critical multiculturalism framework this study adopts.

### ***Embracing Diversity in Canada***

Participants in this study showcased their understanding of diversity in Canada. To begin with, a common belief shared amongst participants is that diversity is a strength of Canadian society. Yixuan talks about various holidays across different cultures that are being

celebrated in Canada. To her, these holidays enrich the cultures in Canada and they show how blended Canadian cultures are. As an observant person, Yixuan likes to explore other cultures and how people express themselves in all kinds of ways. To her, being able to immerse herself in the diversity of Canada helps her find that sense of belonging in living here. Nanzhe also comments on diversity in Canada. He believes that what makes Canada Canada is everything outside of Canada, given that immigration plays a pivotal role in the social, cultural, political and educational infrastructures in Canada. Respect is a key word when he talks about multiculturalism in Canada. In his understanding, multiculturalism entails an ideal situation, where people from different cultural, ethnic and religious groups respect each other and share life with each other in a peaceful way.

Nonetheless, such a situation is not always the reality. As a health professional, Nanzhe shares strong sentiments in terms of how the health care system in Canada is more accessible to local Canadians, that is English- and French-speaking Canadians, compared to new immigrants, whose first language is neither English nor French. This viewpoint also showcases his critical take on bilingualism in Canada, which I will elaborate on later. Despite this critical viewpoint on the accessibility of the health care system, Nanzhe happily discloses how he and most people in Canada were able to learn from various cultures, which enhanced the mutual understanding among everyone in this country.

Wenbin feels the weight of this mutual understanding in his life in Canada. When he first arrived in Canada, he was able to receive translation assistance from public services, such as governmental organizations or banks. The help he had received from public sectors left him with a very good impression of the Canadian society: “Everyone was just so polite, and they genuinely wanted to help you.” Being able to use Mandarin in his day-to-day life in the GTA is a direct way for Wenbin to see how diversity is being embraced in Canada. When asked about his lived experience during the pandemic, Wenbin criticized people who did not respect governmental guidelines, such as wearing a mask. “But I think Canada is a democratic country, so people are entitled to their own opinions. I personally don’t feel offended by their inconsiderateness.” Wenbin added, immediately after sharing his critique.

His tolerance towards these inconsiderate behaviours embodies his understanding of respecting diversified opinions/behaviours.

Lingling and Huiru both shared their understanding of multiculturalism in terms of interpersonal relationships in Canada. Both of them prefer simple and uncomplicated interpersonal relationships in Canada and they are actively expanding their social network through work. Recognizing and respecting differences among people certainly is an interpretation of multiculturalism from both participants. As Lingling puts it:

I sometimes argue with my boss on a variety of topics and I do not have to reserve my opinions simply because he is my boss. I can voice my opinions and he might accept or reject. And it goes the same way when my boss expresses his opinions with me.

Huiru compliments Canadian life on the fact that people of different ages are respected in the workplace and the dating world, in Montreal. Her team recently hired two new employees, both of whom would be considered as unfit for the workplace if they were in China, given their ages. She jokingly shares: "I am in my 40s but I am still considered as young blood in my team, and I enjoy this feeling." Moreover, Huiru also believes that people in Canada are generally more open-minded and do not see age as a deal-breaker in dating, another interesting perspective in delineating multiculturalism from an immigrant's perspective.

Participants in this study also shared their concerns about diversity and multiculturalism in Canada. To begin with, ghettoization is an issue Shilun sees in Toronto:

Very often, one part of the city has a dense Chinese population, another part of the city might have bigger south Asian communities; the interactions between these districts are not much. I think, to build a shared understanding of Canada as a country, a country for all immigrants is something the government should be doing.

Shilun expresses his opinions in a concerned tone. Additionally, he does not like some of the labels the society puts on Chinese immigrants, such as political inactiveness. For him, media

plays a big role in creating these labels because they deliberately choose not to report stories about Chinese immigrants' political participation.

Nanzhe would agree with Shilun on this point because he also holds strong opinions in terms of how Canadian media manipulates people's emotions by amplifying geopolitical tensions between Canada and China. In doing so, stereotypes against Chinese immigrants were further enhanced. Yixuan does not like to be called the 'model immigrant' because that name comes with a lot of pressure. Having no intention in competing with immigrants from other background, she feels that she was dragged into this race of being the good immigrants unwillingly. "We do not want to be anyone's model; we do not want to be anyone's benchmark," Yixuan shares emotionally. On top of these unwarranted labels and tags, Wenbin also feels that voices from Chinese and Asian communities are not often heard by the mainstream society. Going through a legal case regarding a domestic dispute, Huiru also feels that her voice is neglected, especially by the legal system in Quebec. She said: "I think the social and political structures in Canada are very mature and rigid. It is very difficult to make any changes as an individual. This is just frustrating because nobody considers my voice and narrative."

### ***A Critical Examination of the Chinese Elements within Me***

One connotation of multiculturalism is that immigrants can keep their home culture(s) while accepting the culture(s) of the host society (Berry & Hou, 2017). From this perspective, keeping participants' Chinese-ness is an essential part in understanding and verifying multiculturalism in Canada. Despite their distinctive lived experiences, all participants shared their connections and attachments with the Chinese culture during the two rounds of interviews in this study. For example, Wenbin and Lingling miss the convenience of living in China. Even at midnight, they were able to hang out with friends in local restaurants, not to mention the advanced e-commerce system and fast delivery services in China. While both of them think that the public transit system in Canada needs improvement, they also understand the difficulties Canada faces, given its vast territory and relatively small population. This

understanding of the contextual factors in both countries is consistent in both participants' stories. Wenbin summarizes his experiences:

Having lived in China for more than two decades, it is difficult for me to change many habits I have adopted there overnight. Similarly, I cannot say I accept everything in Canada. Every country is different. You keep the good things and learn to adapt to your new life here.

Lingling describes her connections with Chinese culture as things that are in her DNA: "your memories of the food you ate and the languages you spoke ever since you were a child are unforgettable and uncuttable, regardless of where you live on this planet." Then she adds: "but this is not to say I won't accept new things while living in Canada; it comes with time and my exposure to the culture here."

Other participants also consider many contextual factors while critically examining their Chinese-ness in their participation in this study. Reflecting on her connections with Chinese culture, Yixuan thinks that hard work, diligence and competitiveness are elements of Chinese culture that she was brought up with and she still keeps these traits while living in Canada. For her, being a diligent and competitive hard worker is a way to contribute to the society, while seeking that breakthrough in her career. Speaking of the connection between housing prices and Asian immigrants, she thinks that owning your space and having that stability in life are some realities in Chinese culture. As such, Chinese people may have a sense of urgency about owning property when compared to other populations in Canada.

Having worked for a few years in China and obtained a master's degree there, Shilun compares himself to "a product that is being manufactured in a factory" in the job market. This metaphor is still applicable to his experiences living in Canada. Talking about the obstacles he has encountered, while seeking for employment in Canada, Shilun speculates that a potential reason for those difficulties was that the Chinese society and education system did not cultivate students into desirable products for western societies. For instance, being modest is considered a virtue in Chinese culture. However, this humble attitude from

Chinese immigrants can be a disadvantage for them in the job market because Canadian employers favour candidates who are outspoken and confident, the opposite of being humble.

Huiru agrees with Shilun regarding the hypothesis that not being outspoken is a potential reason why many Chinese immigrants have difficulty with career advancement. As a kind-hearted person, she is willing to offer advice to anyone, when it comes to internal promotion in her current company. However, none of her Chinese co-workers have approached her, so far. On top of hard work, diligence and humbleness, Nanzhe thinks that family bonding and respect for elders are some Chinese values he cherishes and keeps with him. Additionally, he also highlights Chinese communities' emphasis on education and lifelong learning, a point that all participants in the study agree on.

### ***Language Learning Experiences and Understanding of Bilingualism***

Interestingly, most participants in this study are either currently living in or have lived in Quebec before. As a province in Canada, using French as the only official language, Quebec's language policy is at the center of the discussion of bilingualism (Ballinger et al., 2022; Bourhis & Sioufi, 2017). As mentioned in the literature review, the creation of bilingualism in Canada was to address the tensions between the two founding nations, the English and French cultures in Canada. This policy also affects immigrants, as a connotation of Canadian multiculturalism pertains to the requirement for immigrants to learn an official language in Canada (Fleming, 2015). Participants in this study shared their invaluable perspectives on their language learning experiences, in English, in French or in both languages. In addition, they also shared their understanding of bilingualism in Canada.

Lingling, for example, uses both English and French in her daily life in Montreal. To her, being bilingual is important for her to get a job in Quebec. As a matter of fact, she took the government subsidised French courses for new immigrants and her overall experiences were good. Speaking of the content of the French courses, she revealed that daily usage of French, such as shopping or interpersonal communication, were the focus of the course, with very few topics being covered about political participation or other aspects of the life in Quebec. Wenbin and Huiru attest to this comment, as the two of them also find that language

courses for new immigrants emphasized survival English or French. Nonetheless, Lingling thinks that content about political or social participation would be too advanced for new immigrants, given that most of them were struggling to understand the basics of the language. Lingling also associates age with language learning ability. She thinks that children generally learn new languages better and faster than adults, given their ability to memorize things.

Shilun shares similar opinions to Lingling. He found learning English very difficult for him, given that he came to Canada in his late 20s. Additionally, Shilun thinks that learning a new language is a process of adopting a new mindset and a new way of thinking. However, the mindset one has formed and adopted in their given culture is quite influential and strong. Naturally, it will be hard for adults like him to give up some of the old mindsets, while learning a new language and culture.

Currently working in Montreal, Nanzhe uses both English and French at work. He admits that he does not have the time to take the French classes offered by the provincial government, even though he has known of the existence of this program for years. Nonetheless, he managed to speak both languages before moving to Montreal. Bilingualism, to Nanzhe, entails a mutual respect between the two founding nations. However, Nanzhe is also aware of that bilingualism is not the reality in Quebec, given its French (only) language policy. Though he understands the historical factors behind this policy, he also thinks that such a policy potentially gives privilege to the French speaking population while making public services, such as health care, less accessible to immigrants whose first language is not French.

Yixuan also knows of the government-sponsored French courses, but she took some French courses offered by her university in Montreal and quite enjoyed the program. Although she is not confident about her French speaking skills, this program helped her learn grammar and vocabulary in French, which made it possible for her to read all the French signs in Montreal. She understands that French is an essential part of Quebec life, both from a cultural and historical perspective. As she puts it:

[French] is part of the reason why Montreal is such a vibrant and diverse city that attracts people around the world. It gives the city a bit of a charm. Culturally, I understand this need for French to survive, as French is part of who they [Quebecers] are.

However, she also thinks that the language policy in Quebec has negatively affected the economy because many companies moved away or shifted their focus to English provinces. Yixuan made the decision to move from Montreal to Toronto after realizing her lack of ability in French might affect her career advancement.

Similarly, Shilun and Huiru also believe that the focus on French has limited economic thriving, both for the province of Quebec and immigrants who choose to reside in Quebec. Shilun made the same decision as Yixuan did, to move to Ontario for careers. When Huiru came to Canada as a landed immigrant, the officer at the border was very nice to her because she could speak French. Reflecting on her personal experiences, she admits that she is both a beneficiary and a victim of the language policy in Quebec. She was able to secure her current job at a multi-national company because she is able to use French at work. Nonetheless, she also encounters difficulties when it comes to internal promotions, since it appears to her that Quebec-born candidates with French as their first language were preferred over her. Having obtained a master's degree from a French university and with abundant international working experiences, Huiru feels that it was unfair when a 28-year-old woman was promoted to higher management and who oversaw more than 1000 employees because she is Quebecois with French as her first language. Huiru shares very passionately:

If she were to work in a different location in our company, she wouldn't stand a chance to get the same position as she has now. I think Quebec is losing a lot of talented and skilled workers due to this obsession with the protection of the French language.

## **Discussion**

Researchers have revealed that both multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada requests that immigrants adapt or assimilate to the mainstream culture of the host society

(Cervatiue & Ricento, 2012; Fleming, 2015; Guo, 2013). Given this point, voices of the underrepresented population are precious in helping us understand their lived realities which, in turn, offers researchers, policy makers and Canadians some clarity in terms of the connections between the two federal policies and immigrant life. Using a critical multiculturalism framework, this study presented stories of six adult Chinese immigrants in Canada to help them voice their critical opinions on multiculturalism and bilingualism. Notably, the stories and voices in this study have never been told or heard before. As such, I hope these untold stories and unheard voices may potentially challenge the inequity that discriminates against one group and enhances the privileges of another (Guo, 2013). I now use critical multiculturalism framework to discuss the narratives of the participants.

***Connotation of Canadian Multiculturalism: Various Perspectives from Chinese Immigrants***

Participants' critical opinions and their experiences of multiculturalism and bilingualism help us understand the connotations of both federal policies. Here, I use "connotation" to symbolize participants' in-depth knowledge and critical perspectives of the two federal policies. These connotations could potentially verify and expand our understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada, with reference to recent adult Chinese immigrants' experiential knowledge. Participants of this study offered many invaluable perspectives to refine our understanding of multiculturalism in Canada. To begin with, participants believe that diversity is a strength of Canada. This diversity pertains to the different cultures, languages and values in Canada (Joshee et al., 2016). Participants shared their fondness of the simple interpersonal relationships, the mutual respect among people and the multiple holidays celebrated in Canada, without any reservations. Some participants also explicated their understanding of respecting differences among people in their lives in Canada.

For instance, Huiru emphasized respecting people from different age groups within the workplace; Yixuan respected celebrations in different cultures and Wenbin understood democracy from a perspective of respecting different opinions. A commonality of all examples, here, lies in the fact that these were things participants have experienced in their

lives in Canada. From this perspective, participants in this study understand diversity and multiculturalism by experiencing them. Nonetheless, experience does not just come in one direction. Efforts from the host society to accommodate newcomers is also key in immigrants' experiences (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016; Thomson & Derwing, 2004). Multiculturalism encourages immigrants to remain close to both their heritage culture and the culture of the host society, which facilitates their integration into the host society (Berry, 2017; Berry & Hou, 2021). With this integration aim in mind, immigrants can critically assess their positions and find their place in their new home. Also with this logic, immigrants need to understand Canada and Canadian cultures to integrate into Canadian society. A positive experience will facilitate this understanding, as showcased by the participants' stories in this study. Similarly, negative experiences might increase immigrants' resistance to the cultures of the host society, which problematize the notion of multiculturalism (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018).

As participants in the Canadian society, Chinese immigrants also understand the flaws of Canadian multiculturalism. Shilun mentioned his concern regarding ghettoization in Toronto, a problem which scholars such as Bissoondath (2002) and Guo and Guo (2015) also pinpoint. Although Kymlicka (2016) attempted to resolve this concern by maintaining that ethnic groups actively participate in the political life of Canada, concerns for the marginalization of ethnic minorities still exist (Guo, 2017, Liu, 2019). Chinese immigrants, as their stories showcased, are active participants in Canada with critical analytical skills to examine their positions in their new home. For instance, both Shilun and Nanzhe associate the stereotypes against Chinese immigrants with media manipulation. Just as Shilun said, not all Chinese immigrants are uninterested in politics in Canada, but it is rare to hear stories of their political participation through media coverage.

Without a venue through which to voice their stories, mainstream narratives retain absolute power to enhance a specific impression or understanding against a group of people. As such, the tags and labels being placed on Chinese immigrants, through mainstream narratives, may enhance the stereotypes they receive in Canada. This is not unique to the

Chinese immigrant population. In fact, Ibrahim (2017) critically examines the notion of “becoming Black” in his study of African Canadians’ lived experiences. He found that, despite the diversified backgrounds, cultures, languages and religious beliefs among immigrants of African descent, they involuntarily adopt a “Black” identity while living in Canada, as if their skin colour triumphs over any individuality they have (Ibrahim, 2017, 2019). This finding potentially explains why Yixuan did not want to be labeled as a model immigrant because she should be the one to define who she is. Sadly, the voices from Chinese immigrants are often unheard and neglected. It is, therefore, important for scholars and researchers to showcase these voices and to be an avenue through which they can tell their stories to inform the public.

#### *A Critical Comparison between Immigrants’ Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness*

Another notable finding from this study is that all participants are actively trying to know more about Canada. While commenting on the advanced public transit system in China, both Wenbin and Lingling considered the vast territory and relatively small population in Canada, which revealed their understanding of the geographic and demographic information about Canada. Such an understanding validated the argument I have raised earlier; that is, Chinese immigrants are active participants with awareness of the specific situations in Canada. Furthermore, being able to consider the contextual factors in Canada, while making comparisons with their home country, also indicates that immigrants accept and integrate Canadian elements into their life (Hou et al., 2018). Yixuan’s critical take on the historical and cultural factors behind the position of French language and culture in Quebec was an embodiment of the social and cultural elements she understood while living in Canada. In the same vein, Shilun’s opinion that some Chinese immigrants are passionate about political participation in Canada reflected the political elements he recognized in his lived realities in Canada. Lingling and Huiru’s understanding of interpersonal relationships in Canada presented social elements in their Canadian lives. Finally, the comment from both Nanzhe and Huiru on how the language policy in Quebec potentially gives privileges to

certain groups of people demonstrated their critical perspectives of the social and political infrastructures in Canada.

Besides these Canadian elements in their stories, participants in this study also examined their Chinese-ness and its influence on their lives in Canada. To begin with, the emphasis on education plays a big role in Chinese immigrants' lives in Canada. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE] (n.d.), Chinese students take up 12% of the international study body in Canada, as of the census conducted in 2021. The majority of the participants in this study came to Canada as international students before obtaining their Canadian citizenship or permanent residency. This emphasis on education was not only reflected in their initial decision to choose Canada, but also on their commitment to continue learning the languages and cultures of their new home. Shilun believes that learning a new language is adopting a new way of thinking, a perspective that is consistent with the findings from Boroditsky's (2001, 2011) extensive research on the connections between language and thought. Norton (2016) posits that, by learning the official language of the new society, immigrants will have access to the social, civic, cultural and political life of the new society. In this logic, the adoption of a Canadian way of thinking while learning one of the official languages in Canada might assist immigrants to know more about Canada.

Another embodiment of participants' Chinese-ness in their life in Canada is how they view work. As immigrants under the skilled worker category (Government of Canada, 2022a), Chinese immigrants attach importance to hard work while living in Canada. A comparative study between the moral education programs in China and Quebec, by Cao (2018), finds that education in China underlines the significance of hard work. This emphasis on hard work potentially explains why Chinese immigrants deem economic integration as an important aspect of their lives in Canada. Additionally, they also examine factors that hinder them from career advancement in Canada. For instance, Shilun and Huiru believe that projecting confidence would assist them in making a breakthrough in their careers. Such a belief is, again, based on their contact with and understanding of the cultures in Canada.

Additionally, this belief also discloses Chinese immigrants' critical acknowledgement of their Chinese-ness in their Canadian lives.

### ***Connecting Languages and Immigrants' Lived Realities***

From both the federal and provincial levels, language-training programs were offered to help new immigrants navigate their lives in Canada. The LINC program, for instance, is considered to be the citizenship education program for new immigrants because of its dual purpose of teaching the English language and integrating newcomers (Morgan & Fleming, 2009). One major criticism of the LINC program is its lack of citizenship content, such as the word "vote," an important topic regarding democracy and citizenship rights (Fleming, 2019). Although in the province of Quebec, a separate French program was offered; given that Quebec has the autonomy to choose its own immigrants (Gouvernement du Québec, 2023; Government of Canada, 2022b), the same criticism applies. Lingling's story revealed the absence of political participation in Quebec's language program for new immigrants. Moreover, Wenbin and Huiru voiced their concern regarding the focus on survival English or French in these classes, mirroring another question scholars have raised about the effectiveness of language programs in helping immigrants learn about Canadian society (Derwing, 2017; Joshee & Derwing, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2004). Although Lingling justifies the absence of political elements in the program by sharing how most new immigrants still struggle with the basics of the French language, such a view potentially validates Fleming's (2015) argument that "legitimate citizens are those who evoke whiteness and the ability to use standardised and high-status versions of English [French in the case of Quebec]" (p. 48).

Another interesting finding in this study pertains to participants' understanding of the language policy in Quebec. The language policy in Quebec has a complex historical and political background (Nelde, 2017). Nonetheless, this study focuses on immigrants' understanding of this language policy. Living and working in Quebec, Huiru and Nanzhe both believe that the focus on French language enhances the privilege of certain populations in Quebec. For both of them, the French speaking-population enjoys the privilege while

immigrants like them, whose first language is not French, encounter visible difficulties in accessing public services and opportunities for career advancement. This point of view is well aligned with the major argument of a critical multiculturalism framework. That is, multiculturalism should aim to remove barriers of inequality that discriminate against one group and enhance the privilege of another (Guo, 2013).

However, such an account of the language policy in Quebec might be simplistic. Perhaps for Huiru and Nanzhe, as well as for other non-French speaking immigrants in Quebec, the belief regarding the privilege associated with French ability is valid. Nonetheless, at the federal level, it is arguably true that the Francophone community is in a minority position (Kymlicka, 1998). Consequently, the privileges associated with the ability to speak French require some delicate discussions.

Going back to Chinese immigrants' understanding of the language policy in Quebec, Yixuan and Shilun associate Quebec's language policy with its economic and job opportunities. Both participants received their higher education in Quebec but decided to move to Ontario for personal development and growth. Yixuan's story showcased her understanding of some historical and cultural factors behind bilingualism in Canada. Nonetheless, investing their time and energy in learning an additional language sounded less appealing to most of the participants. The power relations between English and French in Canada might result in a scholarly explanation of immigrants' motivation in learning an additional language. Future studies should explore this direction to mobilize knowledge in bilingualism and language rights.

## **Conclusion**

This study tells stories from six adult Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada after 2010 to showcase their understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada. As active participants in Canada, recent Chinese immigrants experience both multiculturalism and bilingualism in their lives, and they internalize these experiences as valuable knowledge to guide their lives in Canada. Despite some concerns which participants

have regarding multiculturalism and bilingualism, they demonstrate their nuanced perspectives and opinions regarding both federal policies in Canada.

To begin with, recent Chinese immigrants understand multiculturalism from multiple perspectives. They believe diversity is a connotation of multiculturalism. To further deconstruct this diversity in Canada, they talk about interpersonal relationships, holidays and celebrations, as well as a mutual understanding that is built upon democracy in Canada. At the same time, recent Chinese immigrants are aware of their lived reality in Canada. That is, as a minority group and a marginalized population, their voices are often neglected by the mainstream society. Such a reality validates the need for a critical multiculturalism to remove barriers of inequity and injustice against one specific group of population (Guo, 2013). Nonetheless, their criticism of thematic topics such as ghettoization, media manipulation, and labeling and stereotyping minority groups prove that they hold critical assessments of the social, cultural, political and economic conditions in Canada. This critical assessment also indicates their willingness to learn more about Canada, which is manifested in their desire to participate more in the Canadian society.

Furthermore, while accepting Canadian cultures actively, recent Chinese immigrants also engage in critical comparisons between their Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness. With evaluations of the contextual factors in Canada, participants showcase their understanding of the causes of many social and political issues facing all Canadian. Additionally, they base their criticism of these issues on their lived realities in Canada. This proves that recent Chinese immigrants try to integrate into Canada through active learning. This active learning is also a viable explanation about their belief in educational investment while living in Canada. Another important example of the critical comparison between their Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness lies in their motivation to work hard in their new life in Canada. In doing so, they contribute to their efforts to integrate into Canada economically, socially and culturally.

Related to their understanding of bilingualism in Canada, participants understand the importance of learning either or both official languages in Canada. Some participants took

the language learning programs offered by the government, such as LINC. Their critiques of these programs, such as the lack of citizenship content and a focus on survival English/French, validates scholarly perspectives on the ineffectiveness and inefficacy of these programs (Derwing, 2017; Fleming, 2015, 2019). Many participants in this study resided in or are currently residing in Quebec. Although some of them understand the historical, cultural and political backgrounds of the language policy in the province, they also express their criticisms about such a policy. Specifically, some of them believe the focus on French language and cultures might enhance the privilege of certain populations in Quebec. This belief aligns with a goal of critical multiculturalism to challenge the superiority and privilege of a dominant group (Guo, 2013; Kincheloe & Steinberg; Kubota, 2004). In association with their desire for economic integration, participants also express their concern over the implication of the language policy on the economic conditions in Quebec. These perspectives, again, showcase that Chinese immigrants actively participate in social, cultural, economic and political affairs in Canada.

Chinese immigrants express their understanding of multiculturalism and bilingualism based on their experiences of living in Canada. The new perspectives they have offered, such as a focus on life-long learning and hard work, might potentially supplement literature in the study of Canadian cultures. Their desire to participate more in domestic affairs in Canada is real. Policy makers, scholars, educators and the general public should listen to their stories and find more ways to include Chinese immigrants in the building of democracy and multiculturalism in Canada.

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## Appendix A

**Table 2**

*Participant's Demographics*

Name	Arrived in	Legal status in Canada	Resides in	Self-identified as
Huiru	2010	Permanent resident	Montreal, Quebec	Female
Lingling	2014	Permanent resident	Montreal, Quebec	Female
Nanzhe	2015	Permanent resident	Montreal, Quebec	Male
Shilun	2015	Permanent resident	Toronto, Ontario	Male
Wenbin	2010	Citizen	Toronto, Ontario	Male
Yixuan	2014	Permanent resident	Mississauga, Ontario	Female

*Note:* All names are pseudonyms in order to protect participants' identity. Legal status was based on the information provided, while participating in the current study.

## Appendix B Recruitment Letter

English version

Hello,

My name is Xingtian Cao, I am from Faculty of Education at University of Ottawa. I will conduct a research project to examine the lived experiences of adult (18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010 and have since obtained either a permanent residency status or citizenship in Canada. This study will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chitpin at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I intend to collect stories from you by conducting interviews. These stories are collected for the purpose of my Ph.D. dissertation in citizenship education and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

There will be two interviews in this study. Each interview should last about 1 hour. You can choose to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. The interview will be scheduled for a date and time that are convenient for you. I will conduct the interview virtually using software such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams. If you prefer, the interview can be conducted over the phone or through Wechat. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded in order for me to review and transcribe for research purposes. I would like to emphasize that your participation, that is, agreeing to allow me to use the recording of our interviews is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time. Also, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to withdraw from the study and prefer that I do not use your interview data, I will remove it from the research. I will offer you opportunity to review the narratives I write based on our interview. You are more than welcome to make suggestions to add, modify, or delete these narratives.

Now, if you agree to participate, please review and sign the consent form and return it to me. The form has contact information of myself and my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Chitpin, if you ever had any questions about this study.

Sincerely,

Xingtian Cao

Chinese version

您好！

我叫曹兴潭，是渥太华大学教育学院的一名博士研究生。在我的导师 **Stephanie Chitpin** 博士的指导下，我即将展开一项关于成年华人移民人生经历的研究。这项研究旨在了解自 2010 年以后移民至加拿大，并且获得永久居民身份或者加拿大国籍的华人移民的人生经历。通过访谈的方式，我希望可以收集您的故事。这些故事会被用在我的关于公民教育的博士论文以及相关的文章发表里。

本研究涉及两次访谈。每次访谈大约需要一个小时。您可以选择用英文或中文参与访谈。访谈的时间和日期会根据您方便的时间安排。我会使用 **Zoom** 或者 **Microsoft Teams** 来进行访谈。如果您愿意，我也可以通过电话或者微信进行访谈。在您的同意基础上，我会对访谈进行录音用以转录、回顾等研究目的。我想特别指出您的参与，也就是同意我访谈您并且录音，是完全自愿的。您可以选择随时停止访谈。同时，您不需要回答您不想回答的问题。如果您选择中途退出这项研究，并且希望我不使用您的访谈内容，我会删除相关信息。访谈之后我会将您的分享以故事的方式呈现出来。我会和您分享写好的故事，您可以增加、删改我写的内容。

如果您同意参与这项研究，请您在阅读后签署知情同意书，并且将签好的文件返送与我。知情同意书内附有我和我导师的联系方式，如果您对这项研究有任何问题，欢迎随时联系我们。

感谢！

曹兴潭

## Chapter Four:

### **Becoming Justice-Oriented Citizens in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants' Lived Experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

#### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a collectively shared experience among people around the world. Many research projects reported findings from different perspectives that were relevant to the global pandemic. Nonetheless, few studies focused on the lived realities of Chinese immigrants around the world. During this trying time, anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiments were prevalent in many countries, given the dominant narrative that China was responsible for the world-wide spread of the coronavirus. In this context, Chinese immigrants' experiences of their host society during the pandemic, would assist in updating literature in citizenship education. This study adopts Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its theoretical framework to present the voices from six recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada. Using narrative inquiry, this study tells counter-stories from the participants that challenge the dominant narratives. The findings reveal that racism against Chinese immigrants proliferated in Canada during the pandemic. The study also reveals, as active participants and citizens in Canadian society, Chinese immigrants offer their critical opinions on COVID policies in Canada. With an understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada, Chinese immigrants express their desire to make Canada a more just and democratic place to live. The study also finds that Chinese immigrants aspire to become justice-oriented citizens in Canada.

*Keywords:* Chinese immigrants in Canada; COVID-19 pandemic; CRT; narrative inquiry; citizenship education

## Introduction

This study was conducted between 2021 and 2022, when most countries were still declaring the coronavirus as a national health crisis (e.g., Administration for Strategic Preparedness & Response, 2021; Government of Canada, 2021). While the COVID-19 pandemic created tremendous threats to the world, it also placed the Chinese community, as well as members of the Eastern Asian community, at the forefront of pandemic discourse. Many narratives in the West accused China of being responsible for the outbreak (e.g., Wen, 2023) and these negative attributes, unfortunately, were, and are still being projected onto Chinese communities around the globe. In Canada alone, racial attacks against Eastern Asian communities have increased significantly since the pandemic (Furey, 2020; Heng, 2020; Xu, 2020). Such attacks have created and will continue to create tangible damage to Chinese immigrants across Canada. Consequently, for these and other reasons, the integration of Chinese immigrants into Canadian society remains a problematic matter.

Given this background, this study examines the lived experiences of adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010, with a focus on their lived realities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Employing narrative inquiry as the research methodology, this study recounts narratives of six Chinese immigrants, while attending to the complex relationships and negotiations they experienced during the global pandemic in Canada (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2019). The hope is that these stories would inform Canadians with regard to Chinese immigrants' experiential knowledge about their relationship with Canada. In turn, such knowledge mobilization would enhance mutual understanding between Chinese immigrants and the multicultural Canadian family.

Immigrants are crucial components of Canadian population, given that Canada remains as a popular destination for immigrants from around the world (Fleras, 2014). Immigrants with Chinese ethnic backgrounds make up 4.7 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2022). Although representing a significant portion of the population in Canada, studies on how Chinese immigrants understand their relationship with Canada yield very few results (Guo, 2015). Being a Chinese immigrant and a novice scholar

in Canada, I naturally combined citizenship education with Chinese immigration to Canada as my research interest. Living in Canada as an immigrant with a Chinese background, I always sense that my Chinese-ness is the most obvious attribute that has characterized me since Day One. After all, I discovered that people referred to me as “that Chinese guy.” The more time I spend in Canada, however, the more my Chinese-ness appears to surpass all other achievements and characteristics I may claim. From a narrative perspective, my aim for this study is to unpack this “new” intersectionality, the *métissage* (Donald, 2009) of what it means to live among the tensions of belonging here (Canada) and there (China) among Chinese immigrants.

As I position this study in the domain of citizenship education, I first present literature to define the notion of citizenship and citizenship education. In the current study, the definition of citizenship and citizenship education focuses on a perspective that is inclusive, of which I will elaborate more in the next section. I also connect citizenship education with Chinese immigrants in the literature review. Inspired by the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, this research employs narrative inquiry to present counter-stories from six adult Chinese immigrants to embody their voices within the public sphere. I then use scholarly perspectives to discuss the narratives of these research participants. This study aims to answer two research questions; 1) What are the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada? and 2) How may recent Chinese immigrants’ lived experiences inform education, social and political change in Canada?

### **Citizenship Education and Chinese Immigrants in Canada**

This study situates itself in the domain of citizenship education research. Before we talk about the connection between citizenship education and Chinese immigrants in Canada, it is necessary to first present definitions of citizenship. Although debates about the definition of citizenship have existed for a long time (Connolly, 1993; Pinet, 2006), this study delineates such a definition, using recent literature.

Broom (2012) writes that citizenship refers to the legal membership of the nation-state in which the individual was born or chose to live. To define citizenship, we need to first

understand the connotations of a nation-state. Anderson (1991) defines a nation as an imagined community in which one particular cultural group lives. A state on the other hand is “a structural form of governance that is demarcated through spatial boundaries” (Broom, 2012, p. 9). Hence, a state normally confines itself within a political boundary, but a nation connects to cultural boundaries. Paleri (2014) defines a nation-state as a sovereign state whereby most of its subjects are united by factors which define a nation, such as language or common descent. In our world today, a state could accommodate more than one nation, as a result of globalization and immigration (Kymlicka, 2001). These nation-states qualify as multinational or multicultural states. As such, citizenship, from its legal definition, refers to a shared membership among individuals in a nation-state or a multinational/multicultural state.

Historically, *jus soli* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood) represent two major frameworks regarding conceptions of citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999; Osborne, 2001). The *jus soli* (right of the soil) framework portrays citizenship from a legal rather than a cultural perspective. Commonly referred to as birthright citizenship (Solodoch & Sommer, 2018), an individual does not have to belong to the cultural or linguistic group historically associated with being a citizen of the nation. *Jus sanguinis* (right of the blood), on the other hand, emphasizes whether one is born or assimilated into a particular society (Fleming, 2015). Many countries today employ both *jus soli* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood) frameworks in defining citizenship. More recently, Marshall (1950) developed a model of civil, political and social citizenship in his *Citizenship and Social Class*. Within this model, individual freedom, and political and social rights were some perspectives employed to understand citizenship.

Turner (1997, 2009) criticized Marshall’s (1950) social citizenship framework given its omission of diversity and feminist perspectives. Currently, a more inclusive definition of citizenship, which removes barriers of exclusion from citizenship, as well as including different ethnicities, genders, sexualities and social classes, is needed. To this end, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) advocate for a justice-oriented citizenship instead. Justice-oriented citizens “critically assess social, political and economic structures and explore the

root cause of problems” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240). In so doing, justice-oriented citizens aim to “change established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240). By attending to the root causes of injustice in our society, justice-oriented citizens lead systems and structural changes that contribute to a more democratic and just notion of citizenship. As such, this study uses Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) justice-oriented citizens to define and contextualize the notion of citizenship education.

One of the primary goals of the early stages of public school was to cultivate good citizens who would contribute to national unity (Carr et al., 2014; Sandel, 2009). Today’s citizenship education, however, shifts its focus to critical thinking and recognizing pluralism and diversity. MacMullen (2014) introduces a “patriotic love” and a “civic identification” to distinguish between two definitions of patriotism (MacMullen, 2014, p. 74). Patriotic love refers to the love of the polity, whereas civic identification pertains to a critical stance when an individual reveals a certain felt relationship to the agency of the polity of an organized society in question (MacMullen, 2014). His support of civic identification can be translated into citizenship education. That is, citizenship education should not only focus on teaching content that seeks to arouse a collective pride among students, but it should also introduce topics that are shameful in a nation’s history to create space for critical reflections.

Besides critical thinking, thematic topics such as pluralism, multiple identities and multiculturalism have become key concepts in defining today’s citizenship education (Broom, 2011). In the context of Canada, McDonough (2003) believes that an understanding of cultural diversity is crucial to resolving potential conflicts between majority and minority groups. Moreover, Kymlicka (2001) argues that citizenship education is “not simply a matter of knowledge of political institutions and constitutional principles; it is also a matter of how we think about and behave towards others, particularly those who differ from us in their race, religion, class etc.” (p. 304).

Banks (2009) argues that citizenship education should help students to develop a commitment to act to change the world and make it more just and democratic. Such an

argument is in accordance with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) justice-oriented citizenship. Related to the current study, which links citizenship education and immigration, the necessity to address diversity in multinational states calls for more progressive action in citizenship education – Global Citizenship Education (GCE) – an educative goal that opens up the nation-state and its borders. Global citizenship, according to OXFAM (n.d.), pertains to the belief that we can all make a difference. This definition of citizenship centres upon unity, based on a shared membership among individuals. Expanding on this definition, Banks (2017) argues that educators should find ways to cultivate a sense of shared identity among school populations and future citizens. This shared identity is based on an understanding of our relationships with others. As such, citizenship education not only focuses on teaching facts about a nation-state, but also aims to empower students with an understanding of their relationships with the environment and the people around them, both in and beyond the nation-state's borders (Cao, 2021). Furthermore, citizenship education also entails individual abilities to pinpoint the root causes of many environmental and societal problems that we face and to find solutions to make the world we live in more just and democratic. In this logic, understanding the connotations of being Chinese immigrants in Canada requires immigrants to situate themselves within the historical, cultural, political, social and environment contexts in Canada. Based on an understanding of these contextual factors, Chinese immigrants may form an understanding of their relationships with others (the local population) in their new home, Canada. This process of understanding is the focus of this study. As such, the current study is well situated within citizenship education research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study employs CRT as a theoretical framework to examine the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. CRT scholars (Delgado, 1995; Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009 etc.) believed that racism is an embedded feature in the structure of our social order, making it appear normal to people within this structure. Additionally, racism is permanent in the social and political structure of North American societies (Bell, 1992, 1995; Milner IV, 2017). CRT scholars have criticized

this colourblind ideology because, by creating and imposing a colourblindness ideology, racial issues and the voices of people of colour may be silenced (Crenshaw, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). As such, eradicating racism and oppression of any kind is a challenging but needful mission for CRT theorists (Crenshaw, 1988; Sung & Coleman, 2019).

CRT scholars call for a drastic change in the structure of our society, which has been entrenched within the concept of White Supremacy. Such bold advocacy is based on their argument that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2023). In addition, CRT theorists insist on a critique of liberalism, based on its inefficacy for creating the sweeping changes that anti-racism requires from our citizens and our society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT scholars trust the experiential knowledge of people of colour in analyzing our society and its structure (Delgado, 1990). As such, enabling and embodying the voices of people of color is one of the major objectives and ways to uncover and overcome racism. As Ladson-Billings (1998) argued, “the ‘voice’ component of CRT provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial redress” (p. 14).

In adopting CRT as a theoretical framework, this study presents stories from six recent Chinese immigrants in Canada to uncover the realities they are living during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these presentations, this study shares recent Chinese immigrants’ experiential knowledge about their relationship with Canadian society, which may ultimately contribute to citizenship education research. The employment of CRT in this study also enables the voices of Chinese immigrants in Canada. These voices, often unheard and untold in academia and the public sphere, will help everyone in Canada to better understand Chinese immigrants with the latter’s perspectives and narratives. Further, CRT provides theoretical pillars to pinpoint racism and its roles in the relationship between recent Chinese immigrants and Canada. Lastly, CRT aligns with the research methodology that this study employs – narrative inquiry – a qualitative research methodology, which highlights stories in our knowing. CRT scholars (e.g., Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2023;

Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009, 2023) often employ storytelling in their studies to intentionally challenge the narratives of those in power with narratives from people of colour. I will further elaborate on the research methods in the following section.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts narrative inquiry to present six stories from participants to uncover their experiences as Chinese immigrants in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. Narrative inquiry centralizes the significance of stories in shaping how we acquire, internalize and mobilize knowledge (Clandinin et al., 2018). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p. 2). Underlying this claim is the idea that narrative inquiry centralizes the role of experience in shaping how we come to know. Narrative inquiry engages with the study of people’s experiences and tries to understand “the narrative structures that characterize ours’ and others’ lives” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 51). In doing so, stories become tangible vehicles for us to view the complex relationships between individuals’ experiences and the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives within which those individuals live and have lived. By attending to and interpreting these complex relationships and negotiations, narrative researchers also enhance the trustworthiness of narrative data.

I use Braun and Clark’s (2006, 2013, 2023) thematic analysis to organize and present participants’ stories in this study. I follow their six-step thematic analysis framework, namely; familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up to present narrative data. As a thematic analysis study involves many concrete steps such as presenting main themes, sub-themes and supporting codes with participants’ verbatim quotations (Braun & Clarke, 2006), my employment of thematic analysis is rather in a loose sense. My goal of employing thematic analysis is to search for suitable themes to present the narrative data in this study. Then, I use CRT framework and scholarly perspectives in citizenship education to embody the voices of participants, as well as to discuss the narrative data. The stories and voices of the participants will help

researchers and the public understand the lived realities of this underrepresented population which, in turn, may verify and expand theories in relation to Chinese immigrants' integration in Canada.

### ***Research Participants***

There are six participants in this study (see Appendix A for Table 3). I posted recruitment letters (see Appendix B) in both English and Chinese on popular social forums among Chinese communities in the Toronto and Montreal areas. The rationale of recruiting participants in both cities was simple; both cities host relatively large Chinese immigrant communities from Mainland China. Finally, three participants from Toronto and three participants from Montreal confirmed their participation in this study. All participants were above the age of eighteen when they participated in this study. Among them, three participants self-identified as women and three of them self-identified as men. For the sake of privacy confidentiality and anonymity concerns, I created aliases for each participant when referring to them in this article. All participants met the selection criteria in the recruitment letter; they are all adult immigrants from Mainland China who have obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship after 2010.

### ***Data Collection and Data Analysis***

This study collected data through two rounds of semi-structured interviews. As all interviews took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, online interviews or phone calls were introduced for participants' safety and health concerns. After confirming their willingness to participate in this study, I sent consent forms in both English and Chinese to all participants. I acquired verbal consent from all participants at the beginning of the first interview. The interview, as well as the verbal consent, were audio recorded. I also ensured that all participants were aware of their participatory rights in this study.

To encourage participants to share their stories in a worry-free environment, I gave them the option to be interviewed in English or Chinese, or a mix of both languages, depending on the preference of the participants. A French option was discussed with participants currently residing in Montreal. Nonetheless, they chose English or Chinese for

the interview to share their authentic feelings. During both rounds of interviews, I asked open-ended questions for participants to share their experiences and stories openly. For instance, to understand participants' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, as Chinese immigrants in Canada, I included the following question in the interview guide, "How do you feel about being a Chinese immigrant in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic? Are there any stories you would like to share?" The goal was to give participants opportunities to share their stories and voice their opinions freely and openly.

After the two rounds of interviews, I transcribed and translated the data, as the first step of data analysis. Then, I rewrote the data into stories by re-structuring the transcription and translation texts. These stories then became the research texts of the current study. Further, I used Braun and Clark's (2006, 2013, 2023) thematic analysis framework to regroup the research texts, based on distinctive themes arising from each individual's stories. To present the data, I used counter-storytelling to share and mobilize participants' experiential knowledge in the hopes of challenging narratives from the dominant mainstream culture. These counter-stories from participants align the current research within larger social and educational contexts, which potentially enhance the trustworthiness of narrative data in this study (Clandinin et al., 2007). Finally, I used the CRT framework and citizenship education scholarship to critically discuss the findings of this study.

## **Findings**

Narrative inquiry researchers use a variety of creative ways to present data of their research. For instance, CRT scholars use counter-storytelling to share stories from the underrepresented population and to challenge the dominant narratives in the mainstream culture (Miller et al., 2020). As newcomers, voices from Chinese immigrants are often neglected in this mainstream culture. For instance, Chinese immigrants are often considered to be silent and politically inactive participants by the mainstream society in North America (Yi, 2020). A counter-story, in this case, would share examples to showcase and prove Chinese immigrants' passion for political engagement and their aspirations for justice. Inspired by this notion of counter-storytelling, I present the data of this study in the form of

counter-stories. I share the narratives of each participant, individually, with distinctive themes identified through thematic analysis, as previously noted.

***Nanzhe – A Shift from Curiosity to Suspicion***

Before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of coronavirus as a global pandemic, Nanzhe visited his family and friends in China. Upon his arrival in Canada, he started to wear a mask to protect others at work. As a clinical researcher, he knew the importance of wearing a mask to slow the spread of a respiratory virus like the coronavirus. Unfortunately, this gesture of his was not appreciated by some of his co-workers. He was confronted by his colleagues because they believed he was spreading fear by wearing a mask. Nanzhe felt the weight of his Chinese-ness during the COVID-19 pandemic not only because of this confrontation by his colleagues, but also because of a suspicious feeling projected onto him by others in his life. One day, he received an email from his workplace to warn employees about the possible repercussions of leaking their research data on COVID vaccines to other nations. Although the email didn't mention any specific countries, Nanzhe felt that everyone knew which country it was referring to.

As a researcher and a medical professional, Nanzhe was disappointed that many people in Canada would jump to conclusions when they read posts from media or social media that lacked any scientific verification. One of the results of this lack of scientific verification, during the pandemic, was that people started to feel suspicious about Chinese communities in Canada. Nanzhe shared:

In the past, Canadians were curious to know more about the Chinese culture and people. However, it is like they are more suspicious of us now because of the pandemic. I can sense that people are trying to figure out if I am pro-China or pro-West when they talk to me. I don't appreciate this suspicion from them.

***Yixuan – We have to Move on with Our Lives***

Speaking of the COVID measures and restrictions in Canada, Yixuan believed that the federal government and provincial government were being too strict. Yixuan described the beginning of the pandemic as a “confusing and amending process.” She thought that

Canada did quite well at the beginning of the pandemic but, later on, she believed that Canada remained very strict in its prevention measures. “Even when countries like the US started to lift their COVID restrictions in 2021, Canada was still upholding relatively strict COVID policies,” Yixuan asserted in a frustrating tone. “But I felt that these policies have nothing to do with my ethnic background. I think, overall, people would experience the same thing no matter what their racial background is,” Yixuan added, voicing her take on the COVID measures in Canada.

Yixuan was also aware of the narratives in Canada that the pandemic was a fault of the Chinese government and Chinese people, at the beginning of the pandemic: “I think these narratives were mostly within the groups who didn't like the Chinese in the first place. Now they have one more excuse to amplify that [emotion].” Speaking of anti-Asian racism, Yixuan was saddened when she read news or heard stories of Asian victims, but she didn't experience it personally. “I focus on what I do, and these stories just make me think about how to protect myself,” Yixuan added. Now that the COVID restrictions have been lifted in Canada, Yixuan was content with the fact that life has moved on. Although Yixuan maintained that there are crises other than anti-Asian racism in Canada, she was certain that the existence of racism remains prominent. “It's just like the trends of attention have been taken over,” Yixuan shared, even though she ended her story with a rather positive conclusion, “There is always crisis in the place where we live, but life still goes on.”

### ***Shilun – Liberal COVID Restrictions in Canada***

Unlike Yixuan, who believed that the COVID restrictions in Canada were strict, Shilun spoke highly of the liberal COVID restrictions in Canada. In his understanding, social distancing, vaccines and masks were the major COVID measures on top of working from home and the closure of public facilities in Canada. Such kinds of COVID measures were relatively liberal, with minimal effect on the economy and people's lives. Shilun was not shy to share his preference of and support for these kinds of COVID measures.

“The dynamic zero-COVID policy in China could contain the virus temporarily, but it is quite impactful in terms of the economy,” Shilun commented on the COVID measures in

China. Shilun also thinks that a potential reason for the long-lasting COVID situation in Canada was that some Canadians didn't follow the COVID measures from the government. This was, again, in comparison to China because most people were implementing governmental COVID policies strictly. "I think [the] Canadian government could do better. If they take [a] stricter stance in implementing these measures, it would have controlled the spread of the virus better," Shilun shared; another contradictory comment, compared to Yixuan's belief.

Speaking of those who didn't follow government COVID measures in Canada, Shilun acknowledged that there was not much impact on him. Shilun was slightly concerned over the hatred against Chinese communities at the beginning of the pandemic. Nonetheless, he revealed that he did not receive any racial attacks because he was mostly working from home. That being said, the economy is a primary concern for him, as he believed that, even with a relatively loose restrictive policy in Canada, the damage COVID has created for the Canadian economy was tangible.

### ***Wenbin – It's All the Same***

Working in restaurants, Wenbin shared his concerns regarding the difficulty of finding jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people were losing jobs due to business shutdowns. Naturally, the governmental assistance programs became a lifeline for Wenbin. In his understanding, most people in Canada are unable to save money, which is different than the situation in China. As such, if the government did not step in, many people would not be able to support themselves financially. Wenbin used the word "considerate" to describe his feelings towards the benefit and allowance from the government, intended to assist people during the pandemic.

Wenbin noticed that a small fraction of the population was not following the suggestions from the government, such as wearing a mask to slow the spread of the virus, but he did not give it too much attention. Though he recognized that persuading the uncooperative people was the right thing to do, he chose to stay away from these people. For him, those who chose to not respect government regulations about COVID simply showcased

their impoliteness and inconsiderateness towards other people in Canada. Wenbin said that he did not receive any unfair treatment from others during the pandemic, but he heard from news channels about the anti-Chinese racism and the Stop Asian Hate movement. Although he encountered difficulties in finding jobs, he felt that everything was quite normal for him and he didn't face any major life struggles during the pandemic. Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, Wenbin thinks that everyone needs to go back to their lives. After all, "we need protection for our economy and for our lives," Wenbin shared.

### ***Huiru – Strong Opinions Towards Government Benefits***

Speaking of the COVID policies in Quebec, Huiru wished there could be more consistency. Huiru asked during the interview:

People were exhausted by all the different COVID policies. For instance, the vaccine passport was such a big thing at the beginning, then they [the provincial government] just canceled the program out of blue. Where is the credibility of the government in this case?

At the beginning of the pandemic, Huiru was a member of the e-commerce team in a big supermarket chain in Montreal. Due to the provincial-wide lockdown, many people had to rely on grocery delivery, which led to a surge of orders in Huiru's work. Simply put, the number of orders they received per day, during the early stages of the pandemic, were 25 times more than previously. Nevertheless, all they got from the company was a two-dollar hourly rate raise. Given this background, many employees left the job and relied on governmental aid instead. This was frustrating for Huiru and her team members because they, then, had to take on the workload of five people. Extra workloads meant more chances to make mistakes. Huiru received a four hundred dollar fine from the company, due to some errors she made in the orders. To make it even worse, Huiru had a severe eye infection at that time and needed to see a doctor urgently. However, the company requested a doctor's note for sick leave even when they didn't give her the time off to see a doctor.

All pressures combined, Huiru made the decision to quit that job. To her, the company did not care for the wellbeing of their employees and their hard work was not being

recognized. Huiru didn't skip a day of work during the pandemic, and she didn't accept a penny of governmental aid. She thinks that the governmental benefit was unfair for hard-working individuals like her. Meanwhile, she was especially empathetic towards the international students on her team because neither were they eligible for the benefit due to their legal status, nor did they have the seniority to pick good shifts at their workplace.

### ***Lingling – An Unsafe Feeling During the Pandemic***

The weight of discrimination and racial stereotypes was obvious to Lingling during the COVID-19 pandemic. She saw graffiti on the stone lions in Chinatown with slurs and swearing, aimed at Chinese people. People would give her comments such as: "You people are responsible for the spread of the virus," or "Thanks to China, we are all dragged into this mess." Living in the downtown area of Montreal where the population is quite dense, Lingling felt unsafe and scared during the COVID pandemic. Lingling shared, in a very concerned tone:

Till now we are still trying to understand this virus and how it started. Therefore, I cannot say I agree or disagree with them. But the reality was that I was a bit scared because I did not know how to respond to these kinds of comments.

Speaking of COVID policies in China and Canada, Lingling summarizes the differences this way, "One is too strict; one is too liberal." Lingling believed that COVID measures were consistently strict in China. In her hometown, a city-wide lockdown would be implemented when three active cases were reported. With a universal health care system, Lingling asserted that the medical system in Canada can be quite fragile when crises like the pandemic happen. She believed that the government was panicking at the beginning of the pandemic. Lingling said:

In the beginning, Covid measures were relatively strict in Canada. But it was difficult to get everything under control; then, the government chose to loosen the restrictions. When more cases were reported, they would introduce new lockdowns. The COVID policies were somehow inconsistent in Canada.

Now that we are in the third year of the pandemic, Lingling was convinced that the virus is already a part of our lives. She also noticed that the government has shifted its focus on revitalizing the economy, given the high inflation in Canada. “I think, with the population size in Canada, the government can focus on flattening the curve in the first couple of months. If they did this, the duration of this pandemic would be shortened in Canada,” Lingling concluded.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study document recent adult Chinese immigrants’ stories while living in Canada during a global health crisis. As active participants in the Canadian society, Chinese immigrants have profound understandings of the connection between their lived experiences and the global pandemic. These understandings showcased their voices on social, economic and political issues in Canada. Using a CRT theoretical framework, I narrated counter-stories from Chinese immigrants, with the hope of challenging the dominant narratives and stereotypes against the Chinese community.

To further illustrate the power dynamics between the dominate and counter narratives, I use some examples from participants’ stories here. By voicing out his disappointment over the suspicious feeling from some members in Canada, Nanzhe was trying to challenge this dominant narrative that international students and researchers from China might acquire sensitive technology and research in Canada (Chase, 2023; Dyer, 2020). In Yixuan’s narrative, she challenged the dominate narrative that China and Chinese people were accusable for the start of the pandemic. Huiru shared her critical opinion regarding the vaccine passport in Quebec to challenge the government’s promotion of such an initiative. These counter stories presented perspectives from recent adult Chinese immigrants on various social and political topics in Canada. These stories also reveal their lived realities in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, I use CRT and relevant scholarly perspectives and arguments in citizenship education to discuss findings from this study.

### ***Stereotypes and Racism were Enhanced During COVID-19 Pandemic***

CRT scholars believe that racism is prevalent in North America and it appears to be a normalized feature (Gillbon, 2018). Many participants' stories validate this argument. The comments Lingling received, based on her appearance, during the pandemic were unwarranted. Nanzhe's story at his workplace also spoke to the racism against Chinese communities during the pandemic. The comment from his colleague about spreading fear by wearing a mask was unreasonable and unjustified. Although Nanzhe did not elaborate on this fear his colleague talked about in Nanzhe's story, the suspicious feeling he described later potentially pointed to a fear of his racial background rather than of a facial covering. These comments created tangible damage to the relationship between the individual and the host society.

As Lingling described, she felt unsafe and scared being a Chinese immigrant during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Additionally, these comments failed to consider the realities during the pandemic, when travel bans were implemented by many countries around the world. The absurdity of blaming the pandemic on people, based on their appearance, was a sheer demonstration of racism. These comments also neglected the diversity within the Chinese communities in Canada. Regardless of their legal status and duration of living in Canada, as well as how they self-identify themselves in Canada (Berry & Hou, 2016), every person who looks "Chinese" was suddenly open to be accusable for creating this pandemic. Such stereotypes were heightened during the pandemic, when individuals not only from Chinese communities, but Eastern Asian communities across Canada were targeted.

To make it even worse, without the sweeping changes CRT scholars call for, underrepresented population do not have the power to voice their opinions. In Yixuan's story, though she was aware of and saddened by the racism against Chinese communities during the pandemic, her initial reaction was to protect herself in this kind of scenario. Without a proper channel to voice their opinions and obtain the support they needed, protecting oneself was only a logical response from Chinese immigrants, such as Yixuan. Although Shilun and Wenbin both said they didn't encounter any racial attacks during the pandemic, they

expressed their concern over the existence of anti-Chinese racism. Besides the normal feature of racism in North America, the permanence of racism was another argument from CRT scholars, such as Delgado and Stefancic (2023), Ladson-Billings (2021) and Christian et al. (2019).

Given this background, Chinese immigrants' concerns and worries over racism are real and valid. Their counter-stories highlighted the enhanced racism and stereotypes against Chinese communities across Canada during the pandemic. Moreover, these counter-stories potentially challenged the dominate narrative that Canada is a hospitable place for all because such a narrative neglected the realities and voices from underrepresented population. With the end of the pandemic, anti-Chinese racism might seem less prevalent than before. That said, it is far from being eradicated, given its strong presence within the structure of our society. As scholars, telling the stories of underrepresented populations is one way for us to challenge dominant narratives (Ladson-Billings, 2021); it may be a starting point for us to fight against racism with joint effort and, ultimately, to eradicate oppression of any kind.

### ***Critical Take on COVID Policies as Active Participants in Canada***

Guo (2011, 2013, 2014) conducts a series of studies to investigate the volunteering experiences of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. The findings conclude that Chinese immigrants actively participate in social, cultural and economic affairs in Canada. As active participants in Canada, Chinese immigrants shared their stories to highlight the connections between their lives and COVID policies in Canada, during the pandemic. These stories offered their critical take on COVID relevant policies in Canada.

Taking the example of government aid programs at the beginning of the pandemic, Huiru gave a strong opinion about the benefits from the federal government, while Wenbin appreciated the governmental assistance. These contrasting perspectives embodied the diverse voices and perspectives within the Chinese community in Canada. A commonality among these opinions, shared by the participants, however, is that their personal experiences play an important role in their understanding of COVID policies in Canada. For instance, Huiru's criticism against the government benefits was based on her experiences at her

workplace, since most people took the benefits instead of working on the front line, as she did. By the same logic, Wenbin spoke highly of the government aid, given that restaurants were shut down at the beginning of the pandemic, making it impossible for him to work to sustain his life. Talking about the suspicious feeling he received from others during the pandemic, Nanzhe concluded that a lack of scientific verification among many people in Canada was the cause of this suspicion. Such a conclusion was relevant to his experiences as a clinical researcher, as the credibility of data is a crucial element in any research (Sbaffi & Rowley, 2017).

The relational factors based on Chinese immigrants' prior experiences in China also impact the way they see the COVID policies in Canada. Berry (1980) employs the concept of acculturation to examine immigrants' wellbeing in their host societies. Acculturation, according to Berry (1980, 2019), pertains to the comparison and contrast between immigrants' home cultures and the cultures in the host societies. Shilun and Lingling both made some comparisons between the COVID policies in Canada and China. The process of comparing their new cultures with their home cultures is inevitable for immigrants (Berry & Hou, 2016). A notable finding is that, in making these comparisons, both Shilun and Lingling accepted and understood some of the contextual factors behind the different policies adopted by both Canada and China, especially the ones in their new home, Canada. Such findings demonstrated that they are actively learning and accepting the cultures in their host society while, at the same time, keeping some of their home culture. This fits the integration acculturation profile, as described by Hou et al. (2018). In this profile, immigrants stay close to both their home cultures and the cultures in the host society. This acculturation profile is proven to be more desirable for immigrants' wellbeing (Berry & Hou, 2017).

To conclude, Chinese immigrants, as this study showcased, have their critical opinions towards governmental policies in Canada. These opinions were relevant to their own experiences. Their desires to participate in every aspect of their lives in Canada are real and visible in their stories. The counter-stories presented in this section not only underlined their in-depth knowledge of issues facing the Canadian society, but also challenged the dominate

narratives that Chinese immigrants are politically inactive (Yi, 2020). Moreover, their willingness to participate in Canadian society also demonstrated their acceptance of the cultures in their new home which, in turn, contributes to their integration into Canadian society.

### ***Becoming Justice-oriented Citizens in Canada***

Participants in this study also offered some suggestions to amend the aftermath of the COVID pandemic in Canada. These suggestions reflected their understanding of the social, political and cultural contexts in Canada. For instance, when Lingling suggested that the government should focus on flattening the curve at the beginning of the pandemic, her rationale was based on her awareness of the fragility of a universal health care system in Canada. Coincidentally, in their December 2022 news statement, the Canadian Medical Association (2022) pinpointed issues such as long wait times, staff shortages and burnout regarding the current health system and urged a system reform in 2023. This coincidence did not happen out of blue. As active participants in Canadian society, Chinese immigrants are well aware of the issues in Canada and they genuinely want to get involved and contribute to resolving these issues.

Yixuan's story is another example that showcases Chinese immigrants' in-depth understanding of the realities in Canada. Previously, I discussed Yixuan's story to illustrate her acknowledgement of enhanced racism against Chinese communities in Canada, during the pandemic. To build on this point, Yixuan asserted that racism is one of the crises in Canada. The pandemic might have brought anti-Chinese racism to the forefront of the many issues in Canada, but other crises such as inflation and health care system reform are still prominent. This argument potentially justified many participants' wish to move on and focus on thriving economically, in their lives. At the same time, their focus on economic integration also embodied Chinese immigrants' critical assessment of the economic structures, as well as how the economy in Canada has shaped some of the social and political issues. This finding resonates with the theory of justice-oriented citizens, as such a critical assessment serves as a

starting point to pinpoint some root causes of problems and issues in Canada (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Situating themselves with respect to the cultural, political, social and economic realities in Canada, participants in this study also expressed their wishes and willingness to make Canada a more just and equitable place to live. This wish is a consistent theme in all stories shared by the six participants in the current study. Although Wenbin said he was not affected by those who did not respect government regulations during the COVID pandemic, he deemed the mission to stop these inconsiderate and unjust behaviours the right thing to do. Similarly, Shilun and Lingling believed that compliance with government regulations may potentially reduce the spread of the virus during the pandemic. Within the scope of this article, I cannot examine the validity of their argument or hypothesize on measures that might slow the spread of coronavirus. Nonetheless, their stories demonstrated a willingness to identify the root causes of problems and issues which face all Canadians. Once again, this finding from participants' counter-stories confronted the dominate narrative that Chinese immigrants do not care about domestic affairs in their host nation (Zhou, 2014).

More importantly, participants in this study offered solutions, which they think could tackle these problems and issues. Nanzhe's promotion of scientific verification is among one of the solutions to enhance mutual understanding between different communities in Canada. When Huiru expressed her empathy towards international students in her previous work, she wanted to bring unjust treatment of this marginalized population to our attention. Additionally, as an important aspect of democratic citizenship, developing and showing empathy also reflected her willingness to engage in the Canadian society as an active civic agent (Chong, 2017; Mirra, 2018).

Chinese immigrants not only care about issues in Canada, they also offer critical opinions concerning public affairs and policies. They base these opinions on an understanding and a critical assessment of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada. Additionally, they aspire for more participation in Canada. As active participants in Canadian society, Chinese immigrants try to pinpoint root causes of issues

facing Canadians, as a whole. What is more, they express a desire to facilitate changes to make Canada a more just and democratic place to live. In doing so, Chinese immigrants actively participate in the building of the national unity that citizenship education aims for. They are on a journey to become justice-oriented citizens in Canada. Applying a CRT framework here, we need to find ways to include voices from Chinese immigrants to inform Canadians about Chinese immigrants' desire to participate in Canadian society and to facilitate changes to make it more democratic and just for all.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Fleming (2003, 2010, 2015) notes that citizenship education is a relatively new field in educational research, despite its long history, and philosophical and political foundations. Given the emerging nature of citizenship education research, we need to update our knowledge in this domain of research with perspectives from various stakeholders, such as policy makers, educators and students who currently receive education. The current study illustrated citizenship education with perspectives from six adult new immigrants from Mainland China. Specifically, these perspectives revealed the lived realities of Chinese immigrants in Canada, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study present some novel, yet insightful viewpoints to examine citizenship education for new immigrants.

The first finding of this study confirms that racism is both normalized and permanent in Canada. Chinese immigrants experienced intense racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. This wave of racism conforms to the narrative that China and Chinese people were accused of starting the pandemic. Without sweeping changes that CRT scholars call for within our society and its structure (Ladson-Billings, 2023), it is challenging for Chinese immigrants to have their voices heard. Fear, worry, suspicion and self-defense were a few keywords that Chinese immigrants shared to depict their feelings, while living in Canada during the pandemic. It is therefore crucial for scholars to share their stories in academia to call attention to the fight against racism. Secondly, this study validates Guo's (2014) argument that Chinese immigrants are active participants and citizens in Canada. Chinese immigrants offered their critical perspectives with regards to the COVID policies in Canada. The

uniqueness of each individual's personal experiences potentially explained the diverse viewpoints within the Chinese community in Canada. While giving their analytical standpoints regarding the COVID measures in Canada, Chinese immigrants also showcased their voluntary acceptance of Canadian cultures. This action contributes to their integration into Canada.

Contrary to some of the stereotypes that Chinese immigrants are inactive in their host society, this study concludes that Chinese immigrants are on their journey to become justice-oriented citizens (Westhemier & Kahne, 2004). In their stories, they have showcased some in-depth understandings of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada. These understandings assist them in pinpointing some of the root causes of many social problems Canadians face. Moreover, they offer critical suggestions to resolve these problems and to make Canada a more just and democratic place to live. These findings offer new insights for us to view the connections between citizenship education and Chinese immigrants.

Unfortunately, the counter-stories from Chinese immigrants often go unnoticed in the public sphere. As scholars in an emerging research domain, we should value and mobilize the experiential knowledge from underrepresented populations like Chinese immigrants to update our understanding of citizenship education. Through this knowledge mobilization, we may refine a better and more inclusive notion of citizenship and citizenship education. More importantly, while disseminating the voices from underrepresented population, we hope to enhance the mutual understanding among different populations in Canada. Related to this study, these mutual understandings will also encourage the multicultural Canadian family to learn about the Chinese communities in Canada. Ultimately, with joint efforts from all Canadians, Canada may become a more equitable, hospitable and democratic place to live.

### **Limitation and Future Research**

The current study reported findings regarding how Chinese immigrants understood their relationship with Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the data were collected, we were under yet another lockdown in Ontario and Quebec. Given this

background, the narratives from all participants only captured their lived realities before the second interview of this study. Shortly after the data collection for this study, all COVID restrictions were lifted in Canada. The findings of this research are thus time sensitive. Although the focus of this study is on recent adult Chinese immigrants' lived experiences during the pandemic, future research could compare and contrast the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Canada before, during and after the pandemic to update literature on citizenship education for new immigrants. Such a comparison might yield additional results to interpret the relationship between Chinese immigrants and their host society, Canada.

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## Appendix A

**Table 3**

*Participants in This Study*

Name	Arrived in	Legal status in Canada	Current city of residence	Self-identified as
Huiru	2010	Permanent resident	Montreal	Female
Lingling	2014	Permanent resident	Montreal	Female
Nanzhe	2015	Permanent resident	Montreal	Male
Shilun	2015	Permanent resident	Toronto	Male
Wenbin	2010	Citizen	Toronto	Male
Yixuan	2014	Permanent resident	Mississauga	Female

*Note:* All names in the table are pseudonyms created by the researcher to protect participants' identity.

## Appendix B Recruitment Letter

English version

Hello,

My name is Xingtian Cao, I am from Faculty of Education at University of Ottawa. I will conduct a research project to examine the lived experiences of adult (18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada since 2010 and have since obtained either a permanent residency status or citizenship in Canada. This study will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chitpin at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I intend to collect stories from you by conducting interviews. These stories are collected for the purpose of my Ph.D. dissertation in citizenship education and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

There will be two interviews in this study. Each interview should last about 1 hour. You can choose to be interviewed in either English or Chinese. The interview will be scheduled for a date and time that are convenient for you. I will conduct the interview virtually using software such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams. If you prefer, the interview can be conducted over the phone or through Wechat. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded in order for me to review and transcribe for research purposes. I would like to emphasize that your participation, that is, agreeing to allow me to use the recording of our interviews is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time. Also, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you choose to withdraw from the study and prefer that I do not use your interview data, I will remove it from the research. I will offer you opportunity to review the narratives I write based on our interview. You are more than welcome to make suggestions to add, modify, or delete these narratives.

Now, if you agree to participate, please review and sign the consent form and return it to me. The form has contact information of myself and my supervisor, Dr. Stephanie Chitpin, if you ever had any questions about this study.

Sincerely,

Xingtian Cao

Chinese version

您好！

我叫曹兴潭，是渥太华大学教育学院的一名博士研究生。在我的导师 Stephanie Chitpin 博士的指导下，我即将展开一项关于成年华人移民人生经历的研究。这项研究旨在了解自 2010 年以后移民至加拿大，并且获得永久居民身份或者加拿大国籍的华人移民的人生经历。通过访谈的方式，我希望可以收集您的故事。这些故事会被用在我的关于公民教育的博士论文以及相关的文章发表里。

本项研究涉及两次访谈。每次访谈大约需要一个小时。您可以选择用英文或中文参与访谈。访谈的时间和日期会根据您方便的时间安排。我会使用 Zoom 或者 Microsoft Teams 来进行访谈。如果您愿意，我也可以通过电话或者微信进行访谈。在您的同意基础上，我会对访谈进行录音用以转录、回顾等研究目的。我想特别指出您的参与，也就是同意我访谈您并且录音，是完全自愿的。您可以选择随时停止访谈。同时，您不需要回答您不想回答的问题。如果您选择中途退出这项研究，并且希望我不使用您的访谈内容，我会删除相关信息。访谈之后我会将您的分享以故事的方式呈现出来。我会和您分享写好的故事，您可以增加、删改我写的内容。

如果您同意参与这项研究，请您在阅读后签署知情同意书，并且将签好的文件返送与我。知情同意书内附有我和我导师的联系方式，如果您对这项研究有任何问题，欢迎随时联系我们。

感谢！

曹兴潭

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

In this chapter of the thesis, I summarize findings from all three articles and discuss their implications. As this thesis is based on three manuscripts, a global summary of all key findings may allow readers a more integrated view of key thematic topics and results. There are five major findings from this thesis, pertaining to recent adult Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada. To begin with, Chinese immigrants actively participate in social, cultural, political and economic affairs in Canada. Their participation in Canadian society exhibits their acceptance of Canadian cultures and values while living in Canada. Based on these understandings, they offer their suggestions to make Canada a more democratic, just and livable place. Racism, discriminations and stereotypes received from some members of the host society have created tangible damage to their relationship with Canada. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrants expressed their desire to be included and integrated into Canadian society. Using narrative data presented in all three articles, I support and discuss these findings in this chapter.

Based on these discussions, I address knowledge contribution and the implications of this thesis. Specifically, I talk about the implications this thesis has on multiple stakeholders, relevant to the immigrants' relationship with Canada. I will answer the overarching and specific research questions of this thesis, along with the summary of research findings and the discussion of its implications. As this thesis employs narrative inquiry as its methodology, it is also important for me to reflect on my takeaways and suggestions for this research methodology from a narrative perspective. After this reflection, I address the limitations and de-limitations of this study and offer suggestions for future research. Lastly, I talk about my plans after this doctoral thesis.

### **Research Findings**

There are five key themes pertaining to the global findings of this doctoral research. These themes emerged from all three individual research articles. I summarized these themes in five topics, of which I will present in the next section. Participants of this study were invited to review these themes before the final write up of this thesis. They confirmed that the

themes were accurate and true to their stories. In this sense, participants of this study not only co-constructed their narratives, but also audited the research findings. In the three individual research articles in this thesis, I have included sections to discuss the findings from each of them. To connect all the findings in the three manuscripts, this section of the chapter discusses the comprehensive findings of this thesis based on participants' narratives. To remind readers, the first article, "Dynamic Acculturation Profiles: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants' Understanding of Their Relationship with Canada" is presented in Chapter Two; "Multiculturalism and Bilingualism from the Perspective of Six Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry", the second article of this thesis, is situated in the third chapter of this thesis; lastly, Chapter Four is represented by the third research article, "Becoming Justice-oriented Citizens in Canada: A Narrative Inquiry into Recent Adult Chinese Immigrants' Lived Experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic."

In this section, I use wordings such as "article one" or "Chapter Two" interchangeably to refer to information of the three individually prepared manuscripts. To better assist readers to visualize the progression of the manuscripts, as well as their location in this thesis, I include Figure 2 (see Appendix A) for illustration purposes.

***Theme One: Chinese Immigrants are Active Participants in Canadian Society***

Through their study and work experiences in Canada, participants in this study actively participate in social, cultural, educational, political and economic affairs in Canada. From a social perspective, all participants either actively interact with people around them in Canada or express their desire to expand their social network in Canada. According to Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019), how immigrants form social relations with the host society and members of it is an important aspect of their integration process. Yixuan's participations in student unions, alumni associations and non-governmental organizations, as well as her commitment to step out of her comfort zone and to interact with people outside of her in-groups display her social participation in Canada. Nanzhe and Shilun also made many friends while pursuing their higher education. Huiru and Lingling express their preference

towards simple interpersonal relationships in Canada. Such a preference is connected with their interaction with members in the host society.

Culturally, participants in this study expressed their understanding of Canadian multiculturalism in article two. For instance, Huiru emphasized respecting people of different age groups at her workplace; Yixuan respected celebrations in different cultures; and Wenbin understood democracy from the perspective of respecting different opinions to showcase their viewpoints on diversity in Canada. Through their participation in Canadian society, participants also shared their understanding regarding the flaws of multiculturalism. Shilun observes ghettoization and marginalization in Toronto, which validate many scholarly criticisms of multiculturalism (Bissoondath, 2022; Guo, 2017; Guo & Guo, 2015; Liu, 2019). The connection participants made between language abilities and their lives in Canada is another embodiment of their cultural participation in Canada. Wenbin associates his relatively little exposure to the Canadian culture with his lack of English proficiency. Coming from an engineering background, Shilun also talks about the difficulty in learning and using a second language. Moreover, his assertion about adopting a new way of thinking, while learning a new language, critically examines the connection between language and culture (Norton, 2016). Having taken the French courses for new immigrants offered by the Quebec government, Lingling talks about the lack of political and citizenship content in the curriculum. This opinion not only showcases Lingling's cultural participation in Quebec, it also confirms Derwing (2017) and Fleming's (2015) questioning about the lack of citizenship content in the language training program for new immigrants in Canada. Huiru's belief on being both a beneficiary and victim of the French language policy in Quebec is also based on her active participation in Quebec from a cultural standpoint.

In article one, many participants compared the education in Canada with their prior educational experiences in China. Through this comparison, participants shared their understanding of Canadian education system, as well as things they appreciate in their Canadian education experiences. For instance, Lingling liked the autonomy students enjoy at Canadian higher educational institutions; Shilun and Nanzhe speak highly of the research-

oriented programs they have taken in Canada; Yixuan highlights Canadian education's emphasis on critical thinking rather than factual information. These elements of participants' stories prove that they know Canada through their education experiences in this country.

Another common theme of participants' stories comes from their working experiences in Canada. As immigrants of the economic class, participants in this study actively contribute to the Canadian labour market. Through this contribution, they also realize the importance of work-life balance and employees rights, as well as safety and respect in the workplace. These common themes in their narratives speak to their economic participation, while living in Canada.

### ***Theme Two: Chinese Immigrants Understand and Accept Cultures in Canada***

While Chinese immigrants participate in their host society, Canada, they also understand and accept Canadian cultures voluntarily. This theme is primarily embodied in article two, but article one and three also incorporate this theme in the findings. Though the very definition of Canadian culture can be problematic (Fleming, 2015, 2019), participants in this study offered some perspectives to critically delineate a Canadian culture that is based on diversity, democracy and justice, as well as mutual understanding and respect. To name a few examples, Nanzhe poetically claims that, "What makes Canada Canada is whatever [is] coming [from] outside [of] Canada," which speaks to the openness and inclusiveness of Canadian culture (Harell et al., 2022). Although Huiru went through an unpleasant legal case, she still has hopes of having justice served, even if she has to sue the government. Being able to sue the government is one opportunity for her to understand Canadian culture from a legal perspective.

Previously, I have mentioned Yixuan's commitment to step out of her known group to blend with the culture in Canada. Another example to showcase her efforts in doing so is her active engagement in outdoor activities, especially winter sports in Canada. The connection between sports and immigrants' acceptance of and integration into the host society is a topic which researchers have recently studied (e.g., Hertting, 2021; Nesseler, 2019; Smith et al., 2019). These few examples of participants' stories not only offer some perspectives to define

what Canadian cultures are, they also indicate participants' acceptance and understanding of Canadian cultures.

***Theme Three: Chinese Immigrants Offer Suggestions to Make Canada More Democratic and Just***

The research participants in this study also shared many insightful suggestions to make Canada a more equitable and democratic place to live. For instance, in article one, all participants discussed some of the changes they would like to see in Canada. These changes range from big initiatives such as health care and tax reform to day-to-day projects, such as improving public service efficiency. These suggestions and changes put forward by Chinese immigrants manifest their comprehensive understanding and evaluation of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada, as is also showcased in the discussion of the first common theme in a previous section.

More importantly, they pinpoint the root causes of many social, political and economic issues facing all Canadians and offer their suggestions to tackle these issues, accordingly. Their rationale in offering these suggestions to the Canadian society is based on their wish to make Canada a more hospitable place for all. In addition, while pinpointing the root causes of issues in Canadian society and offering solutions based on their critical assessment of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada, participants in this study demonstrate their wish to become justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This finding was discussed in article three. Overall, Chinese immigrants' in-depth knowledge about Canadian society, their willingness to participate more in public affairs, as well as their wish to make a change in Canada show, beyond doubt, that they are active participants and citizens in Canada (Guo, 2013, 2014).

***Theme Four: Racism, Discrimination and Stereotypes Damage Chinese Immigrants' Relationship with Canada***

In article three, I used a CRT framework to examine participating immigrants' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants' stories confirmed the increasing racial attacks and anti-Chinese sentiments in Canada during this pandemic. For

instance, Lingling received comments accusing her and members of the Chinese community of being responsible for the pandemic. Nanzhe described a suspicious feeling he received from people around him. He believed that many Canadians used to be curious about Chinese culture and Chinese people, whereas the intensified geopolitical tensions between Canada and China (Trilokekar et al., 2020) and the reinforcement of the pandemic made Canadians more suspicious of Chinese communities. Yixuan did not receive any discriminatory thoughts or actions during the pandemic, but the stories and news she read about racism against the Chinese community saddened her and also made her to think of ways to protect herself. These comments created tangible damage to the relationship between the individual and the host society. As Lingling described, she felt unsafe and scared being a Chinese immigrant during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Applying Lingling's feeling to acculturation studies, discrimination and racial attacks may lead immigrants to choose a separation mindset, in which they distance themselves from the cultures in the host society (Berry, 2019; Berry & Hou, 2016).

The current theme is not only embodied in the third research article of this study, participants' stories from other two articles also speak to the discussion of racism, discrimination and stereotypes against Chinese immigrants. In article one, for instance, Shilun attributes the difficulty in finding employment in Canada to his understanding that the Chinese education system does not cultivate students into desirable products sought by western societies, such as Canada. Although Shilun did not directly mention discrimination in this component of his story, such an explanation potentially revealed a subtle prejudice against non-Canadian education credentials that many Canadian employers may feel. In his examination of Chinese immigrants' economic integration in Calgary and Edmonton, Guo (2013) addresses the devaluation of immigrants' foreign credentials and work experiences.

In the same article in this thesis, Yixuan tried to explain some of the cultural reasons, among many Chinese immigrants' desire to own property. This explanation is just one example to showcase the unwarranted tags and labels that become attached to Chinese immigrants. In both article one and two, when Huiru shared her frustration over the legal case

she went through, she believed that she was picked on because of her immigrant status. To her, she was amazed that the prosecutors would buy the narrative that she cannot speak a word of English or French because she is an immigrant; someone with limited language ability. Fleming (2015) criticized this association between language ability and citizenship because, in creating such a narrative, it is implied that "legitimate citizens are those who evoke whiteness and the ability to use standardised and high-status versions of English" (p. 48).

***Theme Five: Chinese Immigrants Express Their Desire to Integrate into Canadian Society***

With their active participation in Canadian society, Chinese immigrants understand and accept the Canadian cultures. Furthermore, they offer suggestions to Canadian society with their in-depth knowledge of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in Canada. The summary of the previous four themes in this section of the conclusion illustrates Chinese immigrants' desire to integrate into Canadian society.

Throughout the three individual articles, it is arguably true that economic integration is a key theme in all participants' stories. For instance, in the first research article, many participants shared their suggestions regarding the tax system, inflation, housing affordability and labour market in Canada, which manifested their desire to thrive economically in Canada (Zhou et al., 2019). When sharing Chinese elements that are personal and private, in articles two and three, participants such as Yixuan and Nanzhe utilize hard work as an example. Finally, economic revitalization is a common theme in the participants' stories as this pertains to their aspirations in their post-pandemic lives.

Nevertheless, this is not to say Chinese immigrants only want to integrate into the Canadian society from an economic standpoint. As previously discussed, participants such as Yixuan also want to integrate into Canadian society for social and cultural reasons. While discussing their understanding between media distortions and the stereotyping of Chinese immigrants, both Shilun and Nanzhe presented their desire for potential political integration in Canada. As Shilun disclosed in article one, not all Chinese immigrants are uninterested in politics in Canada; media manipulation likely gives Chinese immigrants a politically inactive

tag. From this perspective, political inactiveness is not an accurate or clear depiction of many Chinese immigrants' lived realities in Canada.

To close this theme, let's first revisit the definition of integration. From the point of view of acculturation, integration pertains to a condition where immigrants remain close to both the culture of their host society and to their home culture (Berry, 1980, 2017). While they critically examine their Chinese-ness, as is showcased in all three research articles in this thesis, participants also believe that more exposure to the Canadian society and the culture of it will help them understand Canada and Canadian cultures even more. This may represent wishful thinking, although it also denotes the fact that Chinese immigrants hope to be included and integrated into the Canadian society, while also keeping close to their heritage culture.

### **Knowledge Contributions**

This thesis will contribute primarily to citizenship education by presenting experiential knowledge of recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada with regard to many questions scholars have posed, concerning citizenship education. The stories shared by participants allow me to revisit and verify theories and practices in citizenship education and to eventually complete my doctoral dissertation. Details regarding these theoretical verifications were presented in the global summary of research findings in the previous section. To revisit these findings, Chinese immigrants actively participate in social, cultural, political and economic affairs in Canada. They offer their suggestions to make Canada a more democratic and just place for all based on their in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic context in Canada. Although racism, discrimination and stereotypes likely damage their relationship with Canada, recent adult Chinese immigrants accept Canadian cultures and values and they showcase their desires to be included and integrated into the Canadian society.

Overall, I hope that the knowledge generated from this study will refine our understanding about citizenship education and Canadian multiculturalism, with perspectives of underrepresented populations like Chinese immigrants in Canada. I believe this study will

allow more Canadians to know and learn about Chinese communities in Canada. This mutual understanding will eventually promote and enhance the integration of Chinese immigrants in Canadian society, which, in turn, will make Canada a more welcoming and hospitable place.

### **Implications**

I address the implications of the current thesis based on the different stakeholders involved in citizenship and citizenship education. For citizenship education researchers, we need to first trust the experiential knowledge of our participants, especially from those who are underrepresented in both academia and public domains (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2021a). Then, we need to mobilize their experiential knowledge to refine our understanding of citizenship and citizenship education (Cao, 2021). Related to the current study, it has been illustrated that recent adult Chinese immigrants, while living in Canada, actively participate in Canadian society. They have in-depth understanding of the root causes of many issues that impact all Canadians. Additionally, they offer suggestions, based on the understanding of these root causes to alleviate and address such issues in Canadian society. Researchers should update their definitions of citizenship and citizenship education with the experiential knowledge of racialized and underrepresented populations, like Chinese immigrants in Canada.

For educators in Canada, both at K-12 and post-secondary levels, we need to shoulder the responsibility to teach students the importance of mutual respect and mutual understanding in our multicultural and multinational world, both domestically and internationally. Such an understanding should encompass the twin values of democracy and justice. At the same time, we need to attach importance to anti-racism and culturally relevant pedagogy in our classrooms to fight against racism and oppression of any kind (Ladson-Billings, 2021b; Stanley, 2014, 2016). Ultimately, mutual understanding and respect among all Canadians will make Canada a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone.

For policy makers in Canada, consider the voices of Chinese immigrants and include their experiential knowledge in making and implementing policies. Chinese immigrants in Canada genuinely want to participate in the social, cultural and political affairs in Canada.

Nonetheless, they face visible challenges to get their voices heard by the public, as this study found. Including Chinese immigrants' voices in policy makers' decision-making processes should not merely remain in initiatives such as Asian Heritage Month. Policy makers need to recognize Chinese immigrants as active participants and active citizens in Canada, instead of temporary, inactive and unassimilated populations. Inspired by the critical multiculturalism framework this study adopts (Guo, 2013; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997), public policies in Canada should commit to equity and inclusion, rather than enhancing the privileges of any given group in Canadian society.

For Chinese immigrants and Chinese communities across the nation, be brave and unstoppable. Voice your opinions, participate in public affairs, vote if you have the right, and support each other in this multicultural family. With democracy and justice in mind, we should work with everyone in Canada to make it a more inclusive and welcoming place for all. Moreover, be proud of your Chinese-ness! Keeping close contact with your heritages only enriches the culture of Canada.

To all Canadians, do your part to contribute to the building of mutual understanding and respect between you and your Chinese neighbours, colleagues, classmates and family members. Canada and Canadians thrive on the diversity we all embrace. The more we understand and respect each other, the more hospitable Canada will be. Remember, integration works in two directions. As hosts to more than eight million immigrants from around the world (Statistics Canada, 2022), we need to show our efforts in helping Chinese immigrants, as well as other members of the multicultural family, to navigate their new lives in their new home, Canada. Ultimately, our efforts may contribute to the integration of all immigrants in Canada.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

Previously, I have summarized findings of this doctoral study with five key themes. To answer the research questions, I need to unavoidably revisit some of the themes mentioned before. It is my hope that readers will have a comprehensive picture of the findings of this doctoral study through these recapitulations.

This doctoral thesis asks an overarching research question: How can lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants inform or supplement our current understanding of citizenship education for adult immigrants? Before answering this research question, it might be beneficial to look at the four specific research questions in this study; 1) What are the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants? 2) How would a Chinese immigrant in Canada weigh their Canadian-ness versus their Chinese-ness? 3) What are the roles of education or citizenship education, in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada? 4) How may recent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences inform education, social and political changes in Canada? From an overall perspective, all three research articles contribute to answering both the overarching and specific research questions. Nonetheless, each article has their specific focus with regard to the research questions in this study. To help readers organize different articles and visualize how they answered the research questions in this thesis, I create Table 4 (see Appendix B) for illustration.

To begin with, the lived experience of recent Chinese immigrants is described in the five key findings of this doctoral research. To recap, recent Chinese immigrants actively participate in every aspect of their lives in Canada. Through this participation, they understand, accept, and internalize Canadian cultures and values in their lives. Based on their understanding and critical assessments of the Canadian society, they pinpoint root causes of many issues and problems facing all Canadians. Moreover, they offer their experiential knowledge to tackle these issues. One of the issues they face, while living in Canada, is the constant racism, discrimination and stereotypes imposed on them by some members of the Canadian society (Guo & Guo, 2021). These negative attributes regarding their lives damage their relationship with the host society. On a positive note, despite these difficulties and challenges in their lives in their new home, they expressed their genuine desire to be included in Canadian society, and to ultimately integrate into it. This should be considered by researchers and policy makers, in their policy-work, to promote mutual understanding between Chinese immigrants and the multicultural Canadian family. Related to the three

individual research articles in this thesis, all of them contributed to answering the first specific research question for my doctoral research.

Although article one of this thesis is the primary source for answers to the second specific research question, article two also examines how Chinese immigrants weigh their Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness, while living in Canada. A simple answer to this question is that they engage in a dynamic acculturation profile while comparing their home culture and the Canadian cultures. Their experience and exposure to the culture in Canada play a significant role in this comparison. Positive experiences, such as their preference for the Canadian educational system, interpersonal relationships and work-life balance enhance their relationships with Canada. Negative experiences, such as racism and discrimination, will distance them from their new home. Nonetheless, as all participants shared in their stories, they generally believe that the more they get to know Canada and Canadian cultures, the closer their relationship will be with Canada.

Article two, as presented in Chapter Three, answers the third specific research question for this study. Notably, participants potentially answered this question when they critically examine their Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness in article one. Though most participants are aware of the language-training program available to them, only two of them (Wenbin and Lingling) took the government-funded programs for new immigrants. Generally, they did not address the role of the existing citizenship education program (such as LINC) in understanding their relationship with Canada. During the interviews, I also asked questions such as, “What are some of the education resources you would like to get to help you with your life in Canada?” or “What were the resources you rely on to navigate your new life in Canada?” with the hope to get additional answers from participants. Participants disclosed that friends and co-workers offer some help to navigate their new lives in Canada. Meanwhile, they also believe that the more experience they accumulated, the better they will be able to navigate their lives in Canada. Nonetheless, data to answer this question was insufficient. I could have included additional prompt questions to encourage participants to share more of their stories in relation to citizenship education for new immigrants in Canada.

All three manuscripts answer the last specific research question in terms of the changes participants' lived experiences inform. From an educational perspective, participants in this study speak highly of the education system in Canada. In terms of some changes they want to see, Shilun hopes to see some bridging educational programs to integrate skilled professionals, like himself, better and faster into the Canadian labour market. Wenbin and Yixuan both believe that language education programs will be beneficial to newcomers. Translating these individual perspectives into a collective aspiration for changes, educational efforts to assist new immigrants should focus on facilitating their integration into Canadian society.

At a social level, participants prefer the diversity, work-life balance and simple interpersonal relations in Canada. Some participants, such as Wenbin and Huiru, wish their voices and aspirations for justice could be heard by the public. In addition, most participants comment on the health care system in Canada and wish for changes and reforms to make it more accessible and efficient to immigrants like them. In relation to their economic integration in Canada, participants such as Huiru, Lingling and Yixuan call for support for the middle class from perspectives such as tax policy, inflation and housing affordability.

Lastly, political changes in the participants' stories in this thesis that serve to inform readers may appear to be quite subtle. Nonetheless, Nanzhe and Shilun's comments on media distortion, Wenbin and Huiru's wish to be heard, and Shilun and Lingling's suggestion to improve the efficiency of public services in Canada are all examples that embody political changes they hope to see for Canadian society. Moreover, as presented previously, their active participation in Canadian society and their suggestions to make Canada a more democratic and just place to live also call for political change in Canada; that is, to recognize the Chinese immigrants' position in Canada and to include their experiential knowledge in public decision making.

Taking all the above answers to the specific research questions for my doctoral thesis, I can try to answer the overarching research question I have asked. Previously, I have defined citizenship education as an education effort that,

[N]ot only teaches facts about a nation-state, it also aims to empower students to understand their relationships with the environment and the people around them both in and beyond the nation-states border. Citizenship education also entails individual's abilities to pinpoint the root causes of many environmental and societal problems we face and to find according solutions to make our world more just and democratic. (Cao, 2021, p. 6)

While examining the lived experiences of recent adult Chinese immigrants in Canada, I have realized the importance of their invaluable knowledge about Canada and their relationship with their new home. If citizenship education really focuses on citizens' understanding of their relationships with the people and the environment around them, we need to include this understanding from recent adult Chinese immigrants in our current citizenship education in Canada. Additionally, as this doctoral study indicates, Chinese immigrants understand issues facing Canadian as a whole, and they offer their solutions to make Canada more democratic and just, based on their understanding and critical evaluation of the contextual factors that have created these issues. As citizenship education researchers, we also need to include these suggestions from Chinese immigrants in our citizenship education. In doing so, we inform Canadians of the experiential knowledge of Chinese immigrants. Through this knowledge mobilization and the joint efforts from researchers, educators, policy makers and all Canadians, we can contribute to the refinement of a better, more inclusive notion of Canadian citizenship. In turn, this definition of Canadian citizenship may enhance the mutual understanding and mutual trust among everyone in Canada.

### **Personal Reflection as a Narrative Inquirer**

In conducting this research, I have realized the power of narrative data and its roles in updating our knowledge in any given field. In my professional life, I have often heard criticisms about qualitative research methodologies, such as their interpretative nature, small sample size and temporariness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). I have to admit that I was influenced by these criticisms for a very long time. Before I start this doctoral research, I was convinced that I ought to include some sort of "hardcore" data such as a nation-wide survey,

statistics or experiment to prove that my research is scientific and generalizable. However, upon some in-depth reflection regarding my epistemological belief in human experience and the role of that experience in shaping how we come to know, my concerns were cast aside. My choice of narrative inquiry as the methodology of this thesis aligns with my epistemological belief. Moreover, the objective of this thesis, as I have mentioned in the introductory chapter, is to present how recent adult Chinese immigrants understand their relationship with Canada. To achieve this objective, I needed to focus on participants' experiences through the stories they have shared with me.

I have used terms such as “lived experiences” and “lived realities” multiple times in this thesis. Phenomenology, another qualitative research methodology, also centralizes the use of “lived experiences” in its research process. Nonetheless, narrative inquiry is different from the use of experiences and stories in phenomenology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2013) defines phenomenology as the philosophical study of the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person viewpoint. Phenomenology focuses on understanding and explaining the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016), whereas narrative inquiry focuses on participant(s) and the nature of the story to understand not only the individuals' experience but also “the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2019, p. 234).

With regard to this thesis, the focus on the use of participants' lived experiences does not pertain to a specific phenomenon. Rather, I aim to shed light on the relationships and negotiations participants went through, while living in Canada as Chinese immigrants. Moreover, to attend to these complex relationships and negotiations, narrative inquirers also invite participants to participate in the co-construction of their stories (Barkhuizen, 2019). The presentation of data is also flexible in narrative inquiry. On top of the first-person narratives, as is often used in phenomenology, in all three articles I also narrate and tell the stories of participants from a third person perspective. In telling their stories, I engage with

participants in this study and mobilize their experiential knowledge on their relationship with Canada.

I chose a manuscript-based thesis format for my doctoral research study. Initially, my decision in choosing this format was due to a seemingly lighter workload. Preparing three individual manuscripts sounded less daunting than writing a monograph thesis that usually contains more than 200 pages. After collecting the data for the thesis, I was immediately frustrated by my inability to accommodate all the narratives from participants in the form of three research articles, due to word limitations. Additionally, the research process for this doctoral thesis was time consuming. From filed texts to research texts, from raw data to writing up and integrating all the stories in the articles, these moments gave me bittersweet feelings, as I adopted narrative inquiry in writing a manuscript-based thesis.

To put things into perspective, here, please allow me to share my research process. The raw data that I collected, after the two rounds of interviews, came to more than 150,000 words, with a mixture of both Chinese and English. I will skip the time and effort I invested while transcribing such a large amount of data, as most qualitative researchers can relate to this process in their own research. Then, I spent more than three months to translate, regroup and re-organize the data. After that, I spent another four months to re-write the data into the format of stories. I had a brief sense of achievement when I finished the six documents, including the stories of each participant. At this time, I had around 40,000 words of fine narratives for all participants. After sending the narratives back to research participants to get their opinions, I made some minor revisions based on their suggestions. Then, the most challenging part of this thesis appeared. I had to integrate the narratives of the participants into three individual articles with a word limit within 10,000 words per article. The obstacle of complying with the word limit, here, was quite a headache for me.

That's why I also used Braun and Clark's (2006, 2013, 2023) thematic analysis framework to further regroup and re-organize the data. After a close read of all the narratives, I familiarize myself with some key information in each participant's story. Based on this familiarization, I removed redundant and irrelevant details. Further, I included some initial

coded labels for each research article and started to generate themes for these coded labels. For instance, in the third article, where I discuss recent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Chinese racism was a common theme in all participants' stories. As such, I included "racism against Chinese immigrants during the pandemic" as a preliminary coded theme. As I started to group similar stories of the participants under these coded themes, I was able to visualize the connections among stories of different participants. I then reviewed these themes and finally defined and confirmed all the themes. After a final round of write ups to fine tune the stories of all participants, these themes were presented either in the "findings" section in the three manuscripts.

The process of visiting and revisiting the narratives from participants, while writing each individual article, was satisfying. I was able to further connect participants' stories with scholarly perspectives in citizenship education. A major benefit of "thesis by article" is that I can focus on one theoretical framework at a time to interpret and discuss the data. In doing so, I create stronger ties to systematize various perspectives and stories shared by participants. This is also the process by which I can incorporate my creativity in presenting narratives of my research participants. For instance, in article one, I created four timestamps, based on common themes of their lived experiences in Canada in order to present the stories that participants have shared with me. This mode of presentation made it possible for me to focus on the depth of the data while complying with the word limit for individual research papers. Furthermore, presenting data in a chronological order also made it easier for readers to attend to the stories of each participant. In turn, my goal to enhance the mutual understanding between Chinese immigrants and the multicultural Canadian family became attainable.

Upon completing this thesis, I can say with confidence that narrative inquiry is a rich and profound research methodology. Based on my personal reflections, I also have some suggestions for researchers who may consider choosing narrative inquiry. To begin with, building the trust between the researcher and the participants plays an important role in carrying out narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2019). With this trust, participants feel more

comfortable in sharing their life stories with the researcher, which enriches the data. One way of enhancing this trust is to offer the option for participants to share their stories in a language they are comfortable with.

In this doctoral research, I gave participants options to be interviewed in English or Chinese, or a mixture of both languages. As a Chinese immigrant myself, I relate to the fear of using a second language to express true and authentic feelings (Sevinç & Backus, 2017). A few research participants expressed their worry over their English proficiency before participating in the study. Being able to use both Chinese and English languages, I try to address this concern participants might have by offering them the option to use a language they prefer. Some of them finally decided to become a research participant when they learned that they could share their stories in Chinese. From this perspective, having the option to choose a language participants prefer proves to be an effective way to build mutual trust between the participants and researcher. This action also provides a safe space for participants to share their stories openly with the researcher.

I have shared my research process earlier to attest to the point that narrative inquiry is a rich and profound research methodology. But I also want to assure researchers who choose narrative inquiry that the research process is fulfilling, despite the amount of time one might spend. As a matter of fact, even when I spent quite some time in viewing, reviewing, writing and analyzing the narratives in this doctoral thesis, I learnt something new each time I engaged with the data. Planning is key in the application of narrative inquiry. Personally, I created a timetable to keep track of each phase of the research process and it was quite helpful. I share this timetable in Table 5 (see Appendix C).

Conducting a doctoral research and writing a doctoral thesis can be lonely. When I started this doctoral project, we were in the middle of the global pandemic. The aloneness I felt during this trying time was heightened by the isolation from family and friends. Self-care is important. Aloneness can be all-consuming if you lock yourself in to that invisible bubble. Reach out to a friend when you feel stressed. Talk to a professional if you require additional support, mentally and physically. Read the stories of your participants and learn from their

experiential knowledge. Sometimes, taking a break from your research also helps calm yourself. Aloneness is a choice. But you need to remind yourself that you are never alone in the journey of pursuing and mobilizing knowledge.

### **Limitations**

A potential sampling limitation with this research pertains to participants' entry class in Canada. Although it was not my intention to focus primarily on recent adult Chinese immigrants to Canada with a Canadian education credential, five out of the six participants came to Canada as international students and received post-secondary education in a Canadian province. In Chapter One and Chapter Two, I discussed the favourable immigration policies toward candidates with a Canadian diploma. This discussion could serve as a delimitation action.

In addition, as I offered the option for participants to be interviewed in Chinese, I needed to translate some of the data in this study. Whether the translation would accurately embody participants' voices may be another limitation for this study. During this research project, I strived to ensure my personal biases did not interfere with the translation. I also invited participants to review the data themselves, in order for me to maintain a more objective stance.

In this thesis, I only focus on adult Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, who arrived in Canada after 2010. These immigrants reside in urban areas in Ontario and Quebec. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrants live in both urban and rural areas across Canada. Additionally, Chinese immigrants come to Canada from many different source countries and regions, for different reasons (Miles, 2020). Given the diversity within Chinese communities in Canada, some of the findings might have limited implications for the entire Chinese community in Canada. Notwithstanding, as presented before, due to feasibility concerns, this thesis only focuses on recent adult Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, currently residing in GTA and GMA.

Within this thesis, I cannot capture every aspect of participants' lived experiences. For instance, Hou et al. (2018) introduces variables such as marital status, family status,

income level and age at immigration, etc. to measure the wellbeing of immigrants. It was not within the scope of my thesis to consider all elements in recent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences, though consideration of additional facets of participants' lived experiences may inspire a broader, more expansive answer to the question of Chinese immigrants' relationship with their host society, Canada.

### **Delimitations**

The limitations of this study can be manifested in areas such as sampling, word/space limit, objectivity of data translation and the scope of research findings and implications. I have attempted to address each limitation previously with individual justifications. To speak to the de-limitation of this study from a global perspective, this study deliberately chose its participants, scope and boundaries for feasibility concerns.

The richness of narrative data, as previously discussed, requires narrative inquirers to work with relatively small sample size to attend to the complex relationships and negotiations each individual participant goes through. Further, the scope of this study is within the realm of citizenship education for adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada and obtained their permanent residency or Canadian citizenship after 2010. Although each individual manuscript adopts theoretical framework on its own, all research findings contribute to the field of citizenship education for new immigrants. Undoubtedly, recent adult Chinese immigrants' lived experience is broad and extensive. By adopting acculturation, critical multiculturalism and critical race theory as the theoretical frameworks in the three individual manuscripts, the current thesis also sets its boundaries within literature on these three frameworks.

I have used "recent adult Chinese immigrants" and "Chinese immigrants" interchangeably in the discussion of key findings in this thesis. I am fully aware that the six participants in this study cannot represent all Chinese immigrants in Canada. I also admitted that findings from this doctoral study might have limited implications to all Chinese immigrants in Canada. I consider the diversity of Chinese immigrants in Canada in the design of this study. However, due to feasibility concerns, as well as considerations of the scope and

boundaries of this thesis, I highlight the voices and experiential knowledge of the six research participants under economic class to showcase their lived experiences in Canada.

With regard to participants' exposure to post-secondary education in Canada, I acknowledged this might be a limitation for this study. Nonetheless, in article one and two, I have attempted to highlight some of the implications of having Canadian educational experiences on participants' lived experiences in Canada. I purposely set the selection criteria as adult (aged 18 and above) Chinese immigrants who have arrived in Canada after 2010 and have obtained a Canadian permanent residency or citizenship status thereafter to ensure sufficient recruitment for the current study. For future research, I will definitely consider this direction to explore the interconnections between exposure to Canadian higher education and the lived experiences of new immigrants.

This is only a starting point for me and likeminded researchers to be the storyteller of Chinese immigrants living in Canada, a place many of us call home. Moreover, as the research on the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Canada is an emerging field, I hope the current study could shed light on both the collective and individual experiences of Chinese immigrants in Canada. Hence, I do not want to limit the findings of this research only to these Chinese immigrants who came to Canada recently, for economic reasons. I hope these explanations would cast aside readers' potential concerns of this doctoral study. I now turn to directions for future research in the following section.

### **Future Research**

Pertaining to article one, stories of all participants showcase a dynamic acculturation profile. As the very definition of acculturation encompasses the comparison between immigrants' home culture and the culture in the host society, experience is key in interpreting such a comparison. Nonetheless, each individual experiences things differently, based on their exposure to the specific environment. As such, we need more empirical data to understand the acculturation process of immigrants. Future studies might consider a longitudinal approach to examine immigrants' acculturation over a long period of time.

Some participants in this research also shared their understandings of bilingualism in Canada, with a focus on their critical take on the language policies in Quebec. However, this discussion on the language policy in Quebec was rather brief in article two. Future research can expand the discussion on the power dynamics between English and French in the Quebecois context, from the immigrants' perspectives. Furthermore, notions such as linguistic capital, mother tongue maintenance and multilingualism could also be considered in the above discussions to update and enrich the existing literature.

As my doctoral thesis collected data during the pandemic, participants' experiences were interwoven with this global health crisis. For instance, in the third article, I have reported Chinese immigrants' understanding of racism during the pandemic. Additionally, their understanding of public policies in Canada was primarily from a COVID-related perspective. Future research could consider a comparative approach to critically examine Chinese immigrants' lived experiences before, during and after the pandemic. Such a comparative study may expand and enrich the discussion of CRT in a Canadian context, with perspectives and voices of Chinese immigrants.

### **Next Steps**

Finishing this thesis is not an ending, but a beginning for my academic journey. In the introduction chapter, I have talked about the responsibility I shoulder as a Chinese immigrant; that is, to enhance mutual understanding between the Chinese community and the multicultural Canadian family. I will carry this responsibility into my future research and teaching. As a narrative inquiry researcher, I will continue sharing stories of Chinese immigrants to inform Canadians of these lived realities. I want to contribute to the integration of Chinese immigrants in Canada. I will also continue my research in the domain of citizenship education. With joint efforts of researchers, policy makers, citizens of Canada and the world, I hope to refine our understanding of citizenship with experiential knowledge from everyone. With regard to my interests in Chinese immigration in Canada, I will keep exploring answers to the overarching research question in this doctoral thesis, "How can

lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants inform or supplement our current understanding of citizenship education for adult immigrants?”

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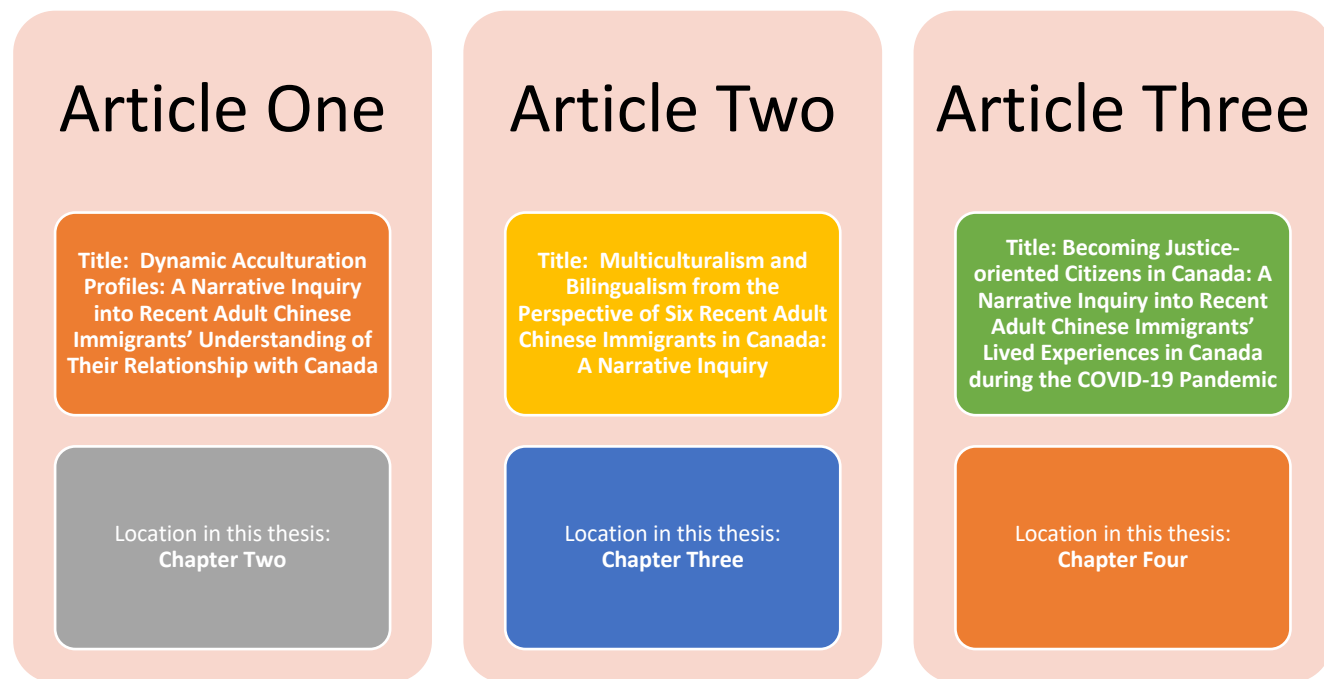
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## Appendix A

Figure 2

*Article Progression and Location in the Thesis*

## Appendix B

**Table 4**

*Research Questions and Answers in Three Articles*

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1) What are the lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants?	All three articles.
2) How would a Chinese immigrant in Canada weigh their Canadian-ness versus their Chinese-ness?	Primarily in article one. Article two also answers this question.
3) What are the roles of education or citizenship education, in particular, in shaping recent Chinese immigrants' understanding of their relationship with Canada?	Primarily in article two. Article one potentially addresses this question as well.
4) How may recent Chinese immigrants' lived experiences inform education, social and political changes in Canada?	All three articles.
How can lived experiences of recent Chinese immigrants inform or supplement our current understanding of citizenship education for adult immigrants?	All three articles.

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## Appendix C

Table 5

*Research Timeline*

Tasks to fulfill	Proposed time frame	Status update
Ethics application	November 2021 to January 2022	Received ethics approval in February 2022.
Data collection	February to June 2022	Finished last interview in May 2022.
Data transcription and translation	June to November 2022	Transcription and translation finished in October 2022.
Completing initial research texts	December 2022 to February 2023	Finished in February 2023. Also starts to write up thesis February 2023.
Participants' co-construction	February to March 2023	Finished in February 2023. Thesis write up happens simultaneously.
Final write-up of the narratives	March 2023	Finished in March 2023. Thesis write up happens simultaneously.
Initial data analysis	April 2023	Finished in April 2023. Thesis write up happens simultaneously.
Final data analysis	April to May 2023	Finished in April 2023. Thesis write up happens simultaneously.
Write up the thesis	February to end of May 2023	First draft done by May 20, 2023.

*Note:* Write up of the thesis happens when the initial research texts were completed.