

Understanding Chinese International Students' Leisure Behaviour

by
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VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY

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Presented as part of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure

Management within the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at

Vancouver Island University

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DECLARATIONS

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

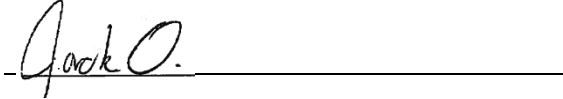
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Abstract

International students play an important role in Canadian educational institutions and in Canadian society more broadly. They not only contribute to the cultural diversity of the academic environment, but they also bring great economic benefits (MacRae, 2011). Chinese international students constitute the largest portion of international students in Canada. As a minority group, Chinese international students face multiple challenges in academic as well as in daily lives, and their leisure experience is one of the aspects that are affected. This study aims to reveal the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behavior. Ten semi-structured interviews with Chinese international students from Vancouver Island University were conducted to learn about their leisure experiences, and Creswell's (2013) method of analysis was employed throughout the data analysis process. To understand the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behavior, this study is guided by social ecological theory (SET). This theoretical framework revealed how intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social/environment factors influenced Chinese international students' leisure behavior. The results of this study can not only benefit this group but also other international student groups by identifying their leisure facilitators and constraints, and help leisure service providers to facilitate leisure activities on campus.

Keywords: Chinese International Students; Leisure behavior; Social Ecological, Semi-structured

Interviews

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Prologue

Being an international student was never easy, and I didn't realize that until I became one of them. On June 20th, 2013, I graduated from Hebei University of Technology, and two paths lay ahead of me: finding a stable job just like my peers, and stay with the same routines my whole life, or study abroad, which has many uncertainties, but surely will help me get away break away from these routines. I felt "young and restless," and gave up my easy cozy life, moved away from family and friends to become an international student in Canada.

I was enrolled in Sustainable Leisure Management in Vancouver Island University. All I heard about before my landing was how beautiful Canada is, and how friendly the people are there. I have to admit that my decision to go abroad was grounded in my desire to achieve a higher level of education for a better future, but also to try something new and different. With high hopes and excitement, I started my journey as an international student.

The collision between dream and reality came so fast that I didn't even know how to respond, and the feeling of helpless was the first slap on my face that woke me up from my fantasies. At the Vancouver airport, in front of the boarder officer, nerves and stress washed away my excitement, my brain turned blank, and I couldn't muster a word to the officer before me. At that moment, embarrassment and regret flooded me, and I questioned myself: Am I really ready for this? I'd never been entirely independent before this; my whole life, there was always someone to look out for me. But right there, right at that time, I felt I was being left alone, even though the airport was crowded with hundreds of people.

I spent my first semester studying language. The environment in the language course was easy and relaxed; I had my balanced time between my studies and my social life, and aced almost all of the projects and tests. This greatly enhanced my confidence, and after this three-

month polishing, I moved on to my actual programme thinking that I would be fine. Contrary to my expectations, this became the point where my confidence began to fall apart.

The first few months of academic life were harsh. I always struggled in one particular class, not only to follow the professor, but also because of the great amount of knowledge I needed to absorb. My mind was continuously translating the material, which exhausted me every single day. Endless work awaited me after class, which took up all my time and strength. With my full dedication, I still couldn't perform as well as my domestic classmates, and that really hurt my feelings. I started to doubt myself, and I was depressed most of the time. I didn't want to let my parents down, even though their only expectation was that I take care of myself; I didn't know if I could make to the end, and at some point, I wondered why I had given everything up everything to come to this foreign land and struggle all by myself.

I was not the only one who was struggling. A lot of my Chinese classmates were experiencing the same anxieties and confusion as I did. Many times I've heard them complain about hard it was, and how much they wished they had never come to Canada. However, none of them ever stopped their journey and headed back to China. Rather, they stayed and completed their studies. No matter the struggle, they endured the pains and made it till the end.

They were the people within whom I spent most of my time, and became familiar with their daily struggles. As a witness who has the same lived experience, I understand what Chinese international students have been through, and what compromises they make to study overseas. When I was choosing my thesis topic, I was reminded of their smiling faces. I knew that I have to do something for them, and for the Chinese students who would follow.

I had many thoughts and flashbacks of this group of friends. I saw myself hanging out with my Chinese friends on a Sunday night at a Chinese restaurant, chattering and laughing. I

saw myself walking home from the aquatic centre, shaking and quivering in the rain, swearing that I would never go again when it's raining- I missed last bus and refused to wait another 40 minutes for the next one coming. I saw myself as the only Chinese student in an outdoor event, when my other Chinese friends all refused to go because they didn't want to communicate with others in English. All of the memories and feelings reminded me of Chinese students' wellbeing and how leisure plays a role therein. With that in mind, I started to plot my research and hoped that my study can be beneficial to Chinese students, and may also make a difference in the field of leisure studies.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Due to its high quality educational system and cultural diversity, Canada has become the seventh most popular educational destination in the world among international students (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010), 196,138 international students traveled to Canada to study in 2009. By 2014, the number of international students studying in Canada had grown to 336,497, a 42% increase since 2009 (CBIE, 2015). International students play an important role both in educational institutions and in society; they not only contribute to the cultural diversity of the academic environment, but also bring great economic benefits (Maureen, 2011). For local communities, international students are valuable sources to create employment opportunities and generate revenue (Andrade, 2006).

Despite the growth in international students, there is a growing concern for the students' wellbeing. Researchers have reported that international students not only experience the everyday challenges of university life, but they also encounter unique psychological stressors due to their cross-cultural experiences. International students in Canada face multiple challenges. For example, they are impacted by power differences that occur when people from different cultural backgrounds come to live together and form cultural groups (Berry, 1997). Power difference is quite normal when ethnic minorities confront the dominant local culture (Li, 2015). A host culture that embraces diversity will contribute to new-comers' adjustment to local society, while a close-minded hosting culture, which is full of discrimination or exclusiveness, can increase international students' psychological stressors, causing anxiety and depression (Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; Li, 2015). Many international students also confront difficulties

around language acquisition and proficiency. This not only affects their academic performance, but also their social adjustment (Akanwa, 2015).

Studies have also shown that international students from non-European countries endure more acculturative stress in North America due to their unique cultural background (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Behl, Laux, Roseman, Tihamiyu, & Spann, 2017; Zhou, Zhang, & Stodolska, 2017). These studies linked acculturative stress with a host of negative outcomes among immigrant populations, and researchers believe that Chinese international students suffer from such stress. We can attribute this increased stress to factors such as differences between the two educational systems and differences in social norms (Wan, 2001; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). This causes Chinese international students to report higher rates of anxiety, increased academic pressure, cultural misunderstandings, and social isolation (Sherry et al., 2009; McDowell, Fang, Kosutic, & Griggs, 2012). Taken together, these stressors further impaired their psychological wellbeing (Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015). Zhou, Zhang and Stodolska (2017) also reported that Chinese students' acculturative stress was interrelated to their plans and reasons for seeking foreign education. In their studies, students who intended to stay in the United States permanently, as well as those who were pressured to study overseas by their families, suffer from higher rates of acculturative stress. In contrast, students who planned to return to China after graduation reported lower levels of stress about socialization and communication because they did not see the necessity for them to be highly integrated into the American society.

While these changes can have a devastating impact on their overall university experience, they can also negatively influence their leisure participation, and their general sense of wellbeing (Barron, 2002). Leisure experiences are crucial in terms of improving the quality of life and

maintaining physical and mental wellbeing of international students (Tsai, Lo, Yang, Keller & Lyu, 2015). However, the mainstream culture of a new country can influence every aspect of an international student's life, including their leisure activities. Researchers have reported that the level of international students' participation in leisure activities in the US institutions is lower than that of domestic students (Yan & Cardinal, 2013). Another multinational study discovered that Asian and African students have the lowest participation level in physical leisure activities, while domestic students are more willing to get involved (Yoh, Yang & Gordon, 2008). This research suggests that international students are not actively participating in leisure activities, which can have negative effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Culture is one of the many factors that inform this trend. In mainland China, leisure is usually translated into Chinese as *Xiu xian* (i.e., 休闲), which reveals a great deal about the idea of leisure in Chinese culture. 休 (*Xiu*) in Chinese traditionally has rich, colorful connotations and symbolizes fine qualities of both people and objects. To its present day, 休 primarily means "taking a rest" or "relaxing. 闲 (*Xian*) was first understood as a time to recover from exhaustion of the flesh and mind. Today, its primary meaning is "free and unoccupied" (Liu, Yeh, Chick, & Zinn, 2008). In articles, Chinese people possibly held a negative attitude toward leisure as they put a strong emphasis on work in their everyday lives, particularly to grow food and provide for the family (Wang & Stringer, 2000). Some Chinese parents are still influenced by this tradition, and view the concept of leisure as "not hardworking" or "a waste of time." Manrai and Manrai (1995) found that the negative attitude that Asian people used to have associated with leisure participation were related to the popular values that held in Asian societies, such as priority of hard work, respect for learning, and the desire for an orderly and harmonious society. Yu and Berryman (1996) found that the notion of leisure has is less culturally relevant in China than in

North America. As a result, Walker and Deng (2004) found that within Chinese culture, individuals often associate a sense of guilt with leisure experiences. Because they have been raised with such values, most Chinese students tend to be highly motivated by their academic achievement, and thus neglect leisure. Chinese people are also known to emphasize social rather than personal needs and believe that fulfillment can primarily be achieved through hard work (Fritz, Chin & DeMarinis, 2008). Taken together, this body of literature suggests that leisure has not been prioritized and/or recognized in China.

Even when Chinese international students do participate in leisure activities, as ethnic minorities, they have different leisure patterns and preferences compared to others. These divergent patterns are more related to cultural differences than socio-economic or social class variations (Xiong, 2006). In Yu and Berryman's (1996) study found that Chinese international students largely engaged in home-oriented leisure activities (e.g. watching Chinese TV shows/series, listening to Chinese music/songs, playing ma-jiong/card-games, and talking on the telephone) instead of outdoor activities or sports (e.g. biking, hiking, and picnicking). Wang and Stringer (2000) also confirmed that Chinese international students are more interested in specific sports like billiards, badminton, and table tennis which are more "Asian involved" and they tend to participate in activities that they had already experienced before studying abroad. This may result in the phenomenon where Chinese international students remain within their own culturally homogenous circles (Jiao, 2006)

The leisure experiences of Chinese international students in Canada are worth exploring. Chinese international students are one of the largest groups of international students in Canada; Citizenship and Immigration Canada reports that Chinese students comprise one-third (33%) of Canada's international student population, and have been ranked as the largest international

student group in Canada since 2004 (CIC, 2014). Moreover, Chinese international students are temporary residents during their study, and contribute enormously to Canadian society during their stay. They are also ideally situated to immigrate to Canada because they are typically young, well educated, and have adapted to life in Canada. Therefore, Chinese international students are an important group within Canadian society, and their wellbeing merits serious attention.

The leisure experiences of international students have not received much attention in leisure studies (Maureen, 2011). Within the field of leisure studies, a significant body of literature has focused on various aspects of leisure behavior among Chinese immigrants, or is being conducted on the leisure experiences of international students in the United States (Allen, Drane, Byon & Mohn, 2010; Yan & Cardinal, 2013); however, only two of these studies examined college student populations (Li & Stodolska, 2006, 2007). Chinese students in Canadian universities have yet to be the subject of scholarly analysis. As a minority group in Canada, Chinese students have unique leisure experiences because they are inevitably influenced by Canadian mainstream culture, while at the same time, they try to maintain close connections to their origin country and retain their cultural traits (Li & Stodolska, 2007). They share similarities with Chinese immigrants in relationship to issues surrounding cultural change and integration, but because of their temporary social status, they have unique lived experiences. For instance, they normally don't have their family members in Canada, so they spend more of their spare time contacting family members and friends back home; legally, they are only allowed to work a small number of hours, and they rely financially on family support. This is further complicated as they cannot apply for financial support from the Canadian government or the universities they attend because of their foreign status. Thus, their leisure experiences have

distinctive characteristics that are differentiated from other students. Even though attention has been given to leisure constraints that prohibited Chinese international students' leisure participation, the existing literature has not addressed the factors that can contribute to their leisure participation. The existing literature does not consider the ways each factor that contributes to participation in leisure intersects with another. Rather, studies tend to simplify each factor and view it flat rather than as dialectic, which would foreground all of the possibilities that can impact Chinese international students' leisure participation.

In order to address these gaps in literature, this study aimed to better understand leisure behavior of Chinese international students studying in Canada and the factors that contributed to their participation in leisure activities. This study not only contributes to leisure literature, but also outlines recommendations and suggestions for local recreation providers and university authorities to further improve Chinese students' participation in leisure activities.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definition of terms may add clarity to the study.

International student: an individual who is a citizen of another country enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in a country on a temporary visa.

Leisure: the use of free time, conceptualized in the contexts of time, activity, and state of mind, producing the benefits of positive mental and physical health and psychological well-being and happiness (Hsieh, Spaulding, & Riney, 2004).

Leisure activity: any activity freely chosen by each individual during free time or non-work hours of the day, such as socializing, sports, entertainment, recreational activities and hobbies, etc (Tsai & Coleman, 1999).

Recreation: tangible activities performed during times of leisure or to gain the physical and

psychological benefits of leisure (Godbey, 1981).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In order to contextualize this study, this literature review covers the following topics: international education, Canadian international education system, international students' leisure in Canada, leisure in Chinese culture, and the leisure participation of Chinese international students in North America.

International Education

In the last half century, more students from across the world have chosen to relocate and pursue higher education in industrialized countries such as the United States, the UK, Australia, France, and Canada (Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Yang, Noels, & Saumure, 2006). In the last two decades, the number of students studying overseas has increased due to industrialization and knowledge internationalization (Mosneag & Winther, 2013). In addition, recent immigration policies in some popular destination countries tend to make immigration and visa procedures easier and more transparent, which in return promote an influx of international students to these countries (Akanwa, 2015; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). Due to global economic expansion, overseas studying and living expenses have become more affordable to wider populations, which has positively influenced students' decisions to study abroad (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013).

International students have become one of the most important stakeholder groups in the global higher education system (Deviney, Vrba, Mills & Ball, 2014). Economically, the tuition fees paid by international students construct a large financial foundation for most academic institutions (Meulders, 2004). On average, international students pay three times as much as a domestic student (Meulders, 2004). Apart from the economic benefits, international students allow universities to foster international business ventures, opportunities to enhance intercultural communication skills, and have catalyzed the internationalization of academic curriculum

(Meulders, 2004). International students currently comprise a large portion of the university population, and will continue to increase in numbers as more students joining this trend (Deviney et al., 2014)

Although the motivation to study abroad varies, research has reported a range of benefits that international student can experience. Spiering and Erickson (2006) explain, “students can develop new perspectives on academic subjects and real-world issues, achieve proficiency in a foreign language, experience personal growth, and develop valuable career skills” (p. 316). Mastering a second language is one of the most important facets of studying abroad (Amuzie & Winke, 2009). Since second language acquisition requires considerable time and effort, adequate language interaction, and cultural exposure (Amuzie & Winke, 2009), studying abroad has become an efficient way to learn a foreign language. In addition to language acquisition, studying abroad cultivates the students’ ability to learn about themselves, live independently, interact actively with others, and deal with life’s daily obstacles (Williams, 2012).

Canadian International Education System

Canada ranks as the seventh most popular destination for international students around the world (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2015). Statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s report (2014) found that over 160,000 international students come to Canada annually, with an annual increase of 10% since 2004. International students not only create a culturally diverse atmosphere in Canadian academic institutions, they also contribute financially to universities (Gómez, Alfredo, & Glass, 2014; MacRae, 2013; Shen, 2011; Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007; Zhang & Zhou, 2010).

Andrade (2006) reported that there are several motivational factors among educational institutions to increase the recruitment of international students. The increasing need for

intercultural education can contribute to intercultural learning and understanding. “New blood” also helps institutions remain competitive in the world market by solving their funding shortfalls and building an institution’s reputation overseas (Andrade, 2006; Marshall, 2005).

The financial benefits that international students bring to Canada go beyond educational institutions. According to Canada’s International Education Strategy (2014), international students spend \$7.7 billion on their accommodations, tuition, and transportation in the Canada annually, and this figure is expected to reach over \$16 billion by 2022. This annual spending will create more job opportunities for Canadians, and increased international student expenditures help support Canada’s economy (Fallis, 2013; Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008).

International students also bring a range of assets to their host countries (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yang, Webster, & Prosser, 2011; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). International students are often young and well-educated, which makes them high quality workers (Asanin & Wilson, 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yang, Webster, & Prosser, 2011; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Mosneaga and Winther (2013) described international students as “talent mobility in globalising knowledge economy” (p. 192). The knowledge and experience international students acquire in their studies make critical economic resources (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). In addition, international students have been viewed as potential immigrants, especially in Canada in the past decade. Thus, international students are valuable supplements to Canadian labour force (Choudhury, 2014).

There is a strategic link between international education and immigration in Canada. According to a report by Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) (2015) on immigration, 67% of international students surveyed expressed a willingness to pursue immigration to Canada, and identified immigration as a deciding factor in their choice to study in

Canada. To support the temporary and permanent integration of international students into the Canadian labour market, the Canadian government set specific strategies to make immigration for international students easier. For example, a recent policy allows international students to work part-time during the school term and full-time during holidays, which gives international students more chances to earn money and gain skills (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). The federal government has also implemented an immigration application approach – the Canadian Experience Class –to simplify the immigration application process for temporary foreign workers and foreign graduates with qualifying Canadian work experience (CIC, 2015). Currently there are two federal level approaches that enhance students’ changes of becoming permanent residents. One is the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and the other is the Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSWC). These two programs both require candidates to have at least one year of Canadian work experience in a competitive field and apply through the CEC (CICA, 2013). In addition, several provinces have also created Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which offers an economic immigration pathway for international graduates or in demand foreign workers who can contribute economically to the province (CIC, 2015).

International Student Motivations and Challenges to Studying Abroad

Researchers have reported several reasons that attract international students to study abroad: (a) the peaceful domestic environment; (b) comparatively low cost of living and education; (c) more opportunities to gain work experience during and after studies; (d) the identification of a multicultural society; and (e) a celebrated international reputation of the country (Choudhury, 2014; Humphries, Rauh & McDine, 2013; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008; Shen, 2011). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also identified economic stability and security as “push factors” while tuition, low living expenses, and personal preference as “pull factors” of studying

abroad. Similarly, Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) found that students were motivated by the benefits that accompany the study experience such as employment and lifestyle when they decide to go abroad. While to most international students' primary motivating factor is the desire to obtain advanced knowledge that will differentiate them from their peers (Akanwa, 2015), it is also reported that studying overseas provides an opportunity to immigrate to other countries (Akanwa, 2015; Jackson, 2008).

Despite the motivations and benefits that international students' experience, there also face challenges in the host country. Often international student experience the process of acculturation during their immersion in a host country as they are exposed to a new socio-cultural and educational environment (Zhou, Zhang, & Stodolska, 2017). Previous studies have documented these acculturative stressors (Cao, Zhu, & Meng, 2016; Zhou, Zhang, & Stodolska, 2017). Acculturation is defined as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p.5), and acculturative stress has been linked to a host of negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among immigrant populations (Akanwa, 2015). Yan and Berliner (2011) claimed that Chinese students suffer more acculturative stress compared to other international students. Cultural differences such as collectivism versus individualism, and cooperation versus competition between Eastern and Western cultures generate culture shock and homesickness, particularly international students have difficulty coping with the host culture, as well as other different cultures. Redmond (2000) stated that the greater the cultural distance between the home culture and the host culture, the more cultural difficulties the international students would experience.

Constantine, Okazaki, and Utsey (2004) reported that insufficient English proficiency was another major acculturative stressor for Chinese international students. English proficiency is crucial for international students' academic success and adjustment to the new society (Akanwa, 2015). Yeh and Inose (2003) stated that learning the English language may be the single greatest barrier experienced by international students as it affects their academic performance and impacts their social ability, which ultimately affects their engagement with other students. In fact, Cheng and Erben (2012) found that Chinese postsecondary students generally have language anxiety when it comes to written and spoken English.

Another factor that will highly affect international students' performance is social adjustment (Akanwa, 2015). Montgomery and McDowell (2009) reported that international students in the U.K. are disadvantaged because of their separation from their own culture and because of maladjustment to new methods of education. Similarly, William and Johnson (2011) investigated the relationship between American and international students and discovered that the two groups rarely build friendships, and this situation is "exacerbated when the context of adjustment is marked by prejudicial attitudes or a history of problematic intercultural relations" (William & Johnson, 2011, p. 41). Furthermore, international students often suffer from academic and social challenges including homesickness, isolation due to poor social adjustment, lack of support systems from school and society, ignorance of support services and financial challenges (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao & Lynch, 2007; Choudhury, 2014).

Chinese International Education

The Chinese economy started its reform process in 1978 which produced tremendous success in "liberating the ownership structure, labour market, and the manufacturing industry" to the world (Yao, 2015, p. 309). As the result of its dramatic economic expansion, China achieved

the same degree of industrialization as Europe (Zhang, de Haan & Fan, S. G., 2010). In 1978, Chinese Economic Reform began by introducing market principles into its economic system and brought China with decollectivized agriculture, foreign investment. As a result, private businesses bloomed (Brandt & Rawski, 2008). This economic reform and the opening of Chinese markets to global trade not only transformed China's economy, it also brought fundamental changes to China's social and political environment (Huang, 2010). For example, longstanding social norms, reflected in the old sayings such "don't travel far when your parents are still alive." Does not restrict young generations as it once did (Brandt & Rawski, 2008, p. 2). Rapid growth in the Chinese economy changed some parents' mindset, and they now allow their children to travel far from home to pursue their dreams. The rapidly expanding Chinese economy also made studying overseas more affordable for more families (Ding & Li, 2012).

Over the last 20 years, the average annual growth rate of Chinese students studying abroad worldwide has grown to 25.7% (Li, 2010). In 2006, the number of Chinese students studying abroad had reached 134,000 (Li, 2010). According to the Institute of International Education (2008), China has become the largest supplier of international students to countries around the world over the past decade. These results are echoed by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2014) report, which stated that Chinese students make up 33% of Canada's international student population. Chinese students have been the largest international student group in Canada since 2004.

Chinese International Students' Comprised Wellbeing

The challenges that Chinese students face during their overseas life can compromise their physical and psychological wellbeing, and cause their dissatisfaction and even depression with both their studies and with life in general (Chirkov et al, 2007; Choudhury, 2014; Grayson, 2008;

Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014). Zhang and Goodson (2011) compared the psychosocial adjustment level of Asian international students with that of U.S. domestic students, and found that students from Asia suffer higher risks of psychosocial maladjustment. They also tend to experience more psychological distress (e.g. insomnia, anxiety) and more social stress (e.g. extreme nervous with speech, unable to deal with relationships) than students from European countries studying in the United States. This was largely because Asian students go through more culture shock than students from Europe. Fritz, Chin and DeMarinis (2008) reported that Asian students feel more anxiety and pressure due to their cultural expectations. In Chinese culture, family members have high expectations surrounding their children's academic success, which prioritizes individual success as their first priority. Failure to produce high academic scores leaves students and their parents feeling feelings of failure and shame. Fritz et al. (2008) also found that Asian students are not as willing to speak to psychologists as other mental health workers when they encounter personal or educational difficulties, because in Chinese culture, psychological problems are often associated with shame and selfishness (Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Hence, Chinese students tend to ignore their mental health issues and avoid seeking professional help when needed, which in turn exacerbates their symptoms.

In addition to psychological distress, Chinese students' social wellbeing is also compromised. Studies have shown that international students, especially Chinese students, suffer from social isolation largely because of low engagement with their host community (Choudhury, 2014). Researchers have reported that international students feel less discriminated against, perceive less hatred, and feel less negative emotions when they are more satisfied with their social network of support (Fritz, Chin & DeMarinis, 2008). In their 2014 report, the Canadian Bureau of International Educators (CBIE) described international students' friendship-making

patterns. It confirmed that international students struggle to make Canadian friends and to adjust living in Canada (CBIE, 2014). 1500 international students participated in the CBIE survey and 58% of them reported having no or very few Canadian friends. While most of these students agreed that they have an overall good perception of Canada, over half of them admitted that they would like to have more opportunities to interact with White students (CBIE, 2014).

Unpleasant relations with host students can also negatively influence Chinese international students' wellbeing, particularly as Chinese students are group-oriented and strive to maintain harmonious relationships with others (Choudhury, 2014). International students tend to view the language barrier as a difficulty that impedes them from integrating with domestic students (Mori, 2000). It is even harder for the two groups to build friendships when some domestic students believe that increased enrolment among Asian students creates a more competitive campus environment (Findlay & Kohler, 2010).

Leisure and wellbeing. Despite the wellbeing deprivation Chinese students face, researchers have reported that leisure helps promote Chinese students' wellbeing. For example, leisure activities decrease personal anxiety among Chinese students (Allen, Drane, Byon & Mohn, 2010; Yan & Cardinal, 2013a; Yan & Cardinal, 2013b). Yan and Cardinal (2013a) conducted a study of Chinese international graduate students who enrolled in the U.S. institutions, and found that participating in physical activities not only allowed the students to have a break from their academic work, but allowed them personal time to clear their minds, talk to themselves, and think things through. Stack and Iwasaki (2009) reported that participation in leisure activities promoted interpersonal relationships and cultural understanding as some Chinese students admitted that their social networks were reinforced by their leisure participation, and leisure helped them adapt to life challenges. This led to a further reduction in

negative feelings and made them feel less stressed in the host community. Similarly, Allen, Drane, Byon, and Mohn (2010) also found that Chinese students who participate in popular sport had more opportunities for socialization with domestic students and might have greater access to valuable social capital.

Chinese International Students' Leisure Constraints

Li and Stodolska (2006; 2007) explored Chinese graduate students' leisure experiences and discovered that most Chinese students expected their leisure practices to be meaningful rather than simply spare time. Li and Stodolska (2006) indicated that Chinese students' leisure options were mostly influenced by their transitional status. Even though Chinese students are aware of the importance of leisure, they must still forego some of leisure opportunities in order to meet cultural expectations surrounding hard work and academic success. Some students may not be satisfied with their leisure practices because of limited time, work-related pressures, or lack of accessibility to the leisure activities they enjoyed in their home country.

Li and Stodolska (2007) explored Chinese students' attitudes toward leisure, as well as leisure's role in their everyday lives. Students saw the importance of leisure but also admitted that they cannot freely enjoy leisure when they study abroad and experience structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal constraints in their leisure participation. Lack of time, language barriers, cultural differences, lack of friends, and feelings of guilt when they pursue leisure are also mentioned in multiple research studies (Xiong, 2006; Li & Stodolska, 2007; Walker, Jackson & Deng, 2007; Walker & Wang, 2008; Williams & Johnson, 2011). For example, most Chinese students give priority to their studies and work and sacrifice their leisure time. This reflects their cultural norms that prioritize study over leisure activities.

Language and cultural barriers also prevent Chinese students from building leisure networks with local students. Many Chinese students feel insecure about their language skills, and this insecurity may turn into unwillingness to communicate with others. Cultural differences also cultivate different leisure values and preferences. For example, Chinese people's leisure activities are mainly informed by Taoism, which encourages people to focus on the harmony between nature and the human body, as well as Confucianism, which advocates a relatively free mind or state (Liu, et al., 2008) Both ideologies encourage people to concentrate on inner spiritual matters instead of outside materials (Wang & Stringer, 2000). As a result, traditional Chinese leisure activities are relatively sedentary, such as painting, gardening, and playing chess, whereas Western leisure activities are more physical involved, such as hiking, basketball, surfing, etc.,. Cultural differences resulted in Chinese students' disparate leisure preferences, which exacerbates the difficulties they face using leisure as a means to connect with and befriend domestic students.

Insufficient social networks also deprive Chinese students of opportunities to share their feelings while participating in leisure activities. Due in part to language and cultural barriers, Chinese students struggle to build their social networks within a short period of time. In such circumstances, they often adopt passive leisure choices. For example, they focus on home-based activities such as watching TV or reading books, they often participate in less time-consuming leisure activities, and seek supports by making friends with fellow international students who share their home culture (Li & Stodolska, 2006; Yan & Cardinal, 2013a).

Studies that explored young immigrants' participation in leisure activities from the perspective of assimilation of minority members found that immigrants were restricted to participate in some of their desired leisure pursuits because of their unfinished assimilation

process (Yu & Berryman, 1996; Stodolska, 2000). Yu and Berryman (1996) analyzed the relationship between young Chinese immigrants' favorite leisure activities and the factors that constrain their participation in these pursuits such as self-esteem and acculturation. This study revealed that new Chinese immigrants' leisure patterns were consistent with their participation in leisure prior to immigration. As acculturation levels increased, however, new immigrants tended to participate more extensively in sports and were more often affiliated with recreational clubs. The authors thus concluded that leisure participation could facilitate young immigrants' immersion into their new surroundings.

Culture's Role in Chinese Students' Leisure

When discussing the leisure behaviour of Chinese international students, it is necessary to review leisure in Chinese culture. Leisure is a very important component within Chinese history. To explore the influence that Chinese history and culture has on leisure patterns in China, Liu, Yeh, Chick and Zinn (2008) explored the influence of Chinese traditional thought on Chinese leisure. Specifically, Taoism and Confucianism, the two significant Chinese traditional philosophical ideologies, have had major influence on the Chinese ideals surrounding leisure. These two lines of thought developed around the classical period of ancient Greece, in the fourth and fifth centuries BCE (Liu, Yeh, Chick & Zinn, 2008). Wang and Stringer (2000) also discussed how Taoism is an essential part of Chinese culture, and how it influenced Chinese people's leisure. According to Wang and Stringer (2000), Taoism is highly valued in Chinese culture and operates in peoples' lives as a set of behaviour principles. Although leisure in China is dominated by principles from traditional Chinese culture, the meaning of leisure for Chinese people is not entirely different from that in Canada or North America. Wang and Walker (2008) examined the meanings of leisure in a cross-cultural study, and explored different understandings

of leisure between Chinese people and their Canadian counterparts. They compared the results with a previous research that focused on Euro-North Americans and found out that there are similarities between Chinese people's understanding of leisure, and those of European North Americans. For both groups, leisure is "a feeling of relaxation." While some people believe that leisure transcends cultural boundaries, the studies summarized above show that culture can still influence the ideals and meanings surrounding leisure in different contexts.

Research conducted by Walker, Jackson and Deng (2007) on Asian international students in the U. S. may be useful to understand Chinese international students' leisure in Canada. This research revealed that Asian international students are motivated to succeed academically because of cultural differences and traditional values. As well, Jackson and Walker (2006) conducted a comparative cross-cultural study and found that passive leisure activities were more popular and socially acceptable for mainland Chinese university students whereas Canadian students prefer active leisure activities. Although this study focused on students from mainland China, their cultural influence on leisure can enlighten research on all Chinese international students in Canada.

Ethnic Enclosure. An important element to understanding culture and leisure participation is ethnic enclosure. Ethnic enclosure in racial minorities' leisure patterns is evident when minority groups associate predominantly with people from their own cultural background, and use ethnic community resources to facilitate their leisure activities (Stodolska, 2007; Stodolska, Marcinkowski & Yi-Kook, 2007). Stodolska (2007) broadly divided ethnic enclosure into two categories: (1) enclosure related to discrimination and exclusion by mainstream society, and; (2) enclosure ones related to minorities' preferences. A study conducted on Polish immigrants' leisure activities in Canada suggested that minority members' ethnically enclosed

leisure activities tended to protect them from ethnically related unfair treatment (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998). Min and Kim (2000) also reported that Korean Americans experienced discrimination during their leisure activities, which led them to limit their social interactions to their co-ethnic group. Here, Korean Americans displayed attachment to their ethnic identity as a means of self-protection, self-preservation, and self-empowerment. Mickle and Chan (1986) investigated in Chinese students' adaption to within Canadian universities and found that Chinese students endure stress from high family expectations, language difficulties, cultural differences, and feelings of discrimination. However, when they remained within their own ethnic group, they often found it less stressful because of the shared support and values.

Cultural preferences also lead cultural minorities to recreate their own ethnic groups (Stodolska, 2007). Stodolska and Jackson (1998) explained that shared cultural and historical backgrounds resulted in Polish Canadians' preferences for associating with the members from their cultural background. Kao and Joyner's study (2004) on interethnic friendships revealed that best friends are more likely to be of the same ethnic group. Jiao (2006) also noticed that the thought of belonging to a group of friends seemed to bring Chinese students much comfort and confidence. In a sense, Chinese circles or friend groups provided these international students with the necessary supports to live and learn in a foreign environment.

Of all international students in Canada, Chinese students are the most likely to form their own co-national peer groups with very limited interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds (Nie, 2005; Minichiello, 2001; Chow, 1997; Chen, 1996; Su, 1995). Asian international students prefer staying within their own culturally homogenous circles, for example, participating in social activities within their own cultures, speaking their own

languages, and celebrating their own festivals, which represent ethnic enclosure (Zhang & Zhou, 2010).

Gaps in the Literature

Although leisure activities can positively influence international students' personal wellbeing (Allen et al., 2010; Yan & Cardinal, 2013a, 2013b), international students face challenges in gaining meaningful leisure experiences. Chinese international students encounter many factors that influence their leisure behaviour including but not limited to, lack of time, lack of self-efficacy, lack of social support, cultural barriers, and lack of information (Yan & Cardinal, 2013a). In addition, Chinese students' attitudes toward leisure are also affected by their transition to a new country as they manage their academic demands, which generates a great deal of confusion, frustration, and stress (Gómez, Urzúa & Glass, 2014; Chirkov et al, 2007; Choudhury, 2014). The challenges that international students encounter have been well documented, however, there is limited understanding to both the factors that facilitate and constrain Chinese international students' participation in leisure. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behaviours. Rather than focusing solely on the factors that may constrain their participation, this study also explores the factors that can positively affect their leisure experience.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behavior, this study utilized social ecological theory (SET) as the theoretical framework. The adoption of a theoretical framework in leisure studies is critical as it helps us understand the foundations of the body of knowledge in leisure field. In social psychological approaches, assimilation and

acculturation framework tends to oversimplify the complexity of intergroup contacts and stereotypes that impact minority groups. To conceptualize the interdependence among people, their behaviour, and their environment, Sallis and Owen (1999) suggested adopting social ecological models. A social ecological framework is unique in acknowledging multiple levels factors and how these social and contextual correlates influence physical activity behaviour, rather than solely focusing on a narrow range of psychosocial elements (Stokols, 1992). From a social ecological perspective, social context, which includes friends, family, and other social relationships, is an important factor that influences behavioural change, (Fleury & Lee, 2006). Social ecological models are normally adopted as an overarching framework to understand the interrelations among diverse personal and environmental factors in human health and illness (Stokols, 1996). This study uses a social ecological approach to understand the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behaviour, as it consists a set of influential factors that can help understand the connections between and among individuals and their social and physical environment (Stokols, 1996). This approach allows us to extend traditional motivational and behavioral and constraints theory in the study of leisure participation, and provide more in-depth insights of components including intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, environmental and organizational factors.

A number of SET models exist in the literature, but the principles of SET are similar as they all highlight the ways in which people's behaviour is influenced by a wide range of factors at multiple levels (Sallis, 2006). SET can be adopted as the framework to investigate Chinese international students' leisure behaviour because its concepts refer to people's relationships with their physical and sociocultural environments (Kaczynski, & Henderson, 2007). This study borrowed components from McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, and Glanz's (1988) SET model and

Sallies et al's SET model. These two models highlight different levels of influence on individual behaviour. Below is a description of the influential factors I selected to include in the study's theoretical framework, and a discussion of how these relate to Chinese international students' leisure behaviour.

Intrapersonal factors are the variables at the center of the SET model, and included individual's knowledge, ethnicity, gender, attitudes, behaviour, self-concept, and skills (McLeroy et al., 1988). In the context of this study, this literature review highlights several intrapersonal factors that influence international Chinese students' leisure behaviour. For example, personality influences one's leisure behaviour. People with extroverted personalities are described as warm, gregarious, assertive, active, excitement-seeking, and having many positive emotions that helps them to reach satisfaction in the activity in which they are involved (Seddigh, Berntson, Platts & Westerlund, 2016). On the contrary, introverted people are more insecure, diffident, passive and stick to convention to avoid risking. Furthermore, Chinese international students' leisure preferences differ in comparison to the host country because of culture. Chinese students stay in their homogenous social circles and mainly participate in collective and indoor activities with their Chinese friends, because these are common activities that resonate with Chinese culture and customs.

Interpersonal factors consist of "formal and informal social networks and social support systems, including the family, work group, and friendship networks" (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 355). Interpersonal factors that influence leisure can include friends, and parents. Researchers have reported that international students often discuss a lack of support systems (friends) when talking about their social activity participation (Chirkov et al, 2007; Choudhury, 2014). These students also identify parental expectations that emphasize academics over leisure as a factor that

impacts their leisure choices. Further, Chinese international students often remain within their own culturally homogenous circles instead of making new friends (Zhang & Zhou, 2010).

Community, institutional, and community factors are distinct from one another, but they all influence Chinese students' participation in leisure activities. Sallis et al. (2006) believe community factors should include neighbourhood, recreation, workplace, and school.

Institutional and organizational factors are understood as social institutions with organizational characteristics that contain community infrastructure, facilities, resources, events, and programs that institutions/organizations provide (Erwin, 2008; McLeroy et al., 1988). In this study, I combined the similar aspects of these two factors and refer to them as "social/environment factors." This captures the factors that community and institutional/organizations have in influencing leisure behavior. In this study, I focused on community factors such as walkability of neighbourhood, community facilities including recreation centre, parks, and transportation, as well as institutional and organizational factors, such as VIU's campus recreation offerings and the City of Nanaimo, as social/environment factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure participation.

The last factor is associated with policies. SET models understand policies and their influence on behavior in a broad context. Sallis et al. frame the policy environment as one that is related to program development (e.g. subsidized programs), zoning of parks or the development of parks and recreation spaces, and transportation regulations. Some policies such as budgets for public recreation facilities and traffic management policies are domain-specific and will mainly impact targeted groups (Sallis et al., 2006). Finally, McLeroy et al. (1988) frame policy as local, state, and laws and policies that will affect people's behavior.

Even though SET has been used successfully in physical activity research and practice (Sallis et al., 2006), it still has its limitations. For example, researchers can gather too much information using SET, which can be too complicated and overwhelming. This depth of information makes it impossible to sort out and report on every single detail in the study context (Golden & Earp, 2012). Further, reporting on all levels of influence may also be unrealistic as authors publish their work, particularly due to the limitations of scholarly research, such as manuscript length (Oncescu, 2015). Within the field of leisure studies, policy issues surely can be isolated as a separate domain, which examines how public decisions are and can be made to develop and apply better analytical methods, institutional designs, and promotional strategies for the public wellbeing. As a result, policy factors are beyond the focus of this study because this research explores leisure behaviour rather than the political and administrative feasibility of upper level recreation management. Given these limiting factors, this study has excluded policy from the framework and limited its scope to SET's intra-, inter-personal, social/environment factors. By limiting the scope of this SET investigation, an in-depth description of certain aspects of what affects Chinese international students' leisure can be provided.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This study is constructed from a social constructivist paradigm, which assumes that people accumulate knowledge from their interpretation of their immediate surroundings to construct their understanding of reality. As a result, realities are socially constructed, fluid, and dynamic (Creswell, 2003). I believe that Chinese international students' leisure behaviour is constructed by several factors that are interrelated, such as cultural background (intrapersonal), the interaction with hosting culture (interpersonal), the programs, services, and infrastructure that are available (institution/organizations). Therefore, this study is framed within a constructivist paradigm.

A constructionist paradigm believes that our knowledge is produced through our daily interactions instead of functioning as direct reflections of the world (Burr, 2003). Constructionists do not believe that existed social and political structures can be directly captured; our perceptions and experiences are the products of our active construction (Chen, Shek, & Bu, 2011). Therefore, a constructivist approach encourages researchers to ask broad and general questions so that participants can provide more information about what they do in their daily lives (Creswell, 2003)

Research Approach

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative research as a naturalistic approach to reality, which enables the researchers to view the world through interpretive and material practices. Henderson (2006) characterizes qualitative approaches exquisite ways to explain experiences and uncover the complexities of social life. Maxwell (2005) also explains that, by using a qualitative approach, researchers can better understand the meanings that people attach to their behaviors, situations, and experiences. This allows researchers to gain a deeper

understanding of the specific context within which the participants act, and to identify and explain unanticipated phenomena and influence events and actions.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at Vancouver Island University (VIU) Nanaimo campus, which is this institution's main campus located in Nanaimo, BC. Apart from Nanaimo campus, VIU also operates three other regional campuses in Duncan, Powell River, and Parksville-Qualicum ("About Vancouver Island University", 2016). VIU, formerly known as Malaspina University-College and before that as Malaspina College, is a Canadian public university on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Since being established in 1969 as Malaspina College, it has contributed to the development of the region's cultural, social, and economic fabric. Like other Canadian universities, Vancouver Island University (VIU) has attracted international students from around the world. In the 2008-2009 academic year, there were 1250 full time international students from more than 80 countries enrolled in a wide range of programs. By 2015-2016, the number has grown to over 2000 (Allan & Ralph, 2015). International students are a sizable funding source for the university. International students also enhance a university's cultural diversity, and many graduates provide a ready supply of highly trained workers who can easily integrate into Canadian society. Among them, Chinese students make up one of the largest portions of international students at VIU at 2135 students. While this large community certainly allows Chinese international students to form their own social communities, they also face most of the difficulties that international students encounter over the course of their studies overseas.

The 2011 Canadian Census reported that Nanaimo had a population of 83,810, and the major driving force for population growth is migration (Economic Development Office of Nanaimo, 2010). These are three components of migration: intra-provincial migrants, inter-

provincial migrants, and international immigrants. Of the three, international immigrants have the lowest numbers in Nanaimo, but they are the only group that has grown consistently since 2003 (Economic Development Office of Nanaimo, 2010). This trend suggests that the increasing number of international students can play an important role in local population blooming and the economy thriving. Therefore, having a clear insight of international students' leisure could benefit local government or educational institutions attracting talent and people who are passionate about leisure lifestyle.

Data Collection Process

Recruitment. To recruit participants, I used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling makes the most effective use of limited resources, which has been widely used in qualitative research to identify and select qualified participants who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest, (Patton, 2002; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Purposeful sampling was the best approach because it allowed me to recruit participants who met the criteria of the study: Chinese international students attending Vancouver Island University. For the purposes of this study, all the current Chinese international students, including those who were taking the English as Second Language program (ESL) at VIU were considered appropriate participants for the study. The ESL program prepared international students for university education. The Chinese students in this programme were doing language preparation for their later studies, and once they finished the ESL program, they would be enrolled into undergraduate or graduate programs at Vancouver Island University.

To recruit participants, I posted recruitment posters on campus bulletin boards (e.g. Cafeteria, campus panel). Participants who showed interest in the study contacted me by phone and/or email. The initial conversation with participants allowed me to further describe the study

details and answer any questions or concerns they had. For participants that wanted to participate in the study, I organized a day, time and location to conduct the interview.

Following a qualitative research design, I used semi-structured interviews with Chinese international students to gather knowledge of what influences their leisure behaviour. I prepared a written interview guide in advance to help structure the interview. The guide outlined the key questions that should be explored with the participants. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for flexibility in relation to adjusting the order of the questions, and allowed me to emphasize some questions, depending on the each individual participant (Given, 2008).

Each interview lasted between 25 to 45 minutes, and took place at a location that was convenient for the participants to access, for example, a study room in the library, which was booked in advance or in the cafeteria. At the beginning of the interview I reviewed the consent form, and had each individual sign it before I began the interview. I ensured them their involvement was voluntary and they could exit the interview at any point in time. I end the interviews by providing the participants with my contact information in case they had anything further to add to the interview.

All interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed in English. Participants then received a copy of the transcript to change, delete, and confirm that the information was correct. All participants were encouraged to use English in the interview; however, Chinese language was allowed in order to increase participants' wiliness to answer some of the questions as some students lacked confidence with their English language skills, or felt reluctant to express their experiences entirely in English.

Participants. There were ten Chinese international students involved in the study. Among them, four were female, and six were male, and their ages ranged from 20 to 25 years

old. They were all taking different academic programmes, such as Accounting, Business, Education, Finance, and Marketing Management. Before they were enrolled in academic courses, nine of them had taken at least one semester of ESL programming. Currently they were at different stages of their university lives, one female student has only been here for one year, and the others have been here from two to three years already.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of examining, coding, and recombining evidence to draw conclusions (Yin, 2009). In this study, I utilized Creswell's (2013) analysis method, and began analysis by organizing and preparing the data. This involved translating and typing the recordings from Chinese into English on my computer, reviewing transcribed interviews to correct any translation errors, sending out transcripts to the participants for further modification, and printing transcripts out for later use. Once the transcripts were organized, I read through all the transcripts. This initial read helped me obtain a general sense of the information gathered, and provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the data's overall meaning. This includes getting a sense of the participants' general ideas about leisure, the tone of their voice, and to get a sense of the participants' credibility. At this stage, I preserved their thoughts by writing notes in the margins of the transcripts. During this phase, I sorted through the ideas I got from reading the data and write them in margins to remind me of the key points the participants mentioned in the conversation. For example, after reading one participant's answer about "how has English influenced your free time leisure activities", I left the note "negatively impacted" in the margin so later when I went back to this question, I would get the general idea that this very participant's leisure participation was negatively influenced by her English. And by the question "What motivated your leisure participation?", I wrote down "intra-personality" and "inter-friends"

suggestion” to give me a hint that this participant’s leisure participation was encouraged by two factors in the framework, and also specified what the factors were.

The next step was coding the data. Coding is an efficient way to pick out all valuable information and organize data into chunks by using a word (or phrase) to represent a category in the margins. I condensed the text data into categories, and labeling those categories with a term based in the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term). For instance, from the answer “Simply, I’m not interested in any of those activities. It was hard to get me excited about, and some of them were even boring” that a participant provided in response to the question “what contributed to your low participation in on-campus leisure activities?”, I extracted two codes, which were “not interested” and “poorly organized”. After I finished coded all the participants’ answers under this question, I collected the codes were “not interested”, “time conflict”, “didn’t get the information”, “laziness”, “didn’t want to go alone” and “poorly organized”. After each code, I labelled each category the code that it belongs to according to my theoretical framework. For example, “not interested” was followed by “intrapersonal”, “didn’t want to go alone” was labelled by “interpersonal” and “poorly organized” was followed by “social/environment”. So when I look back to this question, I can quickly gather the idea that Chinese students’ low participation in university organized leisure activities was influenced by the three factors from my theoretical framework. Coding allowed me to dissect the text into manageable and meaningful text segments rather than be overwhelmed by the amount of data these interviews provided

Following the last step, I generated descriptions by coding the categories and themes for analysis. These themes are supported by multiple quotations from the interviewees, and appear to be major findings in the study. I then extracted headings in the findings sections of this study. I

used the SET model as the framework to design questions which would allow me to explore the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behaviour. Each factor was a main theme in the findings. For example, intrapersonal factors are one of the three factors in the SET model, and my analysis of this theme was supported by several subthemes because intrapersonal factors include an individual's knowledge, ethnicity, gender, attitudes, behaviour, self-concept, and skills (McLeroy et al., 1988).

Then I presented the description and themes in the qualitative narrative. A narrative passage is the most utilized approach to convey the findings of the analysis (Creswell, 2013). I detailed all the findings in conjunction with relevant existing literature. I described how the findings compared with relevant theories as well as with general literature on the topic. Thus, in this step, I described different categories of themes found throughout the text, and how these themes were grouped together to form networks.

Chapter 4 Findings

In this study, I utilized social ecological theory (SET) as the theoretical framework to understand the factors that influence Chinese international students' leisure behavior. The model applied to the current study borrowed components from McLeroy et al.'s (1988) SET model and Sallies et al.'s SET model, and addressed how intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social/environment factors influenced individual behaviour. Below are the findings gathered from the study's semi-structured interviews. The findings are summarized into the following themes: 1) meaning of leisure, including what leisure means to the Chinese international students, and their perspective about leisure in their lives 2) factors that influence Chinese students' leisure, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social/environment level that facilitated and constrained Chinese students' leisure behavior.

Meaning of Leisure

Leisure is a broad concept and has varied meanings in different cultures. To understand the factors that influence the students' leisure, it is important to first understand the meaning of leisure from the Chinese students' perspectives, and the benefits they experience from participating in leisure.

Leisure as concept. When asked what leisure means to them, participants' responses varied, but largely reflected time away from work and studying, activities, or relaxing. Wu, a 25-year-old male undergraduate student who has been studying at VIU for three years, described his perspective,

Ordinarily, people would go to work and study, and...after you spend a certain amount of time on work and study, and you finished it, you go out...and...for example, go for a

vacation, or...maybe hang out with some friends and have fun. I think this is the definition of leisure.

Similarly, participants also described activities that are not related to study and work as being representative of leisure. Kun, an 24-year-old undergraduate male student, described leisure more as an activity,

I think leisure is... I would go out and have a vacation, or hang out with friends and chat with them, or play card games or board games with them. They are all leisure to me.

Another perspective of leisure was that it was a time to relax, either mentally or physically. Tim, a 23-year-old male majoring in International Business at VIU described how leisure is relaxing and gave him the sense of freedom:

I think leisure mainly is relax, do whatever you like. Even reading can be regarded as leisure. As long as it is what you would like to do and that makes you happy when doing it, that's leisure.

Leisure's benefits. In addition to the varied meanings of leisure, participants described a wide range of benefits that come from leisure participation. In this study, leisure was most often referred to time away from work or obligated tasks where freely chosen activities can take place. Often these activities bring a relaxed state of mind. When speaking of leisure, most students valued their leisure time and felt leisure played a very important role in their lives. Una, a 25-year old female, referred to leisure as “very important” and felt that leisure helped her relax: “Because I feel my daily school life is stressful, so after I have a period of busy time, I need a period of time to be relaxed.”

Participants often described the value of leisure through the role it had helping them deal with stress and pressure from their studies. Kun, a 24-year-old male undergraduate student majoring in International Business, described the benefits of leisure he experiences:

[...] especially when it gets close to a deadline or exams, I would be extremely stressed out and easily feel guilty if I was doing something not study-related [...] leisure activities helped me find a balance between study and life, even if it's just going for a walk.

Similarly, Hanyue, a 25-year-old male, reported the negative effects of being over exhausted or without leisure, "During weekdays, our nerves always tight as a spring, so leisure can help us relax. If this spring is overly tight, it might break and many negative things will happen." Ku, also realized the harmfulness of leisure deficiency and claimed, "you can't be mentally stressed all the time, which is too exhausting."

In addition to coping with stress, participants discussed how leisure helped them with emotional regulation, helped them feel refreshed after study, and facilitated adaptation to life challenges. Bob, a 22-year-old male described his own experience: "I like jogging at night, and I would jog on the street with my earplugs on, breathing the fresh air, getting rid of all the worries and pressures and make myself relax."

A few participants discussed the social benefits that came with leisure, particularly how leisure participation reinforced their social networks. Once student talked about his leisure participation experience and concluded that leisure helped him "make more friends, no matter which country they are from."

Lastly, some participants described how leisure enhanced their ability to learn about the local culture. Alex, a 24-year-old male, stated:

At the same time, I learned more about Canada's local situation and some other useful stuff, like my understanding about job-searching in Canada, or local people's way of communication, all of these were learned through these activities.

Influential Factors to Chinese Students' Leisure

Leisure behavior is influenced by multiple factors. The factors specifically explored in this study include intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social/environment. Research participants most commonly spoke of their personality, language, and culture as determining intrapersonal factors. Companionship of partners, homestay experience, and family were extensively discussed within the interpersonal framework. Finally, the natural environment, public/campus recreation, recreational facilities, and transportation made up social and environment factors.

Intrapersonal factors.

Intrapersonal factors are regarded as factors that originate from within the individual. In this study, the factors that have the most influence on the students' leisure were personality characteristics, language, and culture.

Personality. One of the influential factors to the students' leisure was their personality, or personal characteristics that either prevented or supported their leisure participation. For example, some students mentioned that they adapted well to new experiences or had outgoing personalities that helped them to experience new leisure activities and opportunities. Hanyue, describes his experience:

Perhaps [...] my personality helped me to adapt to this overseas life. For example, talking about food, I always hold an open and welcoming attitude towards food from all over the world. That's why it was easy for me to take in the local diet-culture and also would like to try new things, which in return helped me get to know more local stuff, like

living habit, laws, and regulations, etc. As long as there is one point to break through, I can find more ways to get connected with.

In contrast, some participants self-described as having introverted personalities, which they felt constrained their leisure participation. A number of the female students in the study described themselves as “introverted” and felt this personal characteristic affected their leisure participation. For example, several of the female students mentioned they prefer staying at home instead of going out to participate in outdoor activities, and they enjoy hanging out with people they are familiar with. Many felt reluctant to make new friends, and were sometimes hesitant to do something on their own due to a lack of confidence and independence. Victoria, a 25 year student stated: “I think it’s my personality [...] it’s [...] I don’t like to hang out with people who I’m not totally familiar. So [...] I didn’t join in any type of activities at that time.

A key personal characteristic that influenced the students’ leisure was their ability to adapt within a multicultural environment. As an example, some students held open-minded attitudes towards the new environment, and felt comfortable trying new experiences. Kun, described his perspective, “I’m an adaptable person; I’m easy to adjust myself to new surroundings. For food [...] I don’t find myself have any problem, as I was always dining with my homestay family, I just eat whatever they cook. They not only cook local food, but they would also try to make other countries’ cuisine.”

However, some students had a difficult time adjusting to the multicultural environment; they generally felt insecure and had more hesitations about change, and they found it difficult to explore new experiences. Rather, they preferred to seek out familiar activities and experiences. They commonly relied on their Chinese culture for comfort. Victoria shared her experience. “Even though now I don’t have too much problem with basic communication, but [...] this

English environment, it's really hard for me to enjoy. [I] still prefer the environment in which I speak Chinese and everyone else speaks Chinese.”

The inability to try new leisure experiences was connected to students' level of confidence. In some cases, students described the desire to try a leisure activity, but lacked the confidence. And some students mentioned that they were willing to make friends with Canadian native students, but they were not able to because they did not have enough confidence to talk to them. Hanyue, stated how a lack of confidence constrained his leisure pursuits:

Considering most of my ideas or viewpoints couldn't be expressed properly, I don't even have the confidence to keep digging my interests as I know there must be too many difficulties for me to overcome [...] [For] those activities that need to keep on track for a long period of time [...] For example, getting a hunting licence, an arm licence, or any high-risk activity that needs to be trained for is easy to natives, but for me, I know it's going to take me way more time and effort, and I still don't believe in myself to handle those high risk activities.

Language. For international students, language acquisition is a priority because it operates as the foundation for them to function in a new culture, and facilitates social adjustment and adaptation. Good language proficiency not only translates into a strong academic performance, it also gives students more opportunities to make friends and build up their social networks.

In this study, only a few students did not see their language skills as a factor that influenced their leisure participation. These students limited their social interactions to their fellow Chinese international students. In contrast, others considered language to be an influential factor in their leisure participation as language here is the bridge to connect with people, and

communication is integral to making friends. For example, some students felt their lack of English language skills negatively influenced their leisure participation. Una stated:

My English proficiency constrains my ability of doing what I want to do for fun.

Sometimes I would like to participate in some kind of activity, but because of my poor communication ability in English, it's difficult for me to express myself, so I would probably have to give it up and stay at home instead. So I feel I'm limited, and English constrains my leisure activity participation.

Some students believed that they could make more friends with Canadian native students if they had better English language skills, and said that better language skills create better leisure experiences. In sum, many participants said that better language skills would enhance their leisure participation. Bob described his opinion:

Better English skill brings me better leisure experience, especially the activities I like to participate in, like playing basketball or working out in the gym with domestic students; we rely on English to communicate. And even for travelling, English is still essential. So when my English is better, I would be more confidence to talk to them, which also helps me to fit in local groups.

Interpersonal factors.

Interpersonal factors that were most relevant in this study were friends, homestay, family, and other social relations. Each subtheme is expanded below.

Friends. Friends are a critical factor on one's leisure participation. Friendships can contribute to one's social network and meet an individual's social needs. In this study, most students viewed having friends as a very important part in their leisure participation, as most admitted that they would normally participate in leisure activities only with their Chinese friends.

Having a leisure partner is essential to most people's leisure participation, as a lot of leisure activities require a support network to provide collective action. Based on the interviews, it was evident that a lack of leisure partners or friends resulted in female students' non-participation in leisure activities. Victoria described her leisure participation as it connects with friends:

All my leisure activities, I would participate with my friends, and I like to be with others. I feel like...I couldn't have fun by myself. And also, if I go somewhere far away, like go skiing, and if I'm not with any friends, it's [...] there is nobody to take care of me, and we need to look after each other. Anyway, basically, I participate in every leisure activity with my friends.

Friends would not only encourage students' leisure participation, but provided them with knowledge to pursue more leisure activities. For example, one student stated that his friends have different leisure preferences and as result, he participated in all different kinds of activities, which expanded his leisure repertoire. Kun explained, "they would ask me if I've ever participated in some leisure activity, or have I ever been to somewhere. They [friends] would give me recommendation and offer me invitation." Bob mentioned that he normally participated in leisure activities passively and acted as a follower in most cases. Nevertheless, when his friends offered an invitation, this encouraged his leisure participation:

For some activities, I wouldn't participate if it was not because of their invitation. Actually, I rarely am the one who organize activities and gather people together. I'm the one that was organized by others. Also, my friends all shares the same interests, once someone come up with a recommendation, the rest of us would follow.

It was clear that friends' influence the students' participation in leisure but at times making friends was complicated by cultural differences and language barriers. When discussing his

personal struggles when making friends with native students, Alex believed it was “cultural difference” that made the process such a struggle as he remembered:

It was hard to have a meaningful conversation with them [native students], and we didn't have the same understanding of laughing point. Something they found worth laughing about didn't appear to be same to me. Besides, I really couldn't find a topic to start a conversation with them.

Some students blamed their limited communications with local students to lack of language skills. Victoria, explained her experience:

It's hard to communicate, and I feel [...] they couldn't really understand what I say[...] the communication isn't smooth. We talk on class, but after class, I don't want to keep in touch.

Homestay. Living with homestay families is both a popular and common housing option for international students who have just arrived in a host country. Most of the interviewees in this study had a homestay experience. Homestay is form of hospitality and lodging whereby international students stay with a local family who provides accommodation, food, and cultural exchange opportunities. Some students referred to their homestay experience as helpful and inspiring, and reported that they had a positive effect on their acculturation and leisure behaviours. When recalling his homestay experience, Kun described how his homestay family had a positive impact on his leisure participation in Canada:

My home stay family introduced me camping. They would do all kinds of activities, like skiing, camping, hiking, etc. Sometimes they would share with me their experiences with some photos, and I was really inspired by their story. When they were in their early twenties, the two of them spent fifteen to twenty days on a road trip, which is to drive

across Canada, from Montreal to BC. This journey really inspired me, and I would like to have such life.

Despite Kun's positive experience, some students described homestays as inconvenient for their leisure participation. For example, staying in homestay also constricted some of the students' leisure because some homestay families had curfews or other rules that regulated the students schedule or behavior. Tim referred to his homestay experience as inconvenient as he had to give up his old habit of staying up late as there was no noise allowed after 9 pm, which forced him come back home early instead of staying outside late and hanging out with his friends .

I couldn't take a shower after 9 pm., as you know the sound-proof effect of the houses were really bad, so if I take a shower right before I go to bed as I used to, that would affect others, so I had to get it done before 9 pm., which required me to come back home even earlier, but I don't want to be at home so early cause I don't know what to do just by myself in such a long night. Also, I lived downstairs, and I didn't feel comfortable to run upstairs at the middle of the night to grab some hot water as I was afraid I would make some noise and bother the others.

Expectations from family. Expectations from family members play a determining role in influencing Chinese students' leisure participation. Historically, Chinese people respect their families' expectations, allowing their family members to dictate their behavior, including leisure. Mai stated that his family always encouraged him to participate in leisure activities: "[T]hey always encourage me to participate in leisure activities instead of staying at home all the time, which encouraged me to be more active in leisure participation."

Similarly, Bob mentioned that his mom's opinion of his body weight would affect his leisure activities:

[My mom]She was always thinking that I was overweight, actually I was, and the summit of my weight was over 110kg. [Because of that, I put more efforts on fitness and exercise] I lost over 20kg before I moved in with some friends, but I gained back a little now.

For some students, the largest influence their family had on their leisure was through financial support. Students discussed in detail how leisure costs money and if it were not for their family paying for activities they would not be able to participate. As Hanyue mentioned:

“Economically, they give me great help, as the engine to participate in every activity is money. They give me great help on material [items] [...]”

Despite the positive influence family had on the students' leisure, familial expectations also negatively impacted their leisure. For example, a few students mentioned that they had to spend extra time and energy studying so that they would not let their family down. This detracted from their leisure time. Tim described a feeling of guilt and worry in relation to his studies that distracted him from fully enjoying the activities during his leisure participation:

Maybe I have too much pressure here, when I'm playing cards. I'm not only thinking about cards, but also my study, as I need to graduate as soon as possible considering my family's expectation [...] When you are in here, you are carrying the whole expectation from your family, so studying abroad is not only related to myself, it also relates to my family.

Other social relationships. A healthy social network is not only essential to people's work and study, but also to their leisure. When talking about their other social relationships or

connections, many students discussed romantic relationships, teachers and neighbours as influencing their leisure.

Some students mentioned that their romantic partner influenced their leisure participation. Ciel stated that she would play video games with her boyfriend, as her boyfriend is a big fan of video games. “[M]y boyfriend, he is a big fan of video games, and sometimes I find the game he is playing is very interesting, so I would give it a try.” And another student said that he would go for a drive to Victoria because his girlfriend likes visiting that city.

Teachers and even occasionally strangers would influence their leisure activities. Una stated she visited the gym quite often because her teacher mentioned that all students had already paid for it and she wanted to make the most of it. “A teacher from ESL class mentioned that there are facilities provided on campus, and the entrance fee had been covered from our tuition fees, so he suggested that we better make the best use of it as we already paid.”

Hanyue said he was inspired by his neighbour’s boat, as it is as a source of leisure information. “When you saw your neighbour came back with a boat, you would realize that he just came back from the sea [seeing their boat] is a channel for you to collect information [on leisure opportunities].”

Social/environment factors.

The specific relationships between the natural and built environment in communities comprise what I have named social/environment factors. Because all of the Chinese international students who participated in this study grew up in one environment that is very different from the environment in which they are currently studying, their leisure behaviours have been influenced by these new social and environmental factors.

Natural environment. Canada has extraordinary natural resources and well-developed environmental protection regulations, which help the natural environment remain pristine and undestroyed. This provides exceptional nature-based activities. As a result, travel in and to the natural environment became many students' new favourite leisure activity in Canada. This was largely encouraged because nature was easy to access and beautiful. One student mentioned his leisure preference changed from video gaming to travelling because of he felt an attraction to the natural environment in Canada. Hanyue praised the well-protected Canadian natural environment, which increased his leisure participation in outdoor activities such as fishing:

Different experience [...] The decisive factor to this is environment. Canada has extraordinary natural environment, blue sky and clean ocean, which we couldn't experience in China. Even if I live in a coastal city in China, there is barely any fish in twenty miles offshore, not to mention fishing. But here in Canada, as they have fishing regulations, for example, fishing female crabs or fishes shorter than a certain size is forbidden. All these protection regulations contribute to Canada's rich marine products, which gives me the sense of achievement when fishing. While in China, if you go fishing close to the shore, the harvest won't be such fruitful.

Similarly, travelling to outdoor environments and have outdoor experiences became more popular among Chinese students, Wu explained:

En[...] [My leisure is] More close to nature. I prefer [...] more [...]more outdoor activities. Mainly because Canada has great environment, nice natural environment. It is really breathtaking. Back home, the natural scenery is not as good as here, or [...] in other words, the beautiful sceneries are too far away from the city I live. If I want to get close to nature, I would [...] en [...] drive [...] [And] the distance is too far. I would have to take an

airplane or drive a long distance to be there. But in Canada, for example, I can go for a walk around Westwood Lake within a ten-minute drive.

In some cases, students explained that they were addicted in video gaming in China, and now in Canada, they are more engaged in the outdoors. For Kun, being in Canada has inspired him to travel and be outdoors more:

In China [...] en [...] there was a period of time that I was addicted to video games. I can stay up late just for playing video games, and the next morning the first thing I would do is back to the game with my friends. I would order take-out to keep staying in the dorm without spending time on anything else, or I would go to an Internet bar to play it. Even if I went out, I would [...] sing songs in a karaoke bar the whole night with my friends. So [...], the amount of exercise, or go travelling was way less than I do now, and I never really wanted to go out and explore nature at that time. But now, I always eager to go outside and to have a tour, to expand my horizon.

Weather also affected the students' leisure participation. A few students mentioned that bad weather would discourage their participation in leisure activities. They would sometimes change their plans because of weather, or forgo leisure altogether. Kun described how leisure plans change with the weather: "I was planning to view the cherry blossom recently, but this rainy weather stopped us." However, there were instances where students discussed the good weather and how that encouraged their leisure participation, Una mentioned: Even I prefer staying at home; however, if the weather is in good condition, I would like to go out for a walk.

Public, campus and private recreation programs and offerings. During the interviews several of the students discussed their limited participation in public leisure programs, whether it was from the City of Nanaimo or on campus. In fact, there were many leisure activities and

events year round on campus and in Nanaimo. Most students, however, said they had only participated once or not at all. Students describe three reasons for their limited participation: 1) the limited information distributed by public and campus recreation facilities; 2) the type of leisure activities offered were not of interest; and, 3) scheduling conflicts between school and the desired activity.

Most students explained that they were not informed of what leisure activities were going on campus, and that resulted in their lack of attendance to on campus leisure events. The advertising and promotion of campus leisure activities was mainly through posters, which were only pinned on a few designated boards and easily ignored. Victoria stated:

I rarely heard any activities or events on campus, but if there is any [...] like, if I come across Building 255, I may see a poster introducing a new coming event or hear people talking about what's going on right now, but other than that, since I've started academic course and don't go there that often, I've never seen any advertisement about on-campus events.

Students not only experienced this challenge on campus, but also within the City of Nanaimo's leisure programs. When Hanyue was talking about how he was informed of his leisure opportunities, he complained:

Most of my leisure activities I've participated in are informed through my friends, teachers, or people around me, not through social media or government advocates[...]And there is lacking of a broad-coverage authoritative system to publish these information, otherwise I have to distinguish the truth and validity of the information myself.

The type of leisure activities offered by campus and public recreation also influenced the students' leisure behaviour. A number of the students admitted that they were not interested in the activities organized on campus, and in response to that, they didn't go. Una, explained:

I think these activities or events might be good, but not really appealing to me. I remember [...] the only one I remember was a "car-smashing" activity, and I guess it was for releasing pressure for students, which was to smash a car with some tools. That activity did catch my eyes because I think it's pretty special, but I'm not interested in involving in that kind of activity.

In addition to campus and public sector recreation programs, students also discussed the reality that few leisure activities were culturally relevant to them, particular those offered by the private sector. Bob mentioned that he used to like singing in a karaoke bar or going to a pub with friends, but his needs couldn't be filled since he came because lack of services.

While in Nanaimo, there is no karaoke bars, and the pubs here are also different from the pubs in China. In here, the pubs are more quiet and peaceful, but China's pubs are more noisy and crazy. So apparently, there are more entertainment places in China than in here. That probably because of the distinction between Canadians' lifestyle and ours, and the pace of life we have is also different. In China, 8 pm. is the beginning of night-life, which is opposite in here.

Another popular leisure activity for some of the female participants was shopping. Most of the female students expressed their dissatisfaction with the local shopping malls as they used to go shopping with their friends as leisure when they were in China. Una described the limited leisure options and how it constrained her leisure participation in shopping:

In Nanaimo, there is nowhere I can go except Woodgrove Mall if I'm going shopping.

While [...] the first few months when I just came to Nanaimo, I went there shopping frequently. But now, I don't feel it's worthy to go to Vancouver just for shopping, so I just stay at home. If I was in China, going out with friends and shopping is my leisure.

Similarly, Ciel expressed her dissatisfaction on the scale of the local shopping malls in Nanaimo:

I hope the shopping mall could be better. I find the shopping malls here are relatively small, which makes me don't have much to shop from. So, it does affect my leisure participation. Especially compare to Vancouver, the shopping malls over there are very spacious, and you can spend a whole day on shopping. But here in Nanaimo, I can finish my journey within a few hours.

In addition to unappealing leisure programs and activities, students found the campus and city-wide programming schedule problematic. Most students had multiple classes every day, and the majority of these activities were also arranged during the same time period. One student stated that he had planned to attend an event on campus, but unfortunately the time conflicted with his class so he was unable to attend. And some mentioned that they could not be sure that they would always be available for the clubs or training classes that interested them, so they did not join. Because of scheduling conflicts, students preferred to participate in leisure activities with their friends away from scheduled programming, which allowed more flexibility.

The location of amenities also influenced leisure participation and the students' willingness and frequency of participating in daily leisure activities. Some students mentioned that if leisure facilities were located nearby they would be more likely to get out of the house and participate in outdoor leisure activities than they normally do. This is best described by Victoria,

“I live close to a wetland park, and because it’s nearby, I would go for a walk in that park. But if this park is far away from my site, I would most likely never go there.”

Kun, had similar sentiments regarding the location of recreation resources:

When I was staying with my home stay family, where we live is close to the ocean, so I would like to go for a walk in that Oceanside Park frequently. And now I live next to a park as well, so I would go jogging there sometimes.

Una iterates similar sentiments about location of amenities, “the environment in the neighborhood has to be convenient and easily access to public facilities, and otherwise it would discourage me to go outside”.

Access to recreation facilities, particularly low entry fees, appeared to influence some of the students’ leisure participation. For example, Una said that she didn’t work out when she was in China, but since she came here and noticed there is a free-entry gym on campus, she has started working out and would visit the gym from time to time.

However, inadequate equipment and low quality recreational facilities also deterred the students’ leisure participation. Some students mentioned that they have the habit of working out and would like to visit gym regularly; however, VIU’s gym could not meet their needs as they only run certain days and the equipment there were using was not to their standards. As a result, a number of students joined private fitness clubs, which offer 24-7 business hours with wide range of high equality facilities. Moreover, several students mentioned that they had to compromise their opportunities to play badminton or basketball in the school’s gym when the gym was holding an event or the floor was already booked, because there’s no other designated court for badminton or basketball was available on campus. A few students also expressed their

desire to have a swimming pool on campus so they don't have to share the one with the neighbouring high school.

Transportation. Access to transportation was an influential factor to student' leisure participation. Several students admitted that they bought a car because of the poor local transportation system, which they all referred to as, "inconvenient". The bus system was a barrier for students participation in leisure, and in some cases, it actually restricted their leisure participation the most. For example, some students explained that they could not access recreational facilities during holidays as public transportation was not available, and they would try to avoid going out during weekends because there would be fewer buses running than usual. Alex described his experience with the public transportation system: "Nanaimo's bus schedule is horrible and there aren't many bus lines, especially on weekends, there is barely any buses running, which makes going out on weekends very inconvenient [...] I didn't go out that often as it is really inconvenient."

For some students, having access to a vehicle expanded their leisure options considerably. Quite a few students explained gave them the freedom to come and go as they please. For example, Wu stated he would drive to Victoria to see the latest Chinese movies, which Nanaimo does not screen, and they could visit wherever they wanted on the island without worrying about bus routes and schedules. These students also agreed that having their own cars allowed them to have a more flexible schedule. As Bob said, "Since I had my own car, it's much more convenient, and I'm able to participate in any leisure activities at any time if I would like to go".

For students without vehicles, walking or carpooling were the main methods of transportation to their leisure experiences. Even though they agreed that public transportation in

Nanaimo is inconvenient, they did not think that it greatly affected their leisure. This is because most respondents focused their leisure time around indoor activities such as watching TV series, playing card games, or dining with friends. They also tended to participate in these leisure activities with friends, and when they would travel further away in the pursuit of leisure activities, they could always get a ride from a friend who has a car:

[I]f I'm going somewhere farther, I would ask my roommate to give me a ride...[T]o me [...] if I'm going out for leisure purpose, there is definitely a friend going with me, (and he/she would drive). Normally I won't go out for fun just by myself. So I don't think there is a difference. (Una, female, 25-year-old)

One of the students even thought walking is not only her transportation method, but a kind of leisure activity as well, and this type of transportation encouraged her leisure participation.

I think walking is a kind of leisure activity to me. As I'm a [...] I don't work out, and sometimes I even feel grateful that I can still have some walk everyday come and back from school. It's a way for me to exercise. So I take walking as my leisure, and I treat it as I'm hiking. (Victoria, female, 25-year-old)

Chapter 5 Discussion

This study sought to understand the factors that influenced the Chinese students' leisure behavior. The study revealed a number of factors that influence the students' leisure behaviours, and these are discussed in relation to existing scholarly literature below. I also draw conclusions and provide insight into future research and the limitations of the study.

Meaning of Leisure

To fully understand Chinese international students' leisure behaviours, it is important to consider the role that culture plays in leisure activities. Here, culture both inform and support ideologies that influence the common social norms and understandings of how leisure is understood and experienced. In Chinese, "leisure" is usually translated into *Xiu Xian*, which means relaxing and resting, and a free and unoccupied state (Liu, Yeh, Chick & Zinn, 2008). In this study, students described leisure similar to how it is understood in their culture. Leisure is interpreted as free time without study or work, which is sometimes spent pursuing leisure activities. Leisure generally denotes a state of relaxation from mental and physical strain. Many students mentioned that 'leisure' is synonymous with relaxation, and some dedicated their leisure time to pursuing relaxing activities such as sleeping, dining, or watching movies. Ultimately, students who pursued leisure activities did so for entertainment, and to cope with the stress of their daily lives. Although the students' understanding of leisure is strongly tied to their Chinese culture, they also identified leisure as an activity, or as time spent for relaxation and enjoyment in general (Kelly, 1996; Sun, 2011).

Having a clear understanding of what students understand as leisure means that the students could see the value of leisure in their lives. Most of them appreciated their leisure time as they experienced a number of benefits. Students reported that their leisure helped them cope

with the stress and pressure from their studies, and mentioned drawbacks if they could not enjoy right amount of leisure. They also discussed how leisure activities reinforced their social networks. What is unique about these findings is how they differ from other research. Li and Stodolska (2006) investigated the leisure experiences of Chinese graduate students in the United States and they found that Chinese students did see leisure as an important part of their lives, but that they tended to focus on the negative impact that their status as international students has on their leisure activities. Even though Chinese students were dissatisfied with some aspects of their leisure participation, they all agreed that leisure participation was beneficial.

Influential Factors to Chinese Students' Leisure

Intrapersonal factors.

When discussing leisure, it became apparent that students' personalities influenced their participation and could be considered both a facilitator and constraint. For example, students who described themselves as outgoing had more satisfying leisure experiences. Participants who described themselves as easy going stated that their leisure experiences were more diverse, and they tried more new activities in their leisure time. In contrast, students who described themselves as introverted admitted that they wouldn't try new leisure activities without others' suggestions or support. The students with introverted personalities preferred remaining spending their leisure time at home and were hesitate to change. These results are similar to Lu and Kao (2009), who explored the relationship between personality and leisure satisfaction among Chinese students. They reported that an extroverted personality type influences leisure participation, and that low levels of extraversion generate low levels of leisure participation. They also indicated that extraversion had a significant and positive correlation with a student's overall leisure satisfaction (Liu, 2014). Students who self-identify as outgoing tend to participate

in more leisure activities, and those who self-identify as open-minded are better able to adapt to their new surroundings. Knowing the ways personality traits inform leisure participation can help researchers understand some of the Chinese international students' leisure behaviors and can allow them to generate solutions to increase their leisure participation and satisfaction.

This study also found that students' adaptability to change was considered a facilitator to leisure as students reported increased satisfaction in their leisure activities. Adaptability is generally acknowledged as flexibility, and is identified as a personality characteristic allows an individual to have a smooth transition into a new environment (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003). In a multicultural environment, a smooth transition is imperative, and as international students, my research participants have more obstacles and challenges than the average traveller. Therefore, Chinese international students not only face personal-emotional transitions and social transitions, they also face an academic transition as they work to fulfill their study goals (Hoffman & Julie, 2012). A smooth transition also depends on individual adaptability. The more adaptable the student, the sooner the student can adjust to their new environment (Liu, 2014). This is particularly important for pursuing leisure, as some participants in this study felt that their extroverted personalities and their adaptability influenced their leisure pursuits.

Researchers have investigated international students' adjustment to North American campus life and found that language barriers (specifically, international students' difficulties acquiring the English language) were a significant challenge for this group (Akanwa, 2015; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Williams & Johnson, 2011). Language barriers not only negatively impacted their adjustment to the local culture and academic goals, but it also influences leisure participation (Akanwa, 2015). In fact, scholarly literature on recreation situates language is one of the multiple components of intercultural acculturation that pose significant

obstacles to international students' participation in recreation (Gómez, Urzúa, & Glass, 2014). Li and Stodolska (2007) identified language as a barrier that constrained Chinese international students' leisure participation because their insufficient English skills required them to put more time and effort on study over leisure. Much like previous research, participants in my study described their poor English language skills as a constraint to their leisure because it negatively impacted their confidence to participate in new leisure activities or make friends with domestic students.

Language can function as a bridge that connects people, and connection is the foundation of friendship. Good language proficiency creates more opportunities for international students to make friends and build social networks. Within the scholarly literature, language was often regarded as a leisure barrier for many international students. Students often describe their insecurity with English speaking, and felt dissatisfied with their English proficiency (Berry, 1997; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Gallagher (2013) explained that second language proficiency is particularly important for international students' successful integrations with members of the host culture, and confirmed that cultural differences and language difficulties have negatively affected intercultural friendship formation. Similar to these findings, the Chinese students in the study also saw their poor English language skills as a significant obstacle to making domestic friends. They were aware that their inadequate pronunciation and limited vocabulary made them less confident in their interactions with native speakers. Some students even identified the linguistic environment as the most significant barrier to their participation in leisure activities. These students were reluctant to try new activities because they feared that they did not have the language skills necessary to partake in new activities. As a

result of these concerns, students' lack of confidence could transform into an unwillingness to communicate with others.

The negative effects catalyzed by insufficient social networks limited international students' experiences on and off campus, and deprived them of opportunities to share their feelings of insecurity within the parameters of leisure activities. One of the most important benefits of studying in a different country is to broaden one's perspectives through exchanging life experiences with students from all over the world (William & Johnson, 2011). However, due to their lack of confidence to talk to domestic students, international students would only communicate and seek help from friends from their home country, which did not help them gain learning and social experience from students of other origins.

Interpersonal factors.

A leisure partner is a person who is associated with others in leisure participation. For the purposes of this study, leisure partners were referred to as friends, with or without romantic relationships, who have a significant influence on each other's leisure participation. Friendship is connected with leisure participation among individuals, and leisure can be an important tool in increasing or maintaining social integration (Toepoel, 2013). Research suggests that friendships and relationships improve quality of life, provide opportunities for social and emotional development, social support, and serve as a buffer for stressful life events (Geisthardt, Brotherson, & Cook, 2002). Solish, Perry and Minnes (2010) explored the relationship between friendship and the frequency of leisure participation and concluded that reciprocal friendship relationships lead a person to participate in recreational opportunities. Similarities in friends' behaviors can be the result of mutual influences, where an individual adopts behaviors based on the attitudes and behaviors of friends, or as a result of friendship

selection, whereby individuals select friends that share similar interests, attitudes, and behaviors (De la Haye, Robins, Mohr, & Wilson, 2010). This study also found that friendships influence people's leisure choices, as some students confirmed that they would select their leisure participation based on their friends' recommendation or suggestion, or they adopted certain leisure patterns because of their friends' leisure habits. Therefore, friendship and leisure participation are strongly linked.

Friendships and relationships played a fundamental part in the students' leisure participation, and social adjustment in Nanaimo. A number of the students discussed their leisure activities involving others, and even admitted that they would only participate in leisure activities when their friends were also involved. Leisure partners were not only critical of the students' leisure participation, they influenced their social adjustment. It has been reported that international students who develop fewer friendships perceive greater constraints engaging in leisure activities (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Glass, Gómez, & Urzua, 2014). This resulted in significantly lower social adaptation (Glass, Gómez, & Urzua, 2014). However, successful social adjustment is hard for an international student to achieve in a short period of time because of language deficiencies and cultural diversity (Akanwa, 2015), and international students who constantly experience social isolation could develop dissatisfaction and even depression (Chirkov et al, 2007; Choudhury, 2014; Grayson, 2008; Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014). Therefore, seeking leisure partners is necessary and beneficial for Chinese students to overcome these challenges, and also to increase their leisure participation more broadly.

Studies have shown that international students, especially Chinese students, suffer from social isolation largely because of low engagement with their host community (Choudhury, 2014). Although it is acknowledged by international students that making friends with native

students is beneficial, it has been reported that Chinese students in Canada were most likely to socialize with students from their home country and as a result, they are not as well integrated with students of other nationalities (Minichiello, 2001; Chow, 1997; Su, 1995). Similar to these findings, students in my research expressed their willingness to build more friendships with students from outside of China, but were sometimes reluctant to do so because of the language barrier and cultural differences.

A facilitator of leisure for participants in my study were leisure partners. Leisure partners allowed Chinese students to have a wider selection of leisure activities, particularly as they were encouraged by their leisure partners to participate in new activities, and were given recommendations about leisure pursuits. Caperchoine, Mummery, and Joyner (2009) confirmed that having leisure experts who provide useful educational information regarding leisure activities was regarded as the most useful method to encourage some women keep participating in physical activities as the ladies confirmed that having someone who provides leisure information promoted their participation because they had more options to choose from. This finding is also applicable to my study as many students explained that having leisure partners brought them more information about leisure participation. This is particularly true for students who had recently arrived in Canada, or who were shy to explore.

Homestays were also mentioned as a facilitator to leisure experiences for Chinese students. To provide international students with high levels of cross cultural and intercultural understanding and communication skills, many higher-education institutions design and provide homestay programs (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Shiri, 2015). Homestay programs provide international students the opportunity to live with and be part of a local family by providing a supportive environment for their second language acquisition (Pryde,

2014; Shiri, 2015). For both students and hosts, homestay is an ideal way to native culture in an authentic way, and to be totally immersed in the local environment. My findings reflect this research, and the students in my study appreciated the good care they received from their homestay families, and claimed that the time they spent together was beneficial as they adapted to a new country. Students said that communicating with their host families enabled them to better understand the locals' lifestyles and what residents do for leisure. The host family would embrace the students' curiosity, and introduce them to their leisure activities. Due to these interactions, international students gradually learned more about Canadian leisure practices.

Although students in this study confirmed the utility of homestay in their linguistic and cultural immersion, identified benefits such as a safe home, new friendships, leisure knowledge, and a support network while abroad, students also experienced some drawbacks to living with a host family. Researchers have pointed out that clashes of culture, habit, or personality can lead to awkward living conditions (Campbell, 2004; Kendall-Smith & Rich, 2003; Juveland, 2011). As adults, students are concerned about the amount of freedom they receive from their host families, as the families and students may disagree on to expectations surrounding chores and curfews. (Juveland, 2011). Students in my study faced these same concerns, and some did express dissatisfaction with their host families, particularly around curfews, which regulated their schedule and leisure participation.

Another interpersonal factor that influences students' leisure behaviour was family. A number of the students mentioned that their leisure decision-making was often influenced by their families' opinions. More specifically, they would participate in or quit certain leisure activities based on their families' expectations—making family both a facilitator and constraint to leisure. Family expectations are important in Chinese culture as each individual is expected to

place the family first (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). Within the Chinese tradition, people believe that taking care of parents when they get old is a child's responsibility. This value extends beyond obedience, respect, and care for the elderly. Rather, it is a central concept of Confucian principles- filial piety (*xiao*), which is a dominant feature of Chinese culture and family life (Lieber, Nihira & Mink, 2004). As a core Confucian value, the concept of filial piety (*xiao*) has important social and moral implications, which sets the foundation for Chinese sociocultural beliefs and behaviors. According to Confucius, family reverence (*xiao*) is “the root of excellence, and whence education (*jiao*) itself is born” (Rosemont & Ames, 2009, p.105).

This philosophy influenced Chinese students' leisure, as some admitted that they would choose to sacrifice their leisure activities and spend that time on studying to fulfill their parents' expectations. Familial expectations were largely centred on being academically successful, as education has always been highly valued in Chinese culture (Rice, Choi, Zhang, Morero & Anderson, 2012). Moreover, some international students might participate in leisure activities because they were asked to. Here, the deeper implication of the obedience was an expression of filial piety (*xiao*), which dictates that young people are supposed to fulfill their parents' expectations and obey their wishes (Leung, Hou, Gati & Li, 2011).

Financial assistance from family also facilitated the students' leisure participation. Since the application of the one-child policy (OCP) in China, numerous social, economic, and environmental problems in China had been alleviated. This in turn improved many Chinese families' living standards (Howden & Zhou, 2014). Born in a new era, the Chinese millennial have received significant financial and emotional support from their grandparents and parents because resources were not shared among siblings. As a result, Chinese international students have been able to enjoy their life abroad without worrying about finances (Abrahamson, 2016).

Stable financial conditions encouraged the students' leisure participation in activities that require economic support, and Chinese students often described participating in leisure that involved significant financial support, such as watching movies, dining out, and shopping (Wang & Stringer, 2000).

Social/environment factors.

Canada has an extraordinary natural environment, which provides Chinese international students with opportunities to experience outdoor and wilderness leisure activities. To date, many studies identify ethnic and racial minorities as absent visitors to outdoor recreation settings (Stodolska, Peters, & Horolets, 2017). We can attribute this to a number of factors, including their marginalized social status, cultural differences, discrimination (Washburne, 1978), limited access to natural environments, and changes in life conditions (Stodolska, 2000). As a result, ethnic and racial minorities tend not to participate in outdoor leisure activities as often as 'mainstream Whites'. My study, however, found the natural environment had a significant positive influence on the students' leisure participation. In fact, many of the participants in my study explained that their leisure patterns changed from more home-oriented to more outdoor oriented once they arrived in Canada.

Researchers have reported a number of factors that limit immigrants outdoor recreation pursuit: access-related issues; the quality of natural environments; focus on work; transportation problems; cultural differences; knowledge of opportunities; life stage; and, ageing (Stodolska, Peters & Horolets, 2017). For instance, lack of time, increased work responsibilities, lack of access to transportation, and residence in poor inner-city neighbourhoods limited recent immigrants' participation in outdoor recreation. On the other hand, settling into a new country may open up the possibility of participation in activities that were previously constrained in their

home countries (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). In my findings, many students expressed their willingness to interact with nature when they were living in China, but their needs could not be fulfilled because they all originated from large urban centres, and the only green space available in their communities were small plots of land in between apartment buildings. The over-developed cities and urbanization left limited spaces where they could engage with nature. Upon their arrival in Canada, these access issues were not an issue and resulted in leisure participation in outdoor settings. The difference in the quality of natural environments between home and host country also impacts immigrants' attitudes about, and participation frequency in, outdoor recreation. In Stodolska, Peters and Horolets' study (2017), Chinese immigrants' participation in outdoor leisure activities in China was always impeded by overcrowding, traffic jams, and high admission price. The students in this study identified these similar issues when they reflected on their own experiences in China. However, in Canada, these were no longer obstacles, and students were able to participate more easily in outdoor recreation.

Participants in this research project saw China as a country characterized by environmental crises, and perceived the Canadian wilderness as "clean" and "fresh", which increased Chinese international students' outdoor leisure participation. A number of the students discussed how many indoor activities they participated in before moving to Canada. These findings are similar to Yu and Berryman's (1996) research, which mapped Chinese students' participation in primarily indoor-oriented leisure activities, such as watching TV shows/series, listening to music, or playing card-games. However, the psychological benefits of spending time outdoors, as well as Chinese students' perception of the Canadian wilderness as pristine and fresh led many international students to engage in outdoor leisure activities (Calogiuri & Elliott, 2017). My study mirrors these findings, as students described that they now went jogging in the

parks instead of a gym, and that closeness to nature and fresh air was what led them to change from indoor exercise to outdoor activities. One student reported that since they moved to Canada, they preferred going out for a walk to enjoying the beautiful scenery rather than staying at home watching TV. Researchers suggested that culture plays a unique role in shaping people's landscape preferences and environmental attitudes and values, which further mould their outdoor recreation preferences, motivations, meanings and participation patterns (Buijs, Elands & Langers, 2009; Jay & Schraml, 2009). Traditional Chinese ideology holds that the one's happiness depends on interacting with nature (Chen & Prebensen, 2017), and emphasizes the balance between humans and nature. This line of thinking not only requires people to spontaneously interact with nature, but ultimately, understands humans and nature as a single entity through this interaction, and which is called "tianrenheyi" (Weber, 2005). Many of these traditional values have persisted till today, and the Chinese international students in the study embraced the idea that people should be close to nature.

The weather is also an aspect of the natural environment that influences people's leisure participation. Bad weather conditions can impede leisure participation by negatively influencing body comfort, and can act as a perceived barrier for accessibility and mobility to outdoor leisure opportunities (Spinney & Millward, 2011). Thus, weather conditions have a significant impact on individual leisure engagement, especially for outdoor activities. My study found that weather conditions played a key role in international students' leisure activities. Many students recalled postponing or cancelling an outing because of bad weather. Some of them also admitted that the rainy winter weather made them feel lazy, and their outdoor leisure participation has decreased perceptively during the winter because of bad weather conditions. This is problematic in this

region of the country, because rain is a consistent weather pattern for several of the winter months.

Scholars have explored the general benefits that college students get from participating in extracurricular recreation activities (Deere, 2015; Hoffman, 2016; Belch, Gebel & Mass, 2001). Extracurricular activities discussed in the scholarly literature include, but are not limited, to campus recreation, athletics, cultural events, student clubs, student organizations, and student unions (Astin, 1993). In the study, public and campus recreation programs were offered by Vancouver Island University (campus) and the City of Nanaimo (public). Participation in recreation activities not only cultivates positive outcomes such as better grades, critical thinking, stress alleviation, healthy lifestyle cultivation, and cognitive development (Astin, 1993; Deere, 2015; Hoffman, 2016), but also promotes social connection with domestic students, sense of belonging within the local community, and general satisfaction to their campus life (Astin, 1993; Kovac & Beck, 1997; Kuh, 2009; Kasunich, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, international students' participation in these activities tends to be lower than those of domestic students, especially among Chinese students, who have the lowest levels of public recreation participation (Yoh, Yang, & Gordon, 2008; Yan & Cardinal, 2013). Similar to these findings, the students in this study also did not participate in many campus or public recreation programs. Chinese students' participation in recreation activities were hindered due to poor information distribution and lack of event and program advertising. Students reported that their ability to locate useful information about recreation was limited to the overloaded poster walls on campus. Their explanation confirmed Godbey (1985) and Searle and Jackson's (1985) findings about how lack of awareness of offered service and over-crowded facilities/areas could result in students'

lack of attendance in campus recreation activities, and suggested that leisure activity information on campus should be more effective and be more precisely targeted.

The participants in this study also discussed their dissatisfaction with the recreation offerings on campus. Over half of the students admitted that the public/campus provided recreation were either boring because of being repetitive, or not appealing because lack of cultural resonance, which discouraged their participation. Some studies link this phenomenon to institutional discrimination as they believe that the failure to provide needed leisure options to culturally minorities signified an alarming trend where educational institutions and leisure providers were neglecting minorities, which inevitably diminished international students' leisure pursuits (Paraschak & Tirone, 2003; Tirone, 2000). Similar to this research, easy to access activities and leisure facilities on campus were also locally popular activities, such as squash and stair storming (running stairs), and were generally preferred by domestic students. The activities that Chinese students preferred such as badminton and swimming were not provided.

Crowford and Godbey (1987) reported that personal preference also determined leisure participation. Several participants admitted that they would be more drawn to programs or activities that are culturally relevant to them. In this vein, public support from school and society more broadly is critical for international students' adaptation to their host culture and to their subsequent leisure participation. However, according to the students' explanations of their low participation in public/campus recreation, it was clear that the existing campus/society support had failed to provide efficient support to encourage Chinese students' leisure participation because they were not able to arouse cultural empathy of Chinese international students.

Scheduling conflicts were another reason students did not take part in public/campus recreation activities. The study by Shifman, Moss, D'Andrade, Eichel, & Forrester (2012),

echoes this finding, which reports that a general lack of time was a major constraint in international students' leisure participation. International students have little free time, in part because as second language speakers, Chinese international students had to spend more time and energy negotiating their classes, homework, and, which took up a considerable amount of time (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Akanwa, 2015). They also needed to prioritize their regular social interactions, and spend time with friends (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009; Li & Stodolska, 2006; Yan & Cardinal, 2013a). Therefore, students did not spend much time in organized leisure activities in the community or on campus.

Recreation facilities are key infrastructure that support leisure participation (Schryer, et al., 2016; Kaczynski & Henderson, 2008). Recreation facilities are designed as attractive social environments to reinforce individuals' social and leisure interactions by offering them locations to meet people and socialize with friends (Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg & Radcliffe, 2009). Off campus, leisure infrastructure such as parks, community centers, malls, and aquatic centers offer resource to support citizens' leisure participation and social interaction in the community (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2008). Banta, Bradley and Bryant (1991) conducted a study in six U.S. universities and confirmed students' favourable evaluation of campus recreational facilities and program availability positively influenced their leisure participation. This study highlighted that students valued convenient access to campus recreational facilities/programs, as this was an important indicator of their overall campus and life satisfaction. Similarly, Lindsey and Sessoms (2006) and Yan and Cardinal (2013a) reported that easy access to recreational facilities influenced students' participation in leisure and increased overall satisfaction with their college experience. This study also found that easy access to the school's recreation facilities encouraged the Chinese students' leisure participation. This also applied to public and community facilities,

as well as outdoor spaces; a number of students discussed how being located close to public infrastructure such as parks or jogging trails influenced their participation.

Another factor that influenced leisure participation, in this study, was transportation. In fact, a well-developed transportation systems and a convenient means of travel encourages individuals' leisure participation (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008). The influence of transportation has typically been discussed in relation to long-distance travels and geographic isolation, which results in non-participation in leisure (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008; Hoden, 2010; Cleland, Hughes, Thornton, Squibb, Venn, & Ball, 2015). The convenience of transportation is crucial to Chinese international students' leisure participation. In fact, convenient public transportation systems not only improve access to shopping and general commuting, but also helps students to access to sightseeing and leisure attractions (Nakamura, Uchida, & Managi, 2016). However, in the current study, a number of students expressed their disappointment in the local public transportation system and how limiting the service was. Poorly scheduled bus hours and disconnection among their willingly visit sites deprived their visiting intentions when they figured the traveling cost would be long hours on the road if they choose public transit or extra expenses if they take a cab. As a result, some of the students simply gave up going out for leisure purposes that require taking public transportation, unless when they were extremely motivated and prepared.

What is interesting to highlight is that all the male students involved in the study bought their own private vehicle after they had experienced the local bus system. These students admitted their decision to buy a vehicle was to avoid taking the public transportation system. The finding that only male students bought their own cars confirmed Luathep, Suttipan and Jaensirisak's (2015) study, where they pointed out that gender is one of the factors that influence

transportation choices. Even though private vehicles are considered as an unsustainable means of travel that negatively impacts the environment and human health, researchers found that reduced travel time was what attracted passengers the most for using private vehicles (Satiennam, Jaensirisak, Satiennam & Detdamrong, 2015; Luathep, Suttipan & Jaensirisak, 2015). My research participants all expressed their satisfaction with how much time they saved on travelling after having their own cars, and how flexible and frequent their leisure participation became. Among female students, a number decided to walk to avoid the bus system, which jeopardised their leisure participation. From the discussion above, it is clear that an underdeveloped transportation system has a significant and negative impact on Chinese students' leisure participation, particularly for women.

Culture

What is important to highlight in this study is the relationship between culture and the students' leisure behaviour. While I have framed the results according to the theoretical framework, culture cuts across each influential factor. All international students come with a set of taught beliefs and behaviours, which include distinct leisure-participation patterns. This influences their leisure preferences and their expectations of public and campus offerings (Stodolska, 2000). To highlight the relationship between leisure behaviour and culture, I will expand on a few key examples of this relationship in relation to the theoretical framework below.

To fully understand Chinese international students' leisure behavior, it is important to discuss Chinese culture. Wang and Stringer (2000) revealed Taoism's status in Chinese history and confirmed its centrality within Chinese culture. Taoism guides Chinese citizens to focus on the harmony between nature and the human body, and encourages them to concentrate on inner spiritual matters instead of outside materials. Guided under such principles for thousands of

years, Chinese people gradually formed their leisure patterns and behavior within Chinese society, which tend to relatively peaceful and passive, for example, gardening, fishing, and mahjong. For Chinese citizens, these are neutral and harmonious activities. Taoism still influences Chinese people's leisure behaviour, and as previously discussed, the Chinese students in my study gravitated towards regular participation in passive leisure activities, such as card games, fishing, watching TV, or dining with friends, and they favoured these activities.

Culture is at the foundation of Chinese international students' leisure patterns, influences their leisure preferences, and constructs their leisure behavior. Multiple research projects state that culture is an important factor in leisure studies (Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007; Li & Stodolska, 2007; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Purrington and Hickerson (2013) pointed out that leisure is universally accepted as a category of behaviour or experience, and participation in leisure clearly varies across populations and individuals. This suggests that culture differentiates people's behavior from one group to another. This was also identified by the participants in the current study, as they believed cultural difference was one of the reasons that made Chinese students struggle when they were trying to form relationships with domestic students. Cultural difference made creating a shared understanding difficult; it also led them to cultivate different leisure values and preferences. For example, almost all of the students in my study mentioned that they would love to participate in on campus recreation, but they did not because they were not interested in the activities offered. They admitted that the scheduled activities reflected Canadian culture, but were unrelated with Chinese culture, which made it difficult for them to be feeling connected. They mentioned that has culturally relevant activities would increase their participation.

A number of research studies exploring international student leisure behaviours have focused on how cultural difference is a barrier for international students' acculturation and leisure participation. Nevertheless, few studies highlighted culture's role in leisure behavior construction. For example, the study conducted by Li and Stodolska (2006) concludes that the Chinese students in the research were forced to give up some of their leisure opportunities in order to meet cultural expectations surrounding academic success. The findings from my study echo these results, as students acknowledged their families' expectations of academic success deprived them of some of their leisure opportunities. Other studies also addressed cultural difference along with lack of time, language barriers, and social adjustment as constraints in Chinese international students' leisure participation (Xiong, 2006; Li & Stodolska, 2007; Walker, Jackson & Deng, 2007; Walker & Wang, 2008; Williams & Johnson, 2011). Furthermore, I found that Chinese students had all been participated in quite a few leisure activities that were popular in China or at least was welcomed among Chinese young people, which were regarded as signature leisure activities in Chinese leisure culture. Such activities included watching movies, singing in the KTVs, playing video games, and dining in restaurants. In some cases, students would travel to larger cities to watch specific Chinese movies and visit Chinese restaurants because they wanted culturally relevant outlets.

Chinese students' exclusive grouping in leisure was also merits discussion. Based on previous studies, Stodolska (2007) divided the factors leading to ethnic enclosure in leisure into two categories: (1) one is related to discrimination and exclusion by the mainstream society; and, (2) the other is related to minorities' preferences due to their common cultural background and immigration experience. Ethnic enclosure in leisure also exists in Chinese international students groups, and in this study, all of the Chinese students admitted that they socialize primarily with

other Chinese students. They sometimes socialize with other Asian international students with similar cultures, such as Japanese or Korean students, and rarely socialize with domestic students. This mirrors Wang and Stringer's (2000) conclusion that Chinese students are more often witnessed in specific "Asian involved" leisure activities, and Chinese students tend to socialize within their own culturally homogenous circles. According to the students in my study, they mainly socialize with co-nation peers because their preferred activities were more accepted among their culture groups, and students realized that it was easier to negotiate with people from the same cultural background as they were naturally connected by sharing same ideas, customs and interests. This study echoes Stodolska, Marcinkowski and Yi-Kook (2007) research on Korean immigrants' leisure participation in the U.S, which reported that social minorities often participate in recreational activities in ethnically segregated groups due to their cultural preferences.

Ethnic enclosure in leisure participation can also reinforce the participants' social connections within their racial circles and facilitate professional and social networks within the community. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) found that some Korean Americans participated exclusively in recreational activities with other Koreans to reinforce their ethnic identity, retain their traditional culture, and strengthen connections with other group members. Even though the students did not express a willingness to reinforce ethnic identity or retain traditional culture, they did notice that their exclusive social interactions within their ethnic groups strengthened their connections with other group members and helped them develop more profound friendships.

Ethnic enclosure is also a coping mechanism when an ethnic minority feeling discriminated by mainstream culture (Stodolska, Marcinkowski, & Yi-Kook, 2007). Studies have

shown that racial and ethnic minority groups would turn to social interactions with other co-ethnics when they experienced prejudice and discrimination during their leisure interaction. They adopted this strategy as a means of self-protection, self-preservation, and self-empowerment (Stodolska, 2007). In this study, none of the students I interviewed mentioned experiencing discrimination in their leisure participation, however, a few participants noted their disappointment in their restricted participation in their preferred leisure activities due to lack of culturally relevant programming. This is an example of institutional discrimination as the failure to provide needed leisure options to culturally minorities inevitably diminished the ethnic minorities' leisure pursuits and resulted in their ethnic enclosure (Paraschak & Tirone, 2003; Tirone, 2000).

Although Chinese culture had molded and structured Chinese students' leisure behavior before they came abroad, this study revealed that the host country also influenced their leisure behavior. For example, more than one Chinese student mentioned that they started their fitness journey or at least started working out after they came to Canada as they were inspired by Canadians' culture of being physically active. Some of the participants also stated that the reason why they would participate in a new leisure activity was because of its popularity in Canadian leisure culture, like skiing and camping. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) also found that recreational sport participation promotes newcomers' acculturation into the mainstream culture that characterizes the host country. In their study, they noticed that interviewees who participated in "mainstream" activities developed interpersonal contacts outside of their ethnic groups because they were exposed to different cultures and embraced the diversity of society. This could help account for my research participants' complaints about their marginalization within Canadian society. Several students admitted that they would only participate in activities that

they are familiar with, and refuse to expand their social circles. As a result, they block the path to understanding and adopting the values of the local society. In that case, they were grounded into their own cultural circle and could not establish friendships with domestic students, which exacerbated their acculturative stress.

Ultimately, culture is the foundation that formed Chinese international students' leisure behavior. It should not only be noted as a constraint in leisure studies but also should be taken into an overall perspective to think about its role in facilitating and forming leisure behavior. From this study we can see that Chinese international students still preferred their culturally relevant leisure activities, but that they are also influenced by Canadian culture and that most had access to new leisure options and incorporated these into their leisure habits—particularly as it related to the outdoor environment.

It is also important to note that Chinese students are no longer unilaterally study-oriented, but rather, seek out leisure and work to have a better understanding of leisure's role in life. The value Chinese international students put on their studies has been well documented in the literature, which often describes students as study-oriented and prioritizing their academic goals over their leisure needs, ultimately ignoring the importance of leisure in their lives. For example, research conducted by Walker, Jackson and Deng (2007) revealed that Asian international students are more motivated for academic achievement and success in their studies than participate in leisure activities. Similarly, Li and Stodolska (2006) reported that Chinese graduate students in the United States had a strong desire to be successful in their studies, and that academics were the most important factors that affect Chinese graduate students' leisure experience. Despite these findings, in this study I found that Chinese students cherished their leisure experiences and expressed willingness to have more time spent on leisure. These

students, whether they were actively engaged in leisure or not, were all recognized the importance of leisure and the benefits they achieved in leisure. As some of them mentioned, leisure could help them manage life pressures, help them relax, refresh their minds after a period of hard work, increase their energy, and improve the overall quality of their lives.

Summary

Because so many factors co-influenced Chinese students' leisure participation, it is more useful to identify the ones that facilitated to their leisure participation and the ones that constrained their ability to enjoy recreational leisure activities. Based on the students' answers, intrapersonal factors such as an extroverted personality would certainly ease the transition process, help with their acculturation, increase language acquisition, increase their confidence, and thus lead to more leisure opportunities. Interpersonal factors include: supportive friends and family members who encouraged their leisure participation, useful information from other social connections such as homestay and teachers that provided leisure suggestions which expanded their perception in leisure. On a social/environment level, a more pristine natural environment incentivised students to participate in nature-based leisure activities. They expressed their willingness to participate in organized leisure programmes that resonate with their culture, to use accessible recreational facilities, and convenient transportation allowed the students to participate in leisure activities freely without worrying about long travel times.

My research participants also discussed the factors that constrained their leisure participation. Intrapersonal factors such as an introverted personality could lead a student to feel intimidated by their new surroundings and thus close themselves off from others. Poor language proficiency is also a difficulty that the students faced in their leisure and academic life. Lack of friends resulted in some students' absence from group activities, and their families' expectations

for academic success sometimes put them under such pressure that they could not enjoy their participation in leisure activities. Some students also mentioned that over-crowded recreation sites scared them away, and lack of culturally relevant leisure programmes and substandard recreational facilities decreased their interest in participation. Students busy school lives took most of their time, and when joining a leisure activity required taking public transportation, they would generally not participate.

Implication of the Research Findings

Although this study is exploratory, it still provides some useful insights for professionals in the field of recreation services. For instance, to encourage international students' leisure participation, providers must help students overcome the participation constraints I have discussed above. Studies have found that leisure participation constraints were present in every aspect of the students' life. Kelly and Godbey (1992) recommend tackling intrapersonal constraints first as they believed they interferes with the students' will to engage in leisure activities, and they ranked the other two factors less important. I agree with this strategy, but it should also be noted that the motivation to participate in leisure activities sometimes does not come from the activity itself. This means that only focusing on activity delivery might not be an effective way to attract their participation. It is important that researchers and providers learn which leisure activities appeal to Chinese international students. Leisure providers should recognize that Chinese ethnicity plays an important role in Chinese immigrants' leisure activity participation, and be cognizant of this reality as they plan programs. Therefore, strategies such as incorporating cultural elements into program design or involving international students in the activity design process could also be applied to developing culturally sensitive recreation for other international groups.

Communication with Chinese international students also helps overcome intrapersonal deficiencies, which is to raise their awareness of leisure. Since many Chinese students attach great importance to education, they devote as much time as possible to their studies to the detriment of their leisure participation. As a result, leisure providers should devote more time and energy to educating international students about the benefits of leisure activities, which could in turn lead to increased student participation.

Besides intrapersonal constraints, diminishing the constraints at the interpersonal and social/environment level can also increase Chinese international students' leisure participation. The possibility of breaking interpersonal constraints should be part of program promotion, particularly as on-campus and community leisure activities provide great opportunities to meet new people. This strategy could appeal to students who want to expand their limited and homogenous social networks, particularly as international students tend to cling to the perception that a limited social network is constraining, rather than enabling, their leisure participation. The students in the research expressed their willingness to make new friends, which made this intervention seem useful and appropriate.

As highlighted in the findings, friends can positively affect Chinese students' leisure participation. To attract more Chinese international students to leisure activities, a policy where students receive reduced registration fees for signing up in groups might increase enrolment. This special offer could not only reduce costs for participation, which addresses the financial barriers for some students, but it would also reinforce their relationships with one another.

In relation to social/environment factors, students in this study felt that the quality and availability of recreation facilities were positively correlated with their leisure participation. As a result, providers must ensure that quality recreational facilities are available for students.

Further, more reliable public transportation would also facilitate Chinese students' leisure participation. Taken together, these interventions would help Chinese students enjoy more accessible and consistent leisure experience.

Research Limitations

This study has three limitations. First of all, as all of the interviews were conducted in Chinese, I had to translate the interview questions into Chinese before conducting the interviews, and then code the transcripts from Chinese into English for analysis. Although research participants re-read the transcripts of their interviews, misunderstandings and cultural differences were unavoidable in this process because of linguistic differences and comprehension between languages and cultures. Second, because the results are built from a small sample size and non-probability sampling research methods, this research can only be regarded as an exploratory study. Third, this study only looked into Chinese international students attending Vancouver Island University, thus the findings may not reveal the whole picture of attitude variations of Chinese international students in Canada.

Future Research

Future research should focus on the differences between Chinese international and Canadian students' leisure experiences to understand the former group's specific needs. Since most cross-cultural leisure studies explore the leisure that Chinese international students confront within Canadian society (Jackson & Walker, 2006; Walker, Jackson & Deng, 2007; Walker, Jackson & Deng, 2008), a useful avenue for future may be to compare the differences of leisure behaviors between Chinese international students and Canadian students in Canadian universities. This is particularly relevant as live in the same social context but may experience

different leisure constraints and adopt different negotiation strategies. The current study explores leisure patterns from Chinese students' perspective without further exploring the factors that distinguish Chinese students' their Canadian counterparts. Understanding these differences could help leisure researchers identify common problems and provide an evidential basis for leisure service providers to design and develop proper programs for both groups.

Other international student groups in Canadian universities also merit future study, and the comparison between other ethnic groups and Chinese students would bring some interesting results as each group has a distinct cultural background, and may have special needs and experiences in leisure. They may share some common leisure constraints with Chinese students but they will invariably have their own stories about their lives in Canada. Research on different international student groups may provide information for both leisure researchers and leisure service providers about the diversity of leisure preferences and constraints in both research and practice. This kind of study will call more attention to minority groups in Canada within leisure research and may contribute to the development of theories and communities.

Finally, research on how to get international students more involved in campus activities could be very useful within universities. Leisure activities are the bridge that encourages students to become engaged on university campuses. On campus recreation could help students develop a positive view of the university, increase their sense of pride and belonging to the community, and help with their social adjustment. Thus, how to enhance student engagement especially for international students through on campus recreation activities should be considered in the future.

Conclusion

Leisure is a significant element of life and everyone should have the opportunity to experience. However, it is often difficult for some minority groups to participate in leisure

activities. Given this reality, leisure researchers should attend to minority groups when studying leisure issues because everyone should have the right to participate in culturally relevant leisure activities. . Further, fully understanding of the needs and behaviors of minority groups is crucial if we are going to develop leisure practices and policies. The experiences of minority groups are an important component in leisure research and there are still numerous gaps in this field.

The findings of this study add important information to our understanding of the factors that contributed to Chinese international students' leisure behavior in Canada. Different from most existing literature, the results of this study were not only limited to the factors that restrained Chinese international students' leisure participation, but adopted social ecological framework to explore intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social/environment factors that constructed their leisure behavior and explained the development of their existed leisure patterns. The adoption of social ecological theory as the framework is a unique contribution to the field of leisure studies. Unlike most existing frameworks that primarily focus on a narrow range of psychosocial elements, a SET framework starts from a social ecological perspective, and social context is included as an important factor that influences behavioral change (Fleury & Lee, 2006). Even though social ecological models are dominantly used in human health and illness to understand the interrelations among diverse personal and environmental factors (Stokols, 1996), borrowing it to understand the correlates of leisure participation among Chinese international students allows us to extend traditional motivational and behavioral theory and provide more in-depth insights of components including intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, environmental and organizational factors.

This study not only contributes to leisure research on Chinese international students and even other international student groups in Canada, but also helps international students

understand their leisure demands and the barriers to their leisure participation. The findings could help them rethink their leisure lives in Canada and inspire them to seek more opportunities to be active in leisure.

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APPENDIX A—Interview Guide

Information about participant

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - a. How old you are, program of study? How long you've been studying at Vancouver Island University?
 - b. Living situation—live alone, with others, home stay
(Have any of these ever had impact on your leisure?)

Life as an International Student

1. Can you describe what it is like being an International student at VIU?
 - a. What experiences did you have that helped you with being an international student at VIU? (your transition experience)
 - b. Did you experience anything that made being an international student difficult?

Leisure as concept/culture

1. When you hear the word “leisure”, what does that word mean to you?
 - a. Why is leisure important to you?

2. In your opinion, how might Chinese students' leisure differ from Canadian students' leisure?

Leisure & SET Factors

1. Can you tell me about some of your **favourite things (leisure)** to do in your free time?
 - a. How are these “things/experiences” different or similar from when you lived in China? Why is this so?

- b. Describe the types of leisure activities/activities done for fun or in free time when you lived in China?
 - c. Can you describe any changes in your free time activities or preferences since your arrival in Canada?
 - d. What leisure activities do you participate in now that you live in Nanaimo? Are any of them new to you?
 - e. Can you give examples of activities or experiences you'd like to try or participate in but haven't? What **prevented** you from participating?
2. Describe the **individuals** you spend your free time with?
- a. Are these individuals other international students, Chinese students or domestic students?
 - b. What activities or things do you do with these individuals?
 - c. In what ways do these individuals influence your leisure participation?
3. Are there other people in your life that influence your leisure participation? In what ways?
4. When you compare Nanaimo to your home country, can you describe any difference in the amount of **social support (family members)** you experience to participate in leisure activities?
- a. How did your family support your leisure participation in China?
 - b. How did your friends support your leisure participation in China?

5. In what ways do your English language skills **influence** your free time activities (leisure)? In what ways?
6. Can you tell me about the **activities/free time programs** that you participate in that are on or offered by **VIU campus**?
 - a. Who do you participate in these experiences with?
 - b. If you don't participate, can you tell me what gets in the way of participating?
7. What are your impressions of the leisure programs, clubs and activities **offered by VIU**?
 - a. Why do they or do they not interest you?
 - b. Can you describe any activities or experiences in which you would like to participate in are not offered on campus?
8. Can you tell me about the **activities/or the places you visit during your free time** that are **off campus**?
 - a. Who do you participate in these experiences with?
 - b. If you don't participate, can you tell me what gets in the way of participating?
 - c. Can you describe any activities or experiences in which you would like to participate in are not offered in Nanaimo?
9. Can you describe how you get around in Nanaimo?
 - a. How does your access to transportation influence your leisure participation?

10. Can you describe where you live (**neighbourhood**) and how it influences (positive or negative) your leisure participation?

11. What could VIU/City of Nanaimo do to make leisure participation better for you?

12. If you could change anything about your own leisure, what would you change?

a. People?

c. Skills?

b. Places?

d. Activities?