Western Research Forum 2019

From Expectation to Experience: My Changing Identity as a Chinese International Student (Abstract)

Background:

This autobiographical narrative inquiry investigates what we can learn from my experience as a Chinese international student in both writing and art-based ways, which can inform Chinese international students’ expected supports that can improve their mental wellbeing. The study asks: Are my pre-departure expectations for studying in Canada different from the realities? If so, how and why are they different? And, what is my changing identity to be a Chinese international graduate student? The data sources of the study are my autobiographical memories, posts, blogs, journals, drawings and photography works in about a five-year length of my lifetime from China to Canada.

Methods:

The data sources of the study are my autobiographical memories, posts, blogs, journals, drawings and photography works in about a five-year length of my lifetime from China to Canada. Intergroup relationship theories and identity theories are used flexibly as lenses to facilitate my autobiographical narrative along timeline. Multiliteracies theories are used flexibly as a method to write my stories.

Results:

Gaps between my expectation and experience of studying in Canada, in terms of study, expense, friendship and nature, are explored.

Discussion & Conclusion:
The findings of this study show that my aesthetic experience from art and literature, Chinese politics, basic needs for mental security and self-esteem, and desire to be genuine have played significant roles in my ongoing changing identity as a Chinese international student. Based on these results, suggestions are given.