

**THE RESPONSES OF CANADIAN AND CHINESE TEACHERS AND
UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS TO PICTURE BOOKS: A CASE STUDY
ROOTED IN A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN AND CHINESE
AWARD-WINNING PICTURE BOOKS (2004-2014)**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Education
In the Department of Curriculum Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore through a social constructivist framework the similarities and differences emerging from a set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books published between 2004 and 2014. In addition to the application of Radical Change characteristics to the picture book set, responses of eight participants in Canadian and Chinese academic and teaching contexts were also explored through semi-structured interviews related to conceptualizations and use of children's picture books. Child-image and theme were investigated through content analysis. The exploration illuminated that the most frequent child-image was *child who encounters difficulties*. *Child-as-problem solver* and *playing/imaginative child* were more reflected in the Canadian titles, while the Chinese titles included more *child-as-narrator* and *moral/life model*. The theme of *moral/life lessons* was frequently represented by the selected titles, whereas the biggest difference between the two cultural categories was *imagination/fantasy*, with the Chinese study set involving it far less often. The most obvious Radical Change type was *changing forms and formats*. The most important purpose of using picture books in both Canadian and Chinese contexts appeared to be *books as teaching tools*. There has been a considerable amount of *imagination/fantasy* or children with authentic characterization/special needs in the selected books, yet the participants believed there was a dearth of the particular theme or child-image in current picture books. This study indicates potential for further comparative studies of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, and extends the knowledge of picture books, to address current gaps in the literature, particularly as available research relates to the creation, evaluation and use of picture books.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Beverley Brenna, who provided me with consistent guidance throughout my study. Your support and encouragement enabled me to complete this study. I also appreciate the feedback from my committee member, Dr. Brenda Kalyn, thank you for the thought-provoking questions and sage advice. I am grateful to Dr. Lynne Wiltse, whose work I greatly admire, for being the external examiner on this thesis. I would also like to thank the participants, who gave so freely of their time and consideration for this study: Heather Baergen, Dr. Joyce Bainbridge, Brent Campbell, Dr. Zhu Ziqiang, Dr. Tan Fengxia, Ma Jing, and Wang Luyao. I would also like to thank my parents, whose storytelling instilled my interest in children's literature; my child, Zheng, whose love for picture books inspired this study; my husband, Qi, for his endless patience, love and support.

I dedicate this work to my wonderful husband Qi and our son Zheng.

Thank you for being my foundation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My Journey Reading Children's Picture Books

One day in the summer of 2014, I was sitting on the living room floor reading picture books with my 20 month old son. A variety of picture books were spread around us; half of them were Chinese picture books, and the other half were Canadian. My son was looking at me eagerly and urged me to keep reading his favorites, including both Chinese and Canadian titles. At that moment, I realized we were not only telling stories and sharing pictures; I was also transmitting cultural knowledge as well as educational values from two different countries.

My son's love of picture books reminds me of my childhood when I was deep inside amazing children's stories. My mother used to read children's story books for me, just like I was reading picture books with my son. The only difference was that my child could look at the beautiful pictures when I was reading for him, but I could only listen to the stories that my mother read because my childhood books had very few illustrations.

During the last few decades, great changes have taken place in children's literature, especially in children's picture books where many more titles are available than ever before in both Canada and China. Increasing numbers of educators and children's literature experts have also agreed that picture books are an important resource for early childhood education (Edwards & Saltman, 2010; Kiefer, 2010; Pantaleo, 2008; Zhu Ziqiang, 2014). Teaching children through picture books has been advocated not only in terms of classroom practice but also in parent-child activities (Farris, 1995; Kiefer, 2010; Manifold, 1997; Mendoza & Reese, 2001; Pantaleo, 2008; Peng Yi, 2011; Zhu Ziqiang, 2014).

Early in 2008 when I started studying children's literature at the Ocean University of China, I realized for the first time how powerful picture books can be as a newly emerging form of children's literature in China. Later in the summer of 2009, I was responsible for introduction and interpretation duties when the first exhibition of Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Awards was held in Shanghai, 2009. I had discussed and analyzed various Chinese award-winning picture books at that time and I was impressed by their beautiful language and illustrations. Then in 2013, I got a chance to continue studying children's literature in Canada, and this experience opened a new window for me. I wondered what the distinguishing features of Canadian picture books are, and how they differ from Chinese picture books.

As a mother of a two-year boy and a graduate student who is interested in children's literature, I have easy access to varied picture books in my daily life. In general, most of the picture books to which I am exposed can be roughly divided into two groups: Canadian and Chinese picture books. During everyday reading, I became aware of a number of differences between the Canadian and the Chinese picture books and my interest was piqued to explore these differences further, within a bounded set. Variations in child-image and theme are the most prominent differences which have attracted me and caused curiosity, prompting a variety of research questions that include one of the three key questions that underpinned this research study: What similarities and differences emerge in a comparison of Chinese and Canadian award-winning picture books? In addition, I was also interested in inquiring into the perspectives of teachers at the K-12 and post-secondary level related to children's picture books. The second key question of my proposed study was contextualized in this interest:

What similarities and differences appear in the responses of four K-12 teachers and four post-secondary instructors in Chinese and Canadian contexts related to children's picture books? My interest here extended to the third key question of the research study: How do the responses of these eight participants in terms of the potential patterns and use of picture books compare and contrast to my investigation related to Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books?

In terms of choices made in the literature cited, because this study includes both Chinese and Canadian books as part of the bounded case, I have included references to Chinese scholars whose work is produced in Mandarin Chinese, along with other English scholars, and attempted to preserve the meaning of the former through direct quotes followed by my own English translation. In my inclusion of quotations in Mandarin Chinese, I am patterning from Barbas-Rhoden (2011) and Han (2009), who pay similar homage to varying languages within works that are primarily English. I have adapted the linguistic framework and insertion pattern of Barbas-Rhoden's (2011) article, "Toward an Inclusive Eco-Cosmopolitanism: Bilingual Children's Literature in the United States", which utilizes both Spanish and English references as citations. In addition, with regard to interviews for this study, I used the translation model based on Han's (2009) article, "Institutionalized Inclusion: A Case Study on Support for Immigrants in English Learning". In this way I hope to demonstrate respect for cross cultural understandings as well as include different perspectives regarding the picture book topic of study.

Need for the Study

English has become the dominant global language in various communities. Such

positioning of English leads to the worldwide distribution of English children's literature. Chinese children's literature, especially the creating of picture books, is a field that is also developing rapidly with increasing numbers of titles on the market (Zhu, 2014). Children's literature scholars and educators need to look at research questions with broader international perspectives instead of simply confining studies in narrow contexts. Nikolajeva (1996) argued, "The notion that there is a 'common' children's literature in all countries in the world is a misunderstanding....With very few exceptions, children's literature in different countries has little in common" (p. 43). Similarly, according to Nodelman (2008), "...the difference between national children's literatures allow them to be read as variations of each other in another, equally important, way" (p. 289). O'Sullivan (2005) also suggested that a comparative children's literature would focus on "what is characteristic, distinctive and exclusive to individual children's literatures, which emerges, as do their commonalities, only when different traditions are contrasted with each other" (p. 12). Therefore, while this comparative study of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books indicated the similarities and differences between the two cultural groups of children's literature selections, it also enabled me to reveal their distinctive national characteristics.

The picture book is the most representative form of children's literature. As Edwards and Saltman (2010) pointed out, "The picture book, a relatively recent development within the history of children's publishing, is the only book format that is the exclusive domain of children's literature" (p. 4). Therefore, the picture book form is conducive to a study that intends to examine the child-image, the theme, and contextualized responses related to different award-winning picture books from various cultural contexts.

Because of globalization and the widespread use of information technology, multiculturalism has become a topic of growing interest in many countries around the world. Gay (2011) advocated that multicultural education is “integral to improving academic success and preparing all youths for democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society” (p. 236). Kiefer (2010) also stated that as a salient resource of multicultural literature, fine international picture books can help children develop visual maturity and appreciation as well as experience many cultures. In my opinion, with the emergence of globalization, it is important for the generations who are living in such a *global village* era to have exposure to cultural diversity in a variety of ways. “There is a need for children’s literature to go beyond the landscape of a country or the customs and traditions, and provide children with an understanding of all components of the culture” (Hall, 2012, p. 67). That is why I also intend in this thesis to discuss potentialities for bridging cultural gaps with respect to picture book study, and hope to provide inspiration that supports multicultural education.

More and more teachers are working towards the goal of multicultural education in the way of implementing classroom learning through picture books. “There is a potential for using children’s literature as a medium for cross-cultural awareness” (Hall, 2012, p. 66). Papers and articles that discuss this issue are increasing as well (Farris, 1995; Manifold, 1997; Mendoza & Reese, 2001). “Books have the potential be powerful teaching tools for cultural awareness, especially when the content can be analyzed critically and effectively” (Hall, 2011, p. 28). However, previous studies are rare that investigate multiculturalism by comparing potential similarities and differences among award-winning picture books from different countries. One purpose of this study was to identify commonalities and differences through

comparison of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, thus exploring culturally-based views of children and childhood, investigating potential possibilities and concepts related to multicultural education. “Only by making international/global studies an integral part of the curriculum can schools hope to meet today’s challenge of preparing students for effective citizenship in an economically integrated, but politically divided world” (Becker, 2002, p. 56).

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

For this study, I employed social constructivism as a perspective through which a qualitative case study could be built in order to best address my research questions:

1. What similarities and differences emerge in a comparison of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014?
2. What similarities and differences appear in the responses of four K-12 teachers and four post-secondary instructors in Canadian and Chinese contexts related to children’s picture books?
3. How do the responses of these eight participants in terms of the potential patterns and use of picture books compare and contrast to my investigation related to Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014?

A case study is a functioning specific study of the particular which seeks out “emic meanings held by people within the case” (Stake, 1994, pp. 240-241). According to Gay and Airasian (2000), a case can be defined as “one unit”, such as “individual, group, institution, organization, program, or document” (p. 622). The definition that Johnson and Christensen (2014) have given is more concise: a case is “a bounded system” (p. 658). The boundaries of

the case for this study, in particular, are the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014, as well as various responses to the use and the evaluation of picture books in the different cultural contexts of Canada and China. The analysis and comparative exploration of child-image and theme as well as the evaluation of these picture books through Radical Change theory (Dresang, 1999) can be viewed through the lens of my personal critical response as a researcher. The evaluation and use of the picture books in different cultural contexts which may be uncovered through the Canadian and the Chinese children's literature specialists' and teachers' experiences and stories, can be viewed as other various responses to these books from participants active in the fields of children's literature and education. Case study as a method was chosen because it can offer a deep, rich, and personal exploration of participants' feelings, opinions, experiences, and reflections.

Social constructivism is a belief system that assumes that *universal truth* cannot exist because there are multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices that can label truth in scientific pursuit (Hays & Singh, 2012). One aspect of Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory states that our knowledge is shaped or constructed through the social influences and interactions within our environment.

Either the using of picture books or the selection of award-winning picture books links with their specific historical, social and cultural traditions. Adults consciously or unconsciously inherit culture and transmit this culture to children through the creation and sharing of picture books. Edwards and Saltman (2010) indicated, "Complex and contested ideas about nation, community, and the importance of cultural identity are embedded in any discussion of a national children's literature." (p.11). What emerged from this study was not

only the similar or different child-images, themes, and responses involved related to the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, but more importantly, the various views on children, cultural identities, and related educational implications.

In addition, Dresang's (1999) Radical Change theory was used as a framework to examine the body of the selected award-winning picture books. Dresang (1999) indicated three Radical Change types: changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries. For literary criticism, Radical Change theory "can become the librarian's or teacher's or critic's lens to view the body of contemporary literature for youth, and may change the way people using it view that literature" (Dresang, 1999, p. 19). The targeted books for inclusion in this study were originally published from 2004 to 2014, and have embodied many various characteristics defined by Radical Change. Therefore, through examining Radical Change characteristics and identifying which characteristics are most or least obvious, the respective features of the Canadian and the Chinese award-winning picture books can be clearly delineated and addressed.

Conceptual Framework

Children's literature, categories of exploration and purpose of use, is the wider conceptual framework outlined for this research study. Many researchers have explored children's literature, moving from studies related to children's literature and childhood culture (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Zhu, 2014), to children's literature and child development (Hadaway & Young, 2009; Matulka, 2008; Opitz, 1999), and more recently, to children's literature and critical literacy and multicultural education (Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis, 1999; Brenna, 2010; Farris, 1995; Hammett & Bainbridge, 2009; Lewison, Flint, & Van

Sluys, 2002; Manifold, 1997; Mendoza and Reese, 2001; Taliaferro, 2009; Wiltse, 2015).

Looking specifically at content analysis and connections to educational usage, the research described here identifies particular categories of exploration and ways that participant voices can be heard related to conceptualizations and employment of children's picture books as educational tools.

Definition of Children's Literature

What is children's literature? Different scholars and researchers have various definitions based on their own experiences, historical or cultural contexts, and it is difficult to reach a consensus. As Weinreich (2007) said, defining children's literature is:

[A]n area of research and an endless debate that is as old as research into children's literature itself. It is both the simplest and the most complex question we can ask: *What is children's literature?* The answers to this question are many and various. There are not quite as many answers as there are researchers, but it is a close call. (n.p.)

It is indisputable that children's literature involves "a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children" (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1996, p. 17). But what is the basis of our belief that a book is a children's book? If a book is written for children, yet adults enjoy reading this book as well, is it still a children's book? What of adult books that are also read by children? Are they children's literature? As the British critic John Rowe Townsend (1980) pointed out:

Surely *Robinson Crusoe* was not written for children, and do not the *Alice* books appeal at least as much to grown ups?; if *Tom Sawyer* is children's literature, what about *Huckleberry Finn*?; if the *Jungle Books* are children's literature, what about *Kim* or

Stalky?; and if *The Wind in the Willows* is children's literature, what about *The Golden Age?*; and so on. (p. 196)

Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) defined children's literature as "good-quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction" (p. 2). Some key factors can be easily extracted from this definition: firstly, children's literature involves "good quality" books; secondly, children's literature should cover "topics of relevance and interest to children" of the ages "from birth to adolescence". One important idea inferred by this definition is that children's literature should be chosen by adults, because only adults have the power and ability to assess "good-quality" books and determine what are relevant and appropriate topics for children to read. Coincidentally, Lukens (2003) argued children's literature differs from adults' literature only "in degree but not in kind" (p. 8), therefore, although children also seek pleasure from a story, "the sources of their pleasure are more limited" because "their experiences are more limited" (p. 8). Kiefer (2010) offered a similar explanation for the characteristics of children's literature, in that "the content of children's literature is limited by children's experience and understanding. Certain emotional and psychological responses seem outside the realms of childhood" (p. 7). She presented nostalgia, cynicism, and despair as examples to support her argument, but "[t]his is not to suggest that all stories for children must have happy endings; many today do not. It is only to say that when you close the door on hope, you have left the realm of childhood....Children's books are books that have the child's eye at the center" (p. 7).

One thing Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson's (1999), Lukens's (2003), and Kiefer's (2010)

definitions about children's literature all have in common is that children's literature is regarded as an unidirectional literature. More specifically, children's literature involves a literature style that adults write, edit, publish, review, select, sell, buy, and teach for children. This is not to claim that children's literature should also include books or other materials created by children; on the contrary, I agree with Nodelman (2008):

The appearance of books by children in bookstores is unlikely...not primarily because customers might assume such books would lack interest or artistry but because there is no guarantee the books would safely represent the usual experienced adult views of what it is acceptable for children to read....In being authentically childlike, they might transgress the boundaries of children's literature....children's literature centrally represents adult views of childhood, not those of children themselves. A text genuinely expressive of childhood or childlike thinking as experienced by a child would lack a fundamental defining quality of children's literature. (pp. 148-149)

Nodelman (2008) summed up by citing McMaster's words, "literature *by* children is a different matter from literature *for* children" (p. 149).

In fact, when I describe all three of the definitions of children's literature listed above as *unidirectional*, the emphasis is that they all neglect the influence of children's literature for adults. Hence, I lean towards the Chinese critic Zhu Ziqiang's (2009) point of view where he propounded a formula to define children's literature:

儿童文学=儿童×成人×文学 (p. 22)

[Children's literature=Children×Adults×Literature.] (p. 22)

Zhu (2009) further argued that the presupposition of this formula is to contradict the

other two possible formulas: Children's literature=Children+Literature; and Children's literature=Children+Adults+Literature.

在儿童文学的生成中，成人是否专门为儿童创作并不是使作品成为儿童文学的决定性因素（很多不是专为儿童创作的作品却成为儿童文学就说明了这个问题），至为重要的是在儿童与成人之间建立双向、互动的关系，因此，我在这个公式中不用加法而用乘法，是要表达在儿童文学中“儿童”和“成人”之间不是相向而踞，可以分隔、孤立，没有交流、融合的关系，而是你中有我、我中有你的生成关系，儿童文学的独特性、复杂性、艺术可能、艺术魅力正在这里。……“儿童”、“成人”都是无法恒定的、具有无限可能的变量。不过，需要说明的是，在我提出的公式里，“儿童”、“成人”、“文学”的数值均至少等于或大于2，这样，它才有别于“儿童文学=儿童+成人+文学”这个公式，即它的结果至少不是6，而是8，如果“儿童”、“成人”、“文学”的数值是3，那就不是加法结果的9，而是乘法结果的27。可见“儿童”、“成人”的精神内涵越丰富，“相乘”之后的儿童文学的能量就越大。(pp. 22-23)

[In the development of children's literature, whether adult authors are especially writing for children is not the determining factor which enables a book to become a children's literature work (it can be supported by the evidence that many books which are not originally written for children eventually become classic children's literature). It is much more important to build a bidirectional interactive relationship between children and adults, therefore, I use multiplication rather than addition in this formula. I intend to indicate that, in the field of children's literature, *children* and *adults* are not opposite, their relationships are not separate, isolated, and without interaction and integration, but

rather interwoven with each other. This is the uniqueness, complexity, artistic possibility, and artistic charm of children's literature..... *children* and *adults* are both non-constant variables with infinite possibilities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, in the formula I propound, the numerical value of *children*, *adults*, and *literature* are at least equal to or greater than 2, only in this way, it is different from the formula of *Children's literature=Children +Adults +Literature*, that is, the result is 8 instead of 6 at the lowest. If the numerical value of *children*, *adults*, and *literature* are 3, then the result would not be 9 as addition, but rather be 27 as multiplication. In other words, according to the rule of multiplication, the more abundant spiritual connotation is for *children* and *adults*, the greater the energy is for children's literature.] (pp. 22-23)

In summary, children's literature not only includes works that are explicitly written for children, but also includes works clearly intended for an adult audience yet considered appropriate for children to read; children's literature is not only about children and their lives, but also involves adult characters and even adult stories; children's literature should give children spontaneous pleasure in the reading, and not predominantly teach or preach. More importantly, it is far from enough to teach or study children's literature in the limited field of *children* and *literature*; researchers need to explore children's literature within a broader field, and emphasize the interactive relationship among *children*, *adults*, and *literature*. As Nodelman (2008) pointed out, there is always a hidden adult behind children's literature, "[t]he simplicity of texts of children's literature is only half the truth about them. They also possess a shadow, an unconscious—a more complex and more complete understanding of the world and people that remains unspoken beyond the simple surface but provides that simple

surface with its comprehensibility” (Nodelman, 2008, p. 206). Hence, for this study of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, in addition to content analysis, it is important as well to explore various perspectives about children’s picture books from adults with wide-ranging perspectives, from parents and classroom teachers to university instructors who study and teach children’s literature.

Definition of Children’s Picture Books

In the timeline of the development of children’s literature, the establishment of the picture book form occurs relatively late. According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999), the first children’s picture book is *Orbis Pictus (The World in Pictures)*, an alphabet book written and illustrated in Moravia by John Amos Comenius and published in 1657. However, until well into the nineteenth century, due to past restrictions regarding printing and media, early picture books were rare and prohibitively expensive. In addition, at that time, books were believed “for the serious business of educating and soul saving, not for enjoyment” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 70). Therefore, the term *picture book* we use today is actually a developing modern concept. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson believed the prosperity of modern picture books should be attributed to the following reasons: (a) technological advances in color printing; (b) a more understanding attitude toward childhood; (c) higher standards of excellence in picture book illustrations; and (d) a greater demand for books (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, pp. 70-71).

In light of a brief historical overview of picture books, it is important to note that illustration is a crucial part of the picture book form. As Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) defined:

[P]icture books are profusely illustrated books in which the illustrations are, to varying degrees, essential to the enjoyment and understanding of the story....The illustrations in picture books provide actual plot or concept information as well as clues to character traits, settings, and moods. Without the illustrations, therefore, these books would be diminished, and in some cases the story would make no sense or would be nonexistent.

(p. 68)

They further stated that not all illustrated children's books are picture books. For instance:

[N]ovels and anthologies often have a few scattered illustrations that depict what has already been described in the text or that serve to decorate the text. These illustrations are said to be *incidental* to the story. When well done, illustrations of this kind are appreciated and enjoyed by readers, but they are not necessary for a complete understanding of the story. (p. 68)

Similarly, Kiefer (2010) also defined picture books as "books in which images and ideas join to form a unique whole....A picturebook provides the reader with an aesthetic experience that is more than the sum of the book's parts" (p. 156). Edwards and Saltman (2010) offered a good overview of the difference between illustrated books and picture books:

In contrast to the illustrated book, in a picturebook, the visual and textual narratives are integrated and interdependent, creating a metatext through the interplay and counterpoint of image and word. In the picturebook, neither words nor images exist in isolation but are integrated into a complex synthesis in which all parts of the book are

crucial to understanding. Text and image cannot stand alone, but must be seen in relationship to each other. (p. 4)

Hence, although “[a]ny book with a picture book format can be included under the umbrella term picturebook” (Kiefer, 2010, p. 156), many books with abundant illustrations cannot be defined as picture books. For example, this study focused on Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, yet some of the awards were not specifically awarded to picture books as a whole but provided solely for illustrations. The Governor General’s Literary Awards in 2014 gave the award of children’s illustration to a graphic novel *This One Summer* (Tamaki & Tamaki, 2014). According to Bucher and Manning (2004), the graphic novel as a genre “began in 1978 when cartoonist Will Eisner created *A Contract with God*...and coined the term ‘graphic novel’ to describe a complex story told in comic book format in 64 to 179 pages” (p. 67). Bucher and Manning further stated, “As a visual medium, graphic novels are engaging and often written for a mature audience” (p. 67). Hence, as a newly emerging form of literature, the graphic novel differs from the picture book, thus *This One Summer* (Tamaki & Tamaki, 2014) would be beyond the scope of this study, and would not be analyzed as a text. Another example is *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (2009), illustrated by Oleg Lipchenko, which won the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award in 2009. The illustrations are exquisite and stunning, but they only serve to decorate the novel-length text, and are not integral to the story. Because of its length, illustrated books of this kind are outside the scope of this study.

Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) divided picture books into several types: baby books, interactive books, toy books, alphabet books, counting books, concept books,

wordless books, picture storybooks, easy-to-read and pattern books, picture books for older readers, and transitional books. The main research text samples in this study are picture storybooks, for these award-winning picture books fit the characteristics of Kiefer's (2010) description of picture storybooks, that is, "books with a narrative format in which words and pictures work together to evoke an emotional and intellectual response in children" (p. 156). Although the Governor General's Literary Award winners, *Ten Birds* (Young, 2011) and *Cat's Night Out* (Klassen & Stutson, 2010), could be classified as counting books, they also have a complete storyline and even interactive themes, and are thus included in the study as compatible with a definition of picture storybooks where both illustration and text are equally responsible for telling the story.

Definition of Child-Image

For this study, the term *child-image* refers to the patterns and common characteristics related to portrayals of children, intended as something to explore in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. In my opinion, child-image can be reflected by the portrayal of children in these award-winning picture books through descriptive language as well as illustration. Chinese children's literature specialist Zhu Ziqiang has employed the term child-image to investigate the problems arising with the development of Chinese children's literature with results appearing in his academic work *The Essential of Children's Literature* (1997). In addition to academic studies, analysis of child-image appears to be more common in book reviews, and description or analysis of characters in terms of representation of childhood is not unusual as well, for example, "Review of the Book *Virginia Wolf*" (Garstad, 2012), and "曹文轩《草房子》中的儿童形象

解析” (“Analysis of the Child-Image in Cao Wenxuan’s *The Straw House*”) (2011).

While child-image and child-character both refer to portrayals of children, the two terms are slightly different from each other. According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999), characters are “the ‘actors’ in a story...A well-portrayed character can become a friend, a role model, or a temporary parent to a child reader” (p. 29). Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson noted that two aspects should be considered in studying a character: characterization and character development. Lukens (2003) also addressed that “even the briefest of picture book texts can show fully developed characters” (p. 49). As can be seen, a well-portrayed child-character should have a strong personality, and convincing changes, good or bad, that correspond to the development of plot. A child-character usually refers to a specific person in the story. There are a lot of memorable characters populating the world of children’s literature. Charlotte the spider (White, 1952), Frederick the mouse (Lionni, 1967), Pippi Longstocking the dauntless girl (Lindgren, 1950), and Peter Pan the boy from Neverland (Barrie, 1911) are all remembered fondly by generations of readers. In contrast, child-image tends to be the overall impression of portrayals of children instead of specific characters. Moreover, for this study, the analysis of child-image was based on the examination of various child-characters portrayed in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. One purpose of this study was to compare and contrast the child-image in the two groups of picture books in order to outline certain national features reflected in Canadian and Chinese children’s literature, and further explore the differences and similarities of views on children and education implied in the two different cultural contexts. Thus, as a more overall depiction of the portrayals of children, the analysis of

child-image is more appropriate to reflect the national characteristics rather than the analysis of specific child-characters.

Definition of Theme

Classification and research with respect to picture books *themes* are even more common than discussions of child-image. Many teachers, librarians, and other specialists in children's literature have been keen to classify picture books according to various themes in order to facilitate effective use of these resources. For instance, in *Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature*, Kiefer (2010) took great pains to identify a great number of picture books by themes so that teachers can easily find suitable materials for their own context. Chinese scholar Peng Yi recommended world-classic picture books for children and their parents according to various themes as well (Peng Yi, 2011).

“Theme in literature is the idea that holds the story together....It is the main idea or central meaning of a piece of writing” (Lukens, 2003, p. 129). Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) further stated, “Although we sometimes think of the theme as the message or moral of the story, it can just as likely be an aesthetic understanding, such as an appreciation for nature, or a viewpoint on a current societal issue” (p. 30). Meanwhile, Lukens (2003), Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) all disagreed with using a single word instead of a complete sentence to express a theme. They all used *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White as an example. “A better statement of the theme [of *Charlotte's Web*] is ‘friendship is one of the most satisfying things in the world’” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 30), rather than the simple expression “the theme of *Charlotte's Web* is friendship”. Although it is suggested that theme should be expressed in a more complete way, for this study the term *theme* is employed to categorize

various topics which emerged from the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, instead of noting the specific theme of each book. Therefore, when it comes to the categorization of the picture books according to their different topics, theme is generally presented through a single word or phrase rather than a complete sentence.

There might be multiple themes in the same picture book according to different readers or different circumstances. As Lukens (2003) stated, “Each reader brings to a story a personal past, a present, and plans for the future. These elements shape our *responses* to the story....The story speaks to us out of our own individual and varying experiences. It speaks a universal truth to us, but our own universal truth, a personal transaction” (p. 133). Paterson (1990) eloquently stated the partnership between authors and readers when calling up true meaning:

We are trying to communicate that which lies in our deepest heart, which has no words, which can only be hinted at through the means of story. And somehow, miraculously, a story that comes from deep in my heart calls from a reader that which is deepest in his or her heart, and together from our secret hidden selves we create a story that neither of us could have told alone. (p. 153)

Thus, for this study, in addition to the existing reference about categorization of themes of picture books, the theme was primarily generalized through my personal experience, as an individual researcher. For example, in my opinion, the theme of *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) was disability rather than sisterhood. Different readers might find different themes from this relatively complex picture book, but for me, as a researcher, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the theme were the major considerations for determining

categorization.

The discussion values of child-image and theme as well as responses to the picture books are important as they can offer various views on children and education. Hunt (1991) emphasized the necessity to add context to the definitions of children's literature, including the idea that constructions of childhood change over time. In other words, the development of children's literature evolves with the changing views of children and education. Children's literature, views of children, and education can be considered independently and considered in terms of their interactions with each other. From a big picture, these three topics are inseparable.

Child-image is an applicable starting point to investigate the relationship among children's literature, views of children, and education. Comparably, examining prevailing trends and preferences of theme selection in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books as well as the responses to this body of books can also help to portray the various educational concepts implied in these texts. Bainbridge and Wolodko (2002) have indicated that children's literature can articulate the "values, tension, myths, and psychology that identify a national character" (p.21). They further stated that "[c]hildren's literature.....can do the ideological work of extending hegemonic discourses within a society about collective identity, memory, and normative social practices" (p.22).

Definition of Canadian Children's Picture Books and Chinese Children's Picture Books

The scope of my study involves award-winning picture books published from 2004 to 2014 and selected as the winners of the Governor General's Literary Award, the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award,

and/or the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. On the one hand, these awards are representative and can strongly reflect the present contents of picture books in Canada and China. On the other hand, I intentionally chose the most recent winners in order to examine my research questions in a modern context, exploring what current writers and illustrators are saying about children and childhood.

However, when referring to the term *Canadian children's picture books*, one study limitation arises from the boundary of the study sample related to Canadian books published in English Canada. I believe that Francophone children's picture books should be studied by researchers who have greater access to a wide range of Francophone children's publications and the ability to analyze the language-related nuances in image and text. Therefore, when I use the term *Canadian children's picture books*, it refers only to English language titles.

In terms of Chinese children's picture books, due to the early developmental stage of this literary form, there are only a few picture book awards. Currently, the most significant award for Chinese children's picture books is the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. However, in the description of eligibility and rules on the Feng Zikai 2015 website, it indicates that, "The book must be originally written in Chinese language, and its first publication must be in Chinese language. There is, however, no limit in the creator's nationality or region" (n. p.). As a result, although the shortlisted picture books are all originally created in the Chinese language, there is an internal difference among those works. For example, there might be a large gap of educational ideas or exploration of artistic techniques between mainland China and Taiwan due to various historical and cultural factors. Therefore, when this study refers to Chinese award-winning picture books, these are not

limited to picture books that were created and published in mainland China, but also includes picture books from various areas and originally written in Chinese language.

Definition of Children's Literature Specialist and Classroom Teacher

In addition to employing content analysis as a method to explore the child-image and the theme in the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, along with other emerging categories of comparison, I also describe in this thesis various experiences and stories from four classroom teachers and four children's literature specialists from different cultural contexts in order to further explore picture books through adult responses.

The term *children's literature specialist* refers to instructors who have taught and studied children's literature in universities, and have rich professional knowledge and abundant experiences in the field of children's literature. It should be clearly noted that the boundaries between *children's literature specialist* and *classroom teacher* are not clear cut. On the contrary, in spite of the fact that some classroom teachers may be novices in terms of using picture books, other classroom teachers participating in this study are quite experienced in using picture books in their daily teaching or applying other reading activities with children. The purpose of employing the two different terms is only to distinguish the differences between role as children's literature researcher and role as classroom teacher.

Children's literature researchers may be more likely to discuss problems in the field of children's literature; classroom teachers may be more concerned with the value of picture books in practical teaching. Even from the same cultural background, opinions related to children's literature might be different or even opposite due to different working environments, personal experiences, and views on children and childhood. Therefore, in

addition to exploring the similarities and differences between the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books as well as the evaluation and use of picture books, it is also intriguing to inquire about the different views of children's picture books and address the gaps between children's literature specialists and classroom teachers within the same cultural context. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the two groups of people by employing different terms such as *children's literature specialist* and *classroom teacher*.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review addresses three specific areas of research relevant to the present study:

1. Child-image and thematic studies in children's literature, including child-image in the history of English-language children's literature and the history of Chinese children's literature, and theme of children's literature, picture books in particular, that relate to national characteristics.
2. Comparative study of North American and Chinese children's literature.
3. Evaluation and use of picture books.

Child-Image and Thematic Studies in Children's Literature

Chinese scholar Zhu (1997) argued that child-image in children's literature can reflect how people identified children and educational ideas in a certain historical period.

Child-image can be shaped not only by illustration but also by text. Studies related to particular images in children's literature are not uncommon. For instance, we can locate work on the inclusion of characters with Down Syndrome in children's picture books (Kalke-Klita, 2005); the portrayal of people with disabilities in children's fiction (Minaki, 2009); the portrayal of caring teachers in children's literature (Brady, 2009); and the images in multicultural literature (Cai, 1994; Chen & Wang, 2014).

Classification and research with respect to themes and patterns are even more common than discussions of child-image in children's literature. According to different themes and subjects, Kiefer (2010) categorized picture books into: (a) family stories; (b) familiar everyday experiences; (c) appreciating cultural diversity; (d) picturebooks about older people; (e) the child's world of nature; (f) animals as people; (g) modern folktale style; (h) humor; (i)

fantasy; (j) social and environmental concerns; and (k) war and its aftermath. When examining award-winning picture books from different countries, Hall (2012) divided the themes into three broad categories: (a) early childhood education content and skills; (b) imagination/fantasy; and (c) morals/life lessons. Based on the work of Rochman (1993), Hall (2012) further divided “moral/life lessons” into more specific categories: immigration, friendship, heroism, family matters, finding love, labor, global awareness, and emotions. The classification of theme in my study will be built on these foundations.

To narrow down the scope of previous research and highlight the comparative features of this study, my literature review focuses on the studies which reflect child-image and theme related to national characteristics. *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing* (2010) by Edwards and Saltman, *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (2002) by Thacker and Webb, Cai's (1994) and Chen and Wang's (2014) research of images of China and Chinese, as well as Tan's (2011, 2014) and Zhu's (2000, 2008, 2014) studies about Chinese indigenous picture books are the primary sources of my literature review on this topic.

Child-Image in the History of English-Language Children's Literature

In general, child-image refers to the ways that literary works portray child-characters; or in other words, child-image is implicit in conceptualizations such as “how writers can empower and disempower fictive children” (Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 57). As previously mentioned, for this study, child-image is defined as a term to describe the patterns and common characteristics related to portrayals of children, intended as something to explore in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. However, it should be

noted that not all books featuring children are children's literature. For example, *Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain, 1884) is a controversial book that cannot easily be classified as children's literature (Zhu, 2009). Nevertheless, a book without child-character may still be identified as children's literature; a good example is the world-famous children's novel, *Daddy Long-Legs* (Jean Webster, 1912). But, as Zhu (2000) argued, “儿童文学是立于儿童生命空间，表现儿童的存在感、价值观以及人生命运的文学，因此儿童形象的确是儿童文学成立的重要支柱之一” (“children's literature is the literature that stands on children's living world, as well as expresses children's sense of presence, values, and life and fate. Hence, child-image is, indeed, one of the most important pillars of the establishment of children's literature”) (p. 58). Zhu (2000) further asserted, “检验一个国家的儿童文学水平的高低时，一个重要的指标就是看其塑造儿童形象的艺术功力的高低” (“one important indicator that can measure the quality of children's literature of a country, is to examine the authors' artistic capability of portraying child-image”) (p. 58). In my opinion, child-image can not only reflect national characteristics depicted by children's literature of a country or region, but is also an applicable starting point to investigate the relationship among children's literature, views of children and childhood, as well as education. As Lesnik-Oberstein (1996) pointed out, definitions “of ‘childhood’ have differed throughout history, and from culture to culture.... ‘family’ and ‘childhood’ are ideas that function within cultural and social frameworks as carriers of changeable social, moral, and ethical values and motives” (pp. 18-19).

Child-image in the history of English-language children's literature has experienced several general stages of development: religious idea of original sin, Romanticism,

Modernism, and Postmodernism (Thacker & Webb, 2002; Townsend, 1974). As mentioned above, not merely are there a large number of various child-images in children's literature; adult literature has also created abundant child-images that can reflect the change of the times. But the purpose of this study is mainly to explore child-image in children's picture books, thus it only focuses on how child-image is developing in the history of children's literature.

According to Townsend (1974), "There were manuscripts that embodied *lessons* for children: especially the 'courtesy books' which flourished in the fifteenth century" (p. 17). But "[t]his was instruction, not entertainment" (p. 18), and "stories were not being written for children" (p. 18). Until the end of seventeenth century, "Books produced specially for children...were nearly all schoolbooks or books of manners or morals" (Townsend, 1974, p. 20). At that time, children were regarded as born with original sin, as Townsend (1974) argued, "The puritans were certainly aware of children, but were aware of them in a rather special sense: as young souls to be saved, or, more probably, damned" (p. 20). Therefore, child-images in literature works were usually depicted as "saintly children who died young in a rapture of prayer" (Townsend, 1974, p. 20), or as corrupted souls who succumbed to the Devil's wiles and were consigned by Christ to death and damnation. Adults provided literature for young children, primarily due to "the idea of rescuing them, if possible, from hellfire" (Townsend, 1974, p. 20).

Rousseau published his world-famous work *Emile* in 1762, and provided two profound contributions to the revolution of the concept of childhood. In the first place, Rousseau explicitly pointed out that the child is an individual being that is radically different from the adult, or in other words, children are not potential adults (Thacker & Webb, 2002). In the

second place, Rousseau presented “a revolutionary, but simple, view that celebrated the natural tendencies of childhood and demanded that they be celebrated and nurtured, rather than directed toward adult values and knowledge” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 19).

Consequently, English Romantic poets William Black, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge resonated with Rousseau’s view of children, idealizing childhood as an innocent and free period. Yet differing from Rousseau’s education standpoint, the Romantic poets found the value of childhood through literature. Therefore, it is often claimed that “the image of the romantic child has been a key point of reference for the birth of children’s literature since the beginning of the nineteenth century” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 13).

During the Romantic period and the subsequent Victorian age, child-images were often shaped to represent innocence, nature, transcendentalism, “the American form of romantic idealism” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 16), and “the possibility of regaining or recuperating a childlike vision” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 21). “Childhood was thus idealised by those who were concerned with retrieving a consciousness of the sublime; of recapturing knowledge and feeling of those truths unknown and unspoken” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 20).

In the second half of nineteenth century, children’s literature was defined as “entertaining and subversive and produced texts which now attract adult audiences but puzzle many actual child readers” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 41). According to Thacker and Webb (2002), “Child figures in adult fiction of the period are too numerous to mention, yet they all serve the purpose of challenging the corrupted adult world” (p. 42). Both in the Romantic period and the Victorian age, children in literary works appeared to subvert the images of

seventeenth century as being saved, and became the “redemptive emblem” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 51). “Writing for children at this time could thus be seen as an attempt to revisit, recuperate, or rescue the writer from a less hopeful truth” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 50). In summary, child-image in the nineteenth century was regarded as the representative of Romanticism to confront and subvert Rationalism. The innocent child-image was the symbol of “a spiritual knowingness in childhood, forgotten or hidden in adult life (and perhaps, recoverable in a childlike perspective)” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 51), and the force to resist and challenge the hopeless reality, and, at least, the power of hope, “though not necessarily of redemption” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 52).

The beginning of the twentieth century and the shifting response to social and cultural change “brought about a renewal in children’s literature and a change in its circumstances” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 101). “Presaged by the conflict and confusion which characterised the *fin de siècle*, the separation of child and adult experience and a further expansion in the children’s book market, indicated a growing perception of children as ‘other’” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 101). The child-image during this period had been more mysterious and complex than ever before. As Thacker and Webb (2002) said:

Children-as-murderers appear to signify a society in its death-throes; always in reference to the image of innocence derived from Romanticism, the evil, out of control child becomes an indication of our own moral poverty and inability to exert influence in the world. Children’s literature of the period deals with these fears, either by escaping from them and retreating to a Romantic image of innocence, or by addressing children through fractured narratives. (p. 101)

According to Thacker and Webb (2002), Modernism has reflected the characteristics of the modern world: “progress-driven, disrupted by world wars and the threatened destruction of the human race, came to signify the ultimate loss of innocence—a totally adult, grown-up world” (p. 102). Thus, the most prominent feature of child-image in the twentieth century, especially the transitional period between nineteenth century and twentieth century, was uncertainty and alienation of modern life (Thacker & Webb, 2002). If Dickon in *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1962) is the embodiment of Romanticism, Peter Pan in *Peter and Wendy* (Barrie, 1911) and *The Borrowers* by Norton (1953) are the reflections of Modernism.

“Burnett embraces an understanding of psychology and challenges imperialist, male-orientated society by using the garden and the Dickon/Pan figure to suggest a kind of androgyny which emphasizes qualities of ‘goodness, self-sacrifice and Godliness’”(Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 80). Dickon as a child-image in *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1962) has represented Romantic innocence, the power of hope, self-redemption, and returning to nature, revealing the kernel of Romanticism. In addition, Dickon’s mother, Susan Sowerby is a perfect representative of the traditional mother and female. On the contrary, Barrie implied an uncertainty of maternity and growing-up in *Peter and Wendy* (1911), framed by Peter’s version:

So great indeed was their faith in a mother’s love that they felt they could afford to be callous for a bit longer.

But there was one there who knew better; and when Wendy finished he uttered a hollow groan.

‘What is it, Peter?’ she cried, running to him, thinking he was ill. She felt him

solicitously, lower down than his chest. 'Where is it, Peter?'

'It isn't that kind of pain,' Peter replied darkly.

'Then what kind is it?'

'Wendy, you are wrong about mothers.'

They all gathered round him in affright, so alarming was his agitation; and with a fine candour he told them what he had hitherto concealed.

'Long ago,' he said, 'I thought like you that my mother would always keep the window open for me; so I stayed away for moons and moons and moons, and then flew back; but the window was barred, for mother had forgotten all about me, and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed.' (pp. 166-167)

"The seemingly 'adult' tension between Peter and Wendy and his rejection of adult life is centred around the idea of the mother and of women" (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 81). Contrasting with Dickon's image of redemption to Mary in *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1962), Peter and Wendy's relationship has shown the tension between sexes as well as childhood and adult world. Peter Pan is a representative child-image of exploring the alienation of modern adult life and the uncertainty of modern world through a Modernism perspective.

The image of garden in *The Borrowers* (Norton, 1953) demonstrates a changing influence as well, compared with *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1962). The garden in which the boy and Arrietty meet is no longer a redeeming place and the place of fostering hope, "but a threatening space, where identity is questioned and isolation is emphasized" (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 131). Consequently, the child-images active in the garden have also changed

from Romantic perspective to Modernist perspective, as Thacker and Webb (2002) argued, “darkness beyond language that perhaps most forcibly characterizes children’s literature influenced by the Modernist aesthetic” (p. 108).

Thacker and Webb (2002) suggested the ideologies of Postmodernism may be defined as “the rejection of absolutes and essentialist thinking” (p. 140). Thus, child-image of postmodern times often displays traits as subverting traditions and challenging of authority; the images of mischievous children and even evil children have been emerging one after another. Moreover, “elements of subversion present, particularly, in contemporary picturebooks” (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 140). The picture book *No, David!* (1998) by David Shannon is a good example. In this book, naughty David is no longer the child who needs to be instructed about proper behavior like the books about manners and morals emphasized in seventeenth century, not the child who symbolized innocence and purity of Romanticism, not even the child who represented uncertainty and alienation of Modernism; he is just a normal child who challenged the authority of adults by demonstrating naughty behavior without punishment. This lack of punishment seems inconceivable to teachers and parents who hold traditional values about books and child-rearing. However, this story is the embodiment of Postmodernism. As Thacker and Webb (2002) argued, “The fascination with ‘the child’ who, since the Romantic movement, has affected, and been affected by, the way in which we understand the relationship between the individual and society is, perhaps, only a projection of our need to tell stories about ourselves that allow us to live” (p. 150). Chinese scholar Zhu (2009) similarly suggested, “从教育性到娱乐性，从教训性到解放性，这是西方儿童文学从 18 世纪到 19 世纪乃至 20 世纪的现代化进程的总体的走向” (“From

instructive to entertaining, from didactic to emancipatory, this is the general trend of modernization of Western children's literature from eighteenth century to nineteenth century and even to twentieth century") (p. 54). Zhu (2009) further concluded, “总之, 儿童观是儿童文学的原点。我们只要考察世界儿童文学的发展史, 就会清晰地看到, 儿童观总是在制约着儿童文学的发展, 决定着儿童文学的方向” (“In a few words, views on children are the origin of children's literature. As long as we examine the history of children's literature, it can be seen clearly that views on children have always restricted the development of children's literature, and decided the direction of children's literature”) (p. 55). Therefore, in order to distinguish the similarities and differences between the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, we must first analyze the views on children by examining various child-images in the two groups of books.

Child-Image in the History of Chinese Children's Literature

Zhu (2000) has argued there was no children's literature in ancient China because *children* and *children's literature* are both historical notions, and only when *children* is discovered as a social construction, *children's literature* is born along with it. However, there were still some child-images in ancient Chinese literature, though the amount is very limited. Zhu (2000) has examined considerable ancient Chinese literature in which children as characters have been portrayed, and concluded three features of child-image in ancient Chinese literature. Firstly, many child-images have reflected feudal ethics, that is, father has the right to guide his children, and is even in charge of the children's life and death; secondly, those children do not have personalities and literary subjectivity, but rather they are dwarfed as embellishment or props in the literature; thirdly, the creation of child-image was almost

always from an adult's perspective, and reflected the adult's standpoint, rather than children's own spiritual world. Children were thus attached to adults, an expression of adult discourse and a tool of realization of their own wills.

From the early twentieth century, Chinese children's literature has been deeply influenced by Western thought, yet it does not take the very same path with English-language children's literature. With the development of the May Fourth Movement in 1919 and the New Culture Movement (Xīn Wénhuà Yùndòng) which flourished from 1915 to the late 1920s, Chinese intellectuals began to advocate the idea that education should be *child-based* and *child-centered*; in addition, the concepts of "discovered childhood" and "the cultivation of children's literature" (Farquhar, 1999, p. 13) were endowed with great value. In the meantime, due to the complicated progress of Chinese society during the twentieth century, Chinese children's literature is "inextricably tied up with ideas about country, nation, society, intellectual concepts of social reform, and children's agency" (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 79). The child-image in literary works during this period can be roughly divided into two types: romantic child-image that represented the innocence and purity of childhood, and realistic child-image that reflected the miserable reality in China (Lifang Li, 2013). Both the child-images indicated the inextricable relationship between social reform of China and modern Chinese children's literature. *Scarecrow* (1923) by Chinese writer Ye Shengtao, the first original fairy tale collection in the history of Chinese children's literature, is a good example, and can "represent a difficult choice confronting writers during the emergence of Chinese children's literature and its early stages of development" (Lifang Li, 2013, 0. 82). In this work, Ye Shengtao created two types of child-images. The first tale in this book, "*The*

Little White Boat”, is a model of romantic child-image:

In a setting which is an idealized pastoral world, two children find a boat in a stream, a boat which will only carry beautiful and pure children. When carried away by a storm, they are returned home by answering three questions which define the subjectivity of the romantic child: birds sing for those who love them, flowers have fragrance because it symbolizes goodness, and the white boat harmonizes with the pure at heart (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 82).

Subsequently, however, Ye Shengtao turned to depict the darkness of reality. In the last tale “*Scarecrow*”, the only child-character is a boy weakened by severe illness, and his mother has to fish at midnight to exchange her catch for a little food. As Chinese critic Zheng Zhenduo (1962) commented about the book *Scarecrow*, “It is impossible to reproduce the innocence of children and reflect the psychology of children, which is beyond all, especially in the gray clouds of adults” (p. 103). As Lifang Li (2013) pointed out, “in parallel with the progress made in China’s history, a literary experience that stimulated the mind and imagination of children” (p. 82), in addition, “a means of social change has entailed that literariness has been increasingly replaced by social function” (p. 82). Chinese children’s literature has to shoulder the responsibility to educate and shape the future Chinese citizens as well as awake people’s awareness of revolution. Hence, modern Chinese children’s literature has been, as Farquhar (1999) put it, “about great dreams of a future China” (p. 305), about “recreating the nation, with a more egalitarian society and a stronger international position” (p. 306).

“In the 1950s and 1960s, the mainstream of children’s literature was produced within a

politically constrained frame and hence largely focused on heroism and education” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 83). The most prevailing notion about children’s literature at that time was that children’s literature is an educational tool, and “每一篇儿童读物都应当有它的教育任务” (“Every book should have its pedagogical task”) (Zhu, 2000, p. 309). In doing so, children’s literature completely became the transmission belt of school education ideas, and authors created many works that deviated from children’s nature. For instance, the fairy tale “*The Three Little Proud Cats*” (1954) by Yan Wenjing is a typical example that educated children to correct their shortcomings. Zhu (2000) argued:

儿童与成人的不同之一就是缺乏生活的知识和经验，因此，儿童在获得知识和经验的过程中，需要成人社会的正确指导和帮助。但是，像《三只骄傲的小猫》这样，将儿童因年龄所限不能理解劳动的含义，因平生第一次体验而不会捉鱼、不认识老鼠的一些自然状态，当作缺点来教训，将成年人的知识和经验当作教育儿童的资本，这样的艺术构思和立意，不仅缺乏艺术性，而且偏离了儿童教育的意义。(p. 313)

[One difference between children and adults is that children lack knowledge and experience about life, hence, in the process of obtaining knowledge and experience, children need the right guidance and help from adults. However, in *The Three Little Proud Cats*, the author lessoned children because they do not understand the meaning of labor due to their age limit. The cats in the story are unable to catch fish and do not know mice because they have not had such experiences before, but these natural states are regarded as children’s shortcomings. Adults’ knowledge and experience become the position of superiority from which to educate children. Such intention and design not

only lack artistry, but also deviate from the meaning of childhood education.] (p. 313)

Thus, the child-image of this period was framed to reflect the social and educational practices, but lost its individual subjectivity.

With the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976, Chinese society had been totally transformed. “[P]eople with an optimistic attitude tended to refer to the circumstances of society by names such as ‘a Crucial Turning Point’, ‘New Era’ and ‘New Age’” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 86). Therefore, since the 1980s, Chinese children’s literature has been released from political and ideological constraints. “The academic area of literature at that time also realized that children’s literature should not be constrained as a tool of children’s education but should have its own unique ethos and literary qualities” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 87). Moreover, “As a tool for representing the life of children and satisfying children’s mental demands, childness must be its spiritual core” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 87). Zheng Yuanjie, Qin Wenjun, and Yang Hongying are three representative writers of contemporary Chinese children’s literature, and “epitomize the three pivotal stages in the development of the outlook on Chinese children over the last thirty years” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 89). The child-images that are created by the three writers, *PiPi Lu* by Zheng Yuanjie, *Jia Li* By Qin Wenjun, and *Ma Xiaotiao* by Yang Hongying, have many characteristics in common. The three figures are all naughty boys, who often make troubles, yet they are also very clever, energetic, and imaginative. All of the three authors emphasize playfulness and the idea of *child-centered* in their works. As Zheng Yuanjie once observed, “I wish my fairy tales could create an entertaining world, in which my young readers could laugh to their heart’s content, from beginning to end” (Zhu, 2014, p. 10). PiPi Lu, in particular, as an enlightening figure, not only reflects “unruly imagination,

the unconstrained style of fairy tale logic”, but also challenges traditional modes of education through its “wild imagination, grotesque exaggeration, and exciting playfulness” (Zhu, 2014, p. 12), thus “overturn[s] the pedantry of the traditional educational fairy tale” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 87), and shows the way to a new aesthetic school in Chinese children’s literature known as “the hilarious school” (Zhu, 2014, p. 12).

However, such release of the non-traditional child-image has incurred problems. On one hand, driven by the profits, the works of those highly influential writers, like Zheng Yuanjie, Qin Wenjun, and Yang Hongying, have attracted numerous imitators. “[A] large number of works about school life, naughty children, and humorous aspects of children’s lives have been published without too much consideration for their impact, and the industry has therefore produced a considerable number of shoddy books” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 89).

On the other hand, a traditional conception of children is still alive, and has even occupied a dominant position in school education. For example, there is a simple story “*Best Friends*”, in the series *Ma Xiaotiao* (2008), written by Yang Hongying, that reflected potential issues with traditional education. In this short story, Ma Xiaotiao’s teacher allocates his archenemy, an obedient girl named Man Man, to be his desk-mate, because the teacher knows Man Man will always reveal Ma Xiaotiao’s mischief-making. In spite of the jollification and humor of the story, it identifies problems within the Chinese education system, and “the nature of the authority and control adults wield over children” (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 88). Children are still simply divided as *good students* and *bad students*, and teachers will empower the good students to surveil the bad students, and help correct the so called *misbehavior*. It is implicated that children are still expected to foster each other’s compliance

within the Chinese education system. Thus, the true liberation of children's individuality only exists in children's literature rather than the reality, and children can only comfort themselves in the fictional stories. As Lifang Li (2013) clearly indicated:

It has been a long road for Chinese contemporary society to reach its current understanding of children because of the long history of China's feudal society, the many vicissitudes of modern history, and restrictions on the reformation and transformation of the Chinese education system and ideas about education. If contemporary children's authors can truly respect children and be willing to break through the constraints of the traditional mode of education, to establish a new modern outlook on children's education, to discover and interpret the characteristics of children's lives, to accentuate the communication between adults and children, to create works according to the real life of children, they will have an unexpected impact on Chinese society. Chinese children's literature can evolve and maintain a natural healthy development only if people change their outlooks on children. (p. 89)

Thematic Studies Related to National Characteristics

"The idea of a national literature that expresses an identifiable and distinct national character, and reflects a common set of beliefs and values, is embodied in literary criticism" (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 191). Australian children's literature critic John Stephens (2003) stated:

Insofar as children's texts seek to shape, impact on, or intervene in, culture, it is to be expected that representations of the common themes of children's literature—personal growth and development of a sense of one's place in the world; conflict with family,

peers and community—will be nuanced in particularly local ways in response to this changing society. (p. v)

Nodelman (2008) added, “There are common themes...[and] common structures and patterns; they get expressed differently in different national contexts” (p. 289).

Early in 1932, when the magnum opus of children’s literature theory, *Books, Children and Men*, written by French scholar, professor, and historian of ideas Paul Hazard, was published for the first time, national characteristics of children’s literature had been brought forward. “We can disregard the literature for childhood only if we consider unimportant the way in which a national soul is formed and sustained” (Hazard, 1932/1983, p. 111). Hazard (1932/1983) summarized the characteristics of children’s literature of several nations, including Italy, France, and England. Hazard (1932/1983) considered how *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Collodi, 1883/2002) and *Cuore* (De Amicis, 1886/1986) can represent the characteristics of children’s literature of Italy, that were, “[w]itticisms, absurd associations of ideas, humorous observations,...an exuberant imagination that is not only comical but keen; a mixture of apparent naïveté and caustic shrewdness” (Hazard, 1932/1983, p. 117). As for France, the characteristics of children’s literature were logic, wit, and sociability, and demonstrated in the fairies of Perrault. *Pilgrim’s Progress* (Bunyan, 1681) and *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1923) are able to reflect the national characteristics of England. “The English are a fearless and strong people. They admire resistant bodies and tenacious wills. Departures, voyages, conquests, distant colonies are their passion” (Hazard, 1932/1983, p. 141). Therefore, “their books for children will encourage a taste for sport, and exalt, not the individual triumph, but the victory of the team” (Hazard, 1932/1983, p. 141).

British children's literature often involves themes such as "*Brave Tales, Bold Ballads and Travels and Perils by Land and Sea*", and "*Heroes, Soldiers, Sailors and Travelers*" (Hazard, 1932/1983, p. 141) were regarded as children's models.

In terms of Canadian children's literature, perhaps the most outstanding national characteristics are related to the wild settings of Canada. As Nodelman (2008) indicated:

Canadian books thus traditionally tended to represent something not simply Canadian but *distinctly* so....the northern tundra or the wild forest or the pastoral idyll of Anne's Green Gables—rather than the urban places most Canadian children actually have lived in throughout much of Canadian history. There were also many versions of Canadian aboriginal tales and almost none representing the European and other backgrounds of the majority of Canadian children. (p. 291)

Nodelman (2008) further pointed out, multiculturalism used to be one of the most prominent national characteristics reflected through Canadian children's literature, at least, "[f]or a long time this multicultural focus did clearly distinguish Canadian children's literature from its American counterpart" (p. 301), though this discrimination has been fading away due to the similar advocating of multiculturalism in America while "[a] second way to foreground Canadian multiplicity is to focus on regionalism" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 302).

According to Edwards and Saltman (2010), author and critic Sarah Ellis also considered "regionalism as playing a role of recognition and discovery in the development of the Canadian child's sense of national identity..... this experience gives the reader a literary familiarity that is essential if Canada is to survive as a country" (p. 194). Therefore, diverse ethno-cultural identities, Canadian landscapes and regions, as well as multicultural topics, are

common themes often referenced in Canadian children's literature and reflect Canadian national characteristics.

Chinese children's literature, as mentioned above, has been positioned within a national view. Children's author and professor of Chinese children's literature, Cao Wenxuan addressed that "children's literature authors shape China's future national character, and thus have a far-reaching impact" (Lifang Li, 2013, p. 90). Thus, Chinese children's literature has been closely connected with education for a long time for nationalistic purposes. In particular, as Zhu (2014) pointed out, "during the integration an interaction with Chinese language education, 'primary school children's literature', or children's literature for the purpose of Chinese language education, is being differentiated from children's literature" (p. 211). Therefore, cultivating good behavior or educating personal moral character is one of the most prevailing themes easily found in Chinese children's literature. In addition, Zhu (2000) argued Chinese children's literature has generated passively from the Western modernization movement, and been greatly influenced by Western thought. From 1980s to 2000s, most of the children's books that can be seen in China's market were classical Western children's literature in translation, or books written by Chinese children's authors who since the 1990s imitated from Western children's stories. However, many Chinese children's authors have been eager to create children's literature that can reflect Chinese national characteristics. Some Chinese authors even shout out the slogan of *de-Westernization*, and appeal for Chinese culture resuscitation (Zhu, 2009). Thus, parallel to common Canadian themes, the theme about depicting landscapes and regions that reflect national characteristics is currently common in Chinese children's literature as well.

Child-Image and Thematic Studies in Picture Books

Edwards and Saltman (2010) explored Canadian cultural identity which reflected in children's illustrated books through historical periods. Their study gives an overall view of Canadian illustrated children's books. Their comprehensive examination of previous research identified the most predominant Canadian national characteristics as wilderness and cultural diversity. Such identification also brings more questions, for example, who is legitimately able to represent diverse voices? Which strategy can help Canadian picture books move into the global market more easily, erasing identity or maintaining cultural identity?

With the increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants in North America, picture books which reflect the stories of these immigrants, Chinese Americans, and Chinese Canadians as well as Chinese culture, naturally comes into scholars' view.

As early as 1994, Cai examined 73 picture books in the local library that featured Chinese characters and wrote his landmark article "Images of Chinese and Chinese Americans Mirrored in Picture Books" (1994). Cai (1994) pointed out how picture books might influence children's impressions and attitudes toward other cultures when he wrote, "Many children know people from other cultures from picture books before actually encountering those cultures in life. The first impression is very important for children in their impressionable years" (p. 169). Cai (1994) found nearly 70 percent of the total 73 books are folktales, whereas the other major two categories, stories about Chinese Americans in the United States and Canada, and stories about contemporary Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are relatively rare. Such a trend might be a strategy to meet market needs and reader preference, however, it is not a good way to guide children to accept and

honor diversity, like Cai (1994) indicated, “An overwhelming proportion of folktales may distance the young reader from the contemporary reality of Chinese culture and reinforce negative perceptions of Chinese and Chinese Americans” (p. 170).

In terms of the cultural value reflected in Chinese folktale picture books, Cai (1994) stressed that “the value system of a culture is constantly changing” (p. 179), especially under the condition of today’s “worldwide urbanization and homogenization” (p. 180). Therefore, “Some of the ethical codes, beliefs, values, and other aspects of the traditional Chinese culture reflected in these tales are already outdated or observed by only a limited number of people in remote areas” (p. 180). When these folktales which are embodied in ancient China are read to children, cautions should be taken to avoid distorting the culture and leaving a false impression of Chinese and China.

Cai (1994) noted the New Year celebration and the subject kites are two overused subjects in picture books which reflect Chinese and Chinese Americans. These books are published in North America rather than originally coming from China. As Cai (1994) argued, the six books which are categorized as, according to Cai’s (1994) definition, “stories about contemporary Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong,” give the reader only a glimpse of the contemporary Chinese and China. “Half of them are concerned with the continuation of the cultural tradition rather than the confrontation with everyday reality” (p. 181), and there is repetition in terms of subject matter such as “the New Year, kites, and people living on boats” (p. 181). Cai (1994) further concluded, “This repetition makes the limited representation even more inadequate. It is doubtful that readers can really get a sense of modern China today through these books” (p. 181).

In the conclusion, Cai (1994) indicated that cultural inauthenticity is the biggest problem in both the content of text and the details of illustrations. Another problem is that the folktales of the past outnumber by a wide margin tales about Chinese and China of today. Cai (1994) argued even in books that portray contemporary Chinese and Chinese Americans and Canadians, there is a tendency to focus on the cultural tradition rather than contemporary life, on showcasing exotica rather than characterization. “We need more picture books that feature flesh and blood contemporary Chinese and Chinese Americans to promote mutual understanding among children living in this culturally diverse world” (p. 188).

Cai’s (1994) survey has illuminated two directions in which the field can progress. Firstly, there is a desperate need for picture books which can reflect the reality of contemporary China and the mundane life of Chinese people. Secondly, authors, publishers, and educators must attach great importance to authenticity issues in picture books. A study, such as the one I have conducted, related to Chinese award-winning picture books, addresses both of these directions, making my study meaningful for both native and international readers.

Following up Cai’s 1994 study, Chen and Wang (2014) examined 46 titles of award-winning picture-book stories featuring China and Chinese, and published in the U.S. and Canada from 1993 through 2009, tracing changes, progresses, and persistent flaws in how the culture and experience of ethnic Chinese had been portrayed in publications for American young readers.

Chen and Wang (2014) concluded the dominance of Chinese folktales in the picture books examined by Cai (1994) is not found in this body of award-winning titles from 1993

through 2009, suggesting an increased diversity of genres. However, “there are few substantial works featuring contemporary Chinese in China..... The high percentage of foreign born Chinese in the U.S., as well as their continuous ties with where they are from, reminds us of the interconnectedness of a people in global migration” (p. 245).

Two major patterns that emerged from these award-winning picture books, as Chen and Wang (2014) note, are that “negatively, cultural errors, inaccuracies, and problematic representations still occur at a high frequency, appearing in about one third of the titles; positively, the cultural background of the creators remains a good predictor for the reliability of the cultural accuracy of a book” (p. 247).

According to my research, Chen and Wang’s (2014) study is the latest comprehensive study of picture books which reflect China and Chinese in a North American context. According to their analysis, there is still an urgent need to introduce Chinese indigenous picture books which can reflect the authentic Chinese culture and reality of contemporary China.

“[T]he creation of picture books in the mainland of China began to rise around the year 2000” (Zhu, 2014, p. 198). Thus the studies of Chinese picture books, especially the indigenous ones, are hard to find. I have searched related books and online databases, as well as inquired to several Chinese children’s literature specialists, eventually locating studies in terms of indigenous Chinese picture books by two Chinese scholars, Tan Fengxia (2011, 2014), and Zhu Ziqiang (2008, 2014).

With the rise of picture books in the Chinese publishing market, Zhu (2008) drew upon the development processes of Chinese indigenous picture books and discusses the patterns

and trends in some recent books. He indicated three tendencies of creation. Firstly, numbers related to series' picture book are far more than single picture book creation. Zhu (2008) argued the creation of picture books ought to be personalized, thus it is very hard for the picture book series, which are created by unified planning, to produce good works. Secondly, in most Chinese indigenous picture books, text carries the primary narrative rather than illustration. Zhu (2008) claimed that illustrations of picture books deserve equal attention. Thirdly, some authors overemphasize nationalization and indigenization of Chinese indigenous picture books, whereas Zhu (2008) suggested Chinese authors and publishers still need to learn from the outstanding picture books in Western countries, as well as Japan.

In another book *Chinese Children's Literature in the Golden Age* (2014), Zhu used one chapter to introduce several authors and illustrators of Chinese indigenous picture books as well as their high-quality works. There has been a dearth of similar research for Chinese picture books and Zhu's study undoubtedly is the pioneer in this field. However, his study only stays on the surface of the introduction and lacks in-depth analysis.

As a scholar who is able to access both English and Chinese contexts, Tan Fengxia has paid attention to Chinese indigenous picture books. In the "Child and Book" International Conference which was held at the University of Oslo, Norway, 2011, Tan discussed the trends and problems existing in Chinese indigenous picture books. In her article "Breakout and Bondage: the Nationalization of Chinese Picturebooks" (2011), Tan noted that some Chinese artists tend to construct a *Chinese style* to both native and international readers in the way of nationalizing picture books. This nationalism refers to both national subject materials and the traditional styles of painting in picture books. Tan (2011) has observed some problems in the

nationalization, as follows.

First of all, Tan (2011) asserted “the aesthetic pursuit of nationalization comes mainly out of the anxiety about the loss of a national and cultural Chinese identity” (n.p.). Such anxiety leads to the overemphasis of cultural responsibility, which is not appropriate for creating art works, “because the really ideal mentality of art is just aesthetics that means artists are dedicated in ‘playing a pure game freely’” (n.p.). Thus, “overemphasizing nationalization will probably lead creations of native picturebooks towards a narrow way” (n.p.). The second problem is that excessively relying on Chinese folktales or ancient classic literatures may confine the innovation of picture books. Tan (2011) argued it is necessary to create completely new stories to convey certain modern meanings. The third problem is the tension between texts and illustrations. Tan (2011) declared “In some picture books with exquisite national illustrations, the words are not as creative or as wonderful as the pictures” (n.p.). In addition, “The aesthetic style of nationalized picturebooks is influenced by native artists’ nostalgia for the old customs, their own childhoods or the ancient aesthetics” (n.p.), therefore these artists favor employing a traditional style called *Xie Yi*, “which means the painting rely on free strokes and ignore details” (n.p.). However, “most picturebooks with *Xie Yi* style lack absorbing plots to attract children” (n.p.). Thus, Tan (2011) suggested the tension between texts and illustrations should be seriously considered in making nationalized picture books.

Comparative Study of North American and Chinese Children’s Literature

While previous research is scarce related to comparative studies of two or more countries’ contemporary children’s literature, some findings have emerged through the

US-China Children's Literature Symposium (UCCLS), first held at Ocean University of China, Qingdao in 2012. The core of the discussion related to child-image and the view of the child in American and Chinese children's literature. However, there was no comparative study from the two different regions. The American and Chinese scholars separately illuminated the issue of child-image and the view of the child from historical, political, economic, and other various perspectives. What was made available was a basic introduction of current research in the two countries rather than communications from a cross-cultural context.

In contrast, the second UCCLS, which was held at Columbia, US in June, 2014, paid more attention to cross-cultural studies. The American and Chinese scholars focused on how Chinese children's literature has been adopted and translated in Western countries as well as how Western perspectives have impacted Chinese children's literature. Among all the presentations related to the comparison of American and Chinese children's literature, what especially caught my eye was Tan's (2014) article "Light like a Bird, Not a Feather: Study on Possibilities of Science Picture Books from China and US".

In her article, Tan (2014) described how she studied and compared science picture books in China and the United States from three perspectives: intertwined multiple spectra, the infiltration of humanistic feelings, and the call for fun in exploration. The two Chinese science picture books which were discussed in the article, *On the Pond*, *Under the Pond* (Chiu Chen-tsung, 2008) and *I See a Bird* (Liu Bor-Leh, 2011), both won the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, which resonates with a gap I have perceived in the field related to cross-cultural attention to award winning books.

Tan's (2014) study greatly inspires further research. Her idea of comparing picture books from different cultural contexts and their reflection of national characteristics resonates with a need for educators to consider more fully the content of various materials, as well as for authors and publishers to understand trends, markets, and perspectives including perspectives that may be missing from a current body of work. Tan's (2014) study focused on different artistic expression as well as the relationship between artistic representation and scientific knowledge. Moreover, as a symposium essay, there was limited space to explore how the difference between American and Chinese science picture books may influence education.

Evaluation and Use of Picture Books

With regard to evaluation of picture books, there are various criteria according to different children's literature specialists. For example, Kiefer (2010) has raised a series of questions related to content, illustrations, medium and style of illustrations, format, and overall evaluation to help readers determine the strengths of a picture book. Matulka (2008) suggested despite professional reviews, readers should not ignore or overlook one's gut reaction and instinct when evaluating a picture book.

Instead of giving specific evaluations to the award-winning picture books involved in the research, the intention of this study was to explore and compare distinguishing features of the study set of Canadian and Chinese picture books. Besides using Dresang's (1999) Radical Change theory as a framework to examine and evaluate these award-winning picture books from the researcher's perspective, the study also described the experiences and stories of eight children's literature specialists and classroom teachers who came from different cultural

contexts when they were evaluating and using picture books in their daily work.

The application of picture books in daily life varies according to different needs and purposes. One of the most important implications of this study may be to indicate how these award-winning picture books could be used in multicultural education in order to promote cross-cultural awareness. Therefore, the literature review related to use of picture books focuses on the area of multicultural education.

Chen and Wang (2014) articulated that there are two levels in terms of functions and goals of using multicultural literature with young learners: (a) acting as *mirrors* and *windows* to inform young readers; and (b) empowering readers to achieve *social change*. These two functions resonate with my findings through reading articles with regard to multicultural education. It is worth noting that *multicultural education* can refer to a wide range of minorities, including age, gender, physical and mental disability, and ethnicity (Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis, 1999).

According to the purpose of using picture books, the target audience of picture books in the articles I searched can be divided into two parts: native English-speaking people, and non-native English-speaking people, including immigrants and people who come from multilingual families and communities. However, such categories are not completely separate but rather overlapping.

Picture Books Used as Windows

For native English-speaking people, especially children, multicultural picture books are more like windows. The primary purpose of reading these picture books, or the intention of introducing multicultural picture books by teachers, is to experience different cultures, to

honor diversity, to cultivate tolerance and empathy, to broaden horizons in the global context, and to promote intercultural understanding (Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis, 1999; Farris, 1995; Hammett & Bainbridge, 2009; Manifold, 1997; Mendoza and Reese, 2001; Taliaferro, 2009; Wiltse, 2015). The secondary purpose of reading picture books, along with supporting multiculturalism, is to simultaneously develop literacy skills (Hadaway & Young, 2009; Hillman, 1995; Opitz, 1999).

For example, in the article “Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls”, Mendoza and Reese (2001) discussed the possibilities and the pitfalls involved in the selection of multicultural literature for use with young children, and indicated that multicultural picture books allow young children opportunities to develop their understanding of others, while affirming children of diverse backgrounds. Wiltse (2015) considered issues of resonance and representation in children’s literature, especially in picture books which reflected Aboriginal culture. Taliaferro (2009) was concerned with how picture books can be used to expand adolescents’ imagination in order to develop empathy for characters whose lives are different from their own. In the paper “Pre-Service Teachers Explore Culture Identity and Ideology through Picture Books”(2009), Hammett and Bainbridge reported that some pre-service teachers expressed understandings of multiculturalism and their own relations and experiences with it, as well as their thoughts on classroom implementation of curriculum that incorporates picture books with multicultural and diversity themes. Many other authors either discuss Canadian multicultural picture books, or explore multicultural themes through picture books, and they encounter consensus about multicultural education (Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis, 1999; Farris, 1995; Manifold, 1997).

That is, they emphasize that there is a need to understand the interdependence of all people in a global culture and an urgent need for peace and understanding. Multicultural children's literature is one vehicle through which teachers can support and encourage respect and understanding among children.

Picture Books Used as Mirrors and Language-Learning Tools

For non-native English-speaking children and struggling English-language learners, there appear to be two main purposes of reading multicultural picture books: (a) language learning and literature skills development; and (b) identity construction.

In his article, “Cultural diversity + supportive text = Perfect books for beginning readers”, Opitz (1999) articulated the opinion directly through the title, that is, books that represent children’s cultural heritage can not only help them with language acquisition, but also provide children with opportunities to learn about similarities and differences among people and to consider different points of view. As a seventh grade language arts teacher, Hillman (1995) employed multicultural picture books to help her struggling readers. Hadaway and Young (2009) have examined 19 children's books published in the last 20 years that address the linguistic and cultural adjustments of learning English as part of the transition to a new home in the United States. They indicated that children's picture books can help teachers and monolingual peers become more aware of English learners' adjustments.

Summary

Children’s literature has a relatively long history in Western countries, yet Chinese children’s literature is still very young. Thus, the production, critique, and research of children’s literature are flourishing in North America, whereas both the creation and research

of Chinese children's literature have not been receiving an equivalent attention. As a rising form in China, the children's picture book may require additional attention. Only a few indigenous picture books have been discussed in Zhu's (2008, 2014) and Tan's (2011, 2014) articles. There is a lack of comprehensive overview related to many outstanding award-winning Chinese picture books. My study intends to fill some of these gaps with respect to considerations of award-winning picture books produced in Chinese and Canadian contexts.

Comparative study of Canadian and Chinese children's literature requires researchers who have the ability to access both English and Chinese text. Tan Fengxia, as a Chinese children's literature specialist and a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge, has already made some remarkable contributions to this field. However, I believe more research is needed to address the similarities and differences between Canadian and Chinese children's literature. This can facilitate further research as well as a mutually supportive creation of children's literature.

Although scholars and educators have reached consensus that picture books are a good way to implement multicultural education, the picture books they discussed have been confined to those originally published in Canada or the United States. Many international picture books, such as the selected Chinese award-winning picture books involved in my study, have not appeared in their conceptual framework of literature. How can Chinese picture books be used in multicultural education? What kind of reform might they bring to the Canadian context? I believe these questions are worth discussing in relation to further studies.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, I explored through content analysis within a social constructivist framework the child-image and the theme, along with other emerging categories of comparison, in the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. Second, I employed social constructivism and Radical Change theory as theoretical frameworks to describe various experiences and stories from eight participants from different cultural contexts in order to further extend the knowledge of picture books, and to address gaps in the literature, particularly as it relates to the evaluation and use of picture books.

The general methodological framework of this study was qualitative case study design. The intention of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books and the responses to these books from the eight participants involved. Corresponding to the purpose of this study, “[t]he qualitative case study is a particularly suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education” (Merriam, 1988, p. xiii).

Research Design

According to Merriam’s (1988) definition, “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiv). For this study, the “bounded system” (Smith, 1978) can be identified as the responses to the study set of Canadian and Chinese picture books, underpinned by a close examination of award-winning picture books published between 2004 and 2014 in Canada and China. The analysis and comparative exploration of

child-image and theme as well as the evaluation of these picture books through Radical Change theory can be viewed through the lens of my personal critical response as a researcher. The evaluation and use of the picture books in different cultural contexts which may be uncovered through the Canadian and the Chinese children's literature specialists' and teachers' experiences and stories, can be viewed as other various responses to these books from participants in the fields of children's literature and education.

Social constructivists have argued that reality about education phenomena "should never be labeled as objective since the voices of researchers and participants are biased and seated in different cultural experiences and identities" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 41). The intention of this study was to explore the different child-image and themes as well as develop a "collaborative dialogue" (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005) among the researcher and the participants about understanding and using the award-winning picture books.

Resonating with social constructivism employed in this study, Merriam (1988) addressed how:

...qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities—that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. (p. 17)

Case studies "investigate and report the real-life, complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.289). Stake (1995) also suggested that in a case study, the

researcher is “an interpreter in the field... who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings” (pp. 8-9).

Case study as a method was chosen because it can offer a deep, rich, and personal exploration of participants’ feelings, opinions, experiences, and reflections. Particularly, this study has employed *embedded multiple-case design* that was identified by Yin (2009) as one of the four main case study designs. For the *embedded multiple-case design*, “different sub-units may be involved in each of the different cases, and a range of instruments (e.g. a survey questionnaire, interviews, observations, archival records, etc.) might be used for each sub-unit, and each is kept separate to each case” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 291-292). In this situation, my response to the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books is a sub-unit, and can provide ample feelings and opinions related to child-image and theme in addition to other categories emerging from the content analysis. Interviewing the eight participants selected for this research (four teachers, and four university instructors) can be seen as another sub-unit, and offered them a chance to articulate their understanding of picture books and how they evaluate and use picture books in daily work, providing the subjectivity often lacking in other methods of picture book examination.

Study Materials

Forty-five Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books published between 2004 and 2014 were analyzed as the study materials. Since there is a tremendous volume of picture books available, it is unwieldy to attempt to formulate a research study that represents them all. I considered several criteria for the selection of this study set and determined to

compare and contrast elements related to a contemporary selection of award-winning texts.

The content analysis unfolded according to Berg (2009), with some categories predetermined to involve cross-cultural analysis, such as child-image and theme identified ahead of time, and other categories expected to emerge as the analysis unfolds.

I anticipated that these award-winning picture books selected by experienced educators and outstanding children's literature specialists would be representative of the body of work available to children and their families in Canada or China. As Kiefer (2010) pointed out, although award-winning picture books may not sufficiently represent the overall features of artistic creation in this form, "awards do draw the attention of mainstream audiences to books" (p. 84). In her study of investigating the representation of other cultures in award-winning picture books from the United States, Australia, and Great Britain, Hall (2011) believed awarded books have far reaching social and cultural implications and stresses that "[r]eceiving an award usually results in widespread availability in classrooms across the country and these books always stay in print" (p. 22). Therefore, I believe these books can be an appropriate miniature to reflect the sentiments of Canadian and Chinese societies.

Awards that were identified to frame the boundaries of the set of picture books include the following: the Governor General's Literary Awards, the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award, the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, and the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. These Canadian and Chinese awards are significant in terms of prestige and accessibility to the public as well as adequately reflecting the highest honors given to children's picture books in their respective countries. Awards winners from 2004-2014 were targeted in order to establish a contemporary set of titles to interrogate.

Participant Selection

The primary sampling strategy in this study was *purposive* (Chein, 1981) or *purposeful* (Patton, 1980). “Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (Merriam, 1988, p. 69).

Specifically, my study combined criterion sampling and stratified purposeful sampling. They are both purposeful sampling methods used to describe a phenomenon. With criterion sampling, “researchers sample participants who meet an important, predetermined criterion” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 166). For this study, I purposefully invited eight participants who were knowledgeable in regards to children’s picture books and could provide in-depth opinions and rich experiences related to evaluating and using picture books.

Stratified purposeful sampling “allows a researcher to demonstrate the distinguishing features of subgroups (or strata) of a phenomenon. As a result, these unique features also allow a comparison of different subgroups” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 166). The context for my exploration was the content of contemporary picture books in Canada and China, as well as the understanding conveyed by Canadian and Chinese children’s literature specialists and experienced teachers who encountered picture books in their academic work or classroom teaching. One intention of this study was to explore the potential differences that might emerge through comparing the two subgroups. Eight participants were included in the interview section (four children’s literature specialists and four elementary teachers). Half of the participants were Chinese and the other participants were Canadian.

Of the four Canadian participants, B. A. Brenna was a children’s literature writer and

a university instructor who was very familiar with the selected Canadian award-winning picture book titles; J. M. Bainbridge was a retired university instructor who taught children's literature courses as well as other language and literacy courses, and her previous research specialized in Canadian picture books. These two academics were considered to be somewhat representative of the Canadian children's literature specialist viewpoint. H. Baergen was a classroom teacher who often taught Grade One, Two, and Three, and was very experienced with uses of picture books in daily teaching. In the last five years of teaching, Baergen was trying to employ a model called "The Reader's Workshop", supporting social justice, and for three years she taught future teachers at the university level in her role of "seconded teacher" hired temporarily by the university. At the time of the study, B. Campbell had been working as a classroom teacher for almost ten years, and often taught Grade Two and Three where he used picture books frequently in daily teaching as well. At the time of the study, he had begun to pay more attention on Canadian picture books, influenced by his Master of Education program at university. H. Baergen and B. Campbell are considered somewhat representative of Canadian classroom teachers in the context of this study.

In terms of the four Chinese participants, Zhu was a university instructor whose research area included children's literature and Chinese language education, and he was very familiar with all the selected Chinese award-winning titles. Zhu used to be the judge of Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. Tan was also a university instructor who studied and taught children's literature, and she was a scholar able to access both Chinese and English children's literature. Zhu and Tan's opinions can be considered to somewhat represent the position of Chinese children's literature specialist. At the time of the study, Ma

had been working for over a decade as an English teacher in an elementary school in China. She could be deemed a pioneer who employed picture books in English classroom teaching. Wang was also an elementary English teacher, although having seven years teaching experience, she could be considered a novice in the use of picture books in classroom teaching. Ma and Wang were selected to somewhat represent the standpoint of Chinese classroom teachers. It is important to remember that although these participants were selected to represent particular groups, in the context of this study they are individual participants and generalizations cannot occur from their views to the views of all academics or teachers in their respective countries.

There were research connections between B. A. Brenna and J. M. Bainbridge as the former had previously studied under the latter's supervision at the University of Alberta. Similarly, the two Canadian classroom teachers had taken a university-level class with B.A. Brenna prior to the study, thereby having access to some of her scholarly views about children's literature prior to the study. In terms of the Chinese participants, Zhu and Tan had known each other and had academic communications related to children's literature prior to the study. Although Ma and Wang worked as English teachers in different elementary schools, they had interacted with each other prior to the interviews at a conference related to English-language learning. Wang's applying of picture books in classroom teaching was inspired by Ma. In addition, some of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the delivery of the study, as B. A. Brenna was her current supervisor, and Zhu was her previous supervisor when she was studying in China. In addition, B. Campbell was the researcher's peer in graduate-level classes, and Wang and the researcher had known each

other in high school. While relationship between participants was not considered to be a necessary element of participant selection, it may be important to note these connections as results of the study unfold.

Data Collection

This study employed content analysis (Berg, 2009) and semi-structured interviews (Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2006) as the primary data collection methods. This study was designed to examine child-image and theme of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books originally published from 2004 to 2014 and compare the differences between the two groups of books in these and other emerging categories. These award-winning picture books were the documents which were analyzed using content analysis. *Documents* is a term referring to “printed and other materials relevant to the case” (Merriam, 1988, p. 69). Using documentary material as data in qualitative case study is like being “surrounded by voices begging to be heard. Every book, every magazine article, represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologist’s informant or the sociologist’s interviewee” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 163).

Content analysis involves “a progress of examining content and themes, typically from written documents” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 419). For the sake of gaining the outcomes which reflected my research questions completely and comprehensively, the documents I located were 45 award-winning picture books from Canada and China which were considered as two distinct groups, with 23 Canadian books and 22 Chinese books. I examined the child-image and the theme that appeared in the winning picture books and classified these images and themes according to categories that emerged from the data. Then I reflected on

the views of children and how these may relate to education inherent in these child-images and themes.

In addition to content analysis, semi-structured interviews (Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2006) was the method applied in data collection from teachers and children's literature specialists. According to Brantlinger et al. (2005) interviews should have purposeful selection of participants and reasonable open-ended interview questions. Given the purpose of this study, which was to hear the voices of the teachers and the children's literature specialists, the interview process was the method used to capture the words of these people. According to Hays's and Singh's (2012) definition, the semi-structured interview is "a form of interview that uses a protocol as a guide and starting point for the interview experience" (p. 431). While a structured interview has a rigorous set of questions which does not allow one to divert, a semi-structured interview is somewhat open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says, and through the strength of in-depth interviewing "we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view" (Seidman, 2006, p. 130). See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview template used with the eight teachers and children's literature specialists.

Regardless of the different careers and specialties, all of my eight participants have given opinions worth considering related to picture book reading, child-images, and multicultural education. Due to distance challenges, in addition to six face-to-face interviews, one interview was conducted through email, and one interview occurred through Skype voice call. The interviews have widened my lens on picture book resources and added richness to a study that is rooted in content analysis but intended to resonate with a wider audience of

educators as well as children's literature specialists.

Data Analysis

This study was framed in a qualitative fashion to encourage an informative analysis regarding potential differences between the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, as well as offer the children's literature specialists' and the teachers' perceptions of evaluating and using picture books. The content analysis used in this study was divided into child-image analysis and theme analysis.

Merriam (1988) suggested that *counting* and *noting patterns and themes* could be used as analysis strategies in qualitative case study. Through the exploration of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, I categorized and interpreted the patterns by both deductive and inductive means. Despite examining the child-image and theme which are already summarized in previous studies, there was also flexibility included in my study in order to explore emerging themes previously undocumented.

Protocol of Child-Image Analysis

Since there is no standard or reference approach to classify various child-images, the categorization of the child-image occurred according to my reading impression and experience with the selected picture books. This type of content analysis unfolded according to Berg (2009), with some categories predetermined to involve cross-cultural analysis, and other categories emergent as the analysis unfolded.

Protocol of Theme Analysis

A protocol related to theme analysis was built basing on Kiefer's (2010) and Hall's (2012) studies to examine themes of the targeted picture books. This protocol was also

widened by Berg's (2009) notion of emerging categories, so that other categories of worth could appear from the analysis.

Radical Change Theory Analysis

As for the analysis of the picture books through the lens of Radical Change theory, the categorization was based on the protocol built by Dresang (1999) involving three Radical Change types: changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries. The detailed analysis occurred according to further subdivision of the three Radical Change types:

Type 1 Changing forms and formats:

1. Graphics in new forms and formats;
2. Words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy;
3. Nonlinear organization and format;
4. Nonsequential organization and format;
5. Multiple layers of meaning;
6. Interactive formats.

Type 2 Changing perspectives:

1. Multiple perspectives, visual and verbal;
2. Previously unheard voices;
3. Youth who speak for themselves.

Type 3 Changing boundaries:

1. Subjects previously forbidden;
2. Settings previously overlooked;

3. Characters portrayed in new, complex ways;
4. New types of communities;
5. Unresolved endings.

Similar to the emerging ideas related to child-image and theme analysis, new types of Radical Change were anticipated from the examination of the award-winning titles. See Appendix B for sample analysis charts related to Radical Change characteristics.

Interview Data Analysis

With regard to the interviews, one interview was conducted through email due to distance challenges, and one interview was conducted through Skype voice communication. As for the six face to face interviews, each participant was involved in a 60 minute semi-structured interview with the possibility of a 30 minute follow-up conversation. Three of these six interviews occurred in Canada and three of these six interviews occurred in China.

The steps of analysis of the interview data was shaped by the method of Leatherman's (2007) study of inclusive education: (a) Read individual interviews several times to become familiar with the overall data; (b) Distinguish answers to each posed question; (c) Separate interview information into meaningful units of data; (d) Label units for a specific category; (d) Place each labeled segment with other similar labeled segments; and (e) Connect the units into coherent text as presented within the themes/categories in the results section.

In summary, the thematic categorization related to the interviews can be divided into six aspects:

1. Purpose of using picture books;

2. Patterns and trends related to child-image in picture books;
3. Patterns and trends related to theme in picture books;
4. Recommended considerations in child-image;
5. Themes deemed lacking in currently available picture books ;
6. Suggestions and ideas about using picture books in classroom teaching.

Validity and Reliability

For qualitative research, the meaning of a particular document or record can change from reader to reader and from one historical period to another (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Therefore the analysis of the picture books as well as the interview data mainly relied on my personal interpretations and reflection although rigor is apparent in the transparency of my methods of inquiry as well as the attention to stages of analysis. Qualitative research allows the investigator to interpret and bring to light an understanding of particular subjects and events (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative design was used in this study to discover insights and interpretations rather than to control a set of variables or to test a hypothesis (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009).

The analysis and comparison of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books primarily depended on my personal understanding and interpretation, thus researcher subjectivity was an integral aspect of this study that should be not only acknowledged, but also viewed in a positive light. Subjectivity is defined as the qualitative researcher's internal understandings of the phenomenon (Schneider, 1999). Peshkin (1988) used the phrase of "virtuous subjectivity" to convey the idea that researcher subjectivity should be embraced in qualitative inquiry, that is, "not something to be overamplified or even

overindulged, but rather as a critical role of the researcher that becomes the framework for a study's process" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p.145).

In terms of the semi-structured interviews, audio tapes of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then, each participant was given the transcript to perform a member check. A member check is a way to assure the findings are recognizable and accurate to the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member-checking of the summaries after each interview assisted with accuracy of information, supporting the ethics of the study as well as clarity of results. By the participants verifying their words, the data was more accurate and also more valid, as it was judged to be what the participant wanted to say about the topic. In terms of the specific process used, the participants were asked to read the transcript and respond if the information seemed correct as well as what they remembered from the interview. If they did not feel that the transcript reflected their meaning, they were asked to correct it to be accurate with their views. Each participant edited his/her transcript by correcting the grammar and expanding his/her comments as he/she felt necessary in order to portray his/her perceptions of evaluating and using picture books.

Additionally, Stake (1995) suggested that it is the researcher's responsibility to promote understanding using description, taking the story apart and putting it back together in enough detail that it makes sense to the reader who also engages in interpretation. The tenets of constructivism suggest that if the researcher has done his or her job well in capturing and communicating the essence of participants' realities, then the reader will ultimately be the judge of the strength of the research through the process of constructing meaning.

Study Limitations

The first limitation of this study was that due to the lack of time I was unable to embrace all picture book award-winners in Canada and China, in my study sample. My limited sample size necessarily provided limited generalization of results. Including other award books could provide a more representative sampling, and, furthermore, analyzing a larger range of books published, rather than just award-winning picture books, would provide a more comprehensive overview of books published from the two countries.

The second study limitation arose from the boundary of the study sample related to Canadian books published in English Canada. I believe that Francophone children's picture books should be studied by researchers who have greater access to a wide range of Francophone children's publications and the ability to analyze the language-related nuances in image and text. Therefore, when I used the term *Canadian children's picture books*, it referred only to English language titles.

The third limitation related to the criteria of my study sample relating to award-winning books. Using only award-winning books yielded a small sampling of books published each year and involved the politics of the selecting bodies of the awards from each country. There are several factors that can influence which books receive awards. For example, who serves on the decision-making committees and how many books are considered for the award each year? Those involved in the choosing the awarded books cannot avoid the subjectivity of the selection process and the recognition that everyone has a different definition of distinguished literature (Miller, 1998). Such criteria may raise serious issues of representation, marginalization, and exclusion.

Ethical Considerations

Before interviewing, permission was asked of participants regarding tape recording the conversations for purposes of transcription. I made it clear and explicit to the participants that the purpose of the interview was to expand currently existing research on evaluating and using picture books in different cultural contexts. I gave the participants the choice of remaining anonymous through the use of a pseudonym, or to be known through attaching direct quotations to their real names. All the participants gave permission for quoting and using their real names, and they appeared to be glad to contribute to this study in the way of sharing their opinions and stories related to children's picture books. The participants were clearly informed that the intention of this study was not to evaluate or judge their opinions or work related to the using of picture books. Additionally, there were no incentives offered, nor were there any consequences for not participating in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the similarities and differences that emerged in the comparison of two sets of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books as well as the responses of four K-12 and four post-secondary instructors in Canadian and Chinese contexts related to children's picture books. Picture books awarded with Canadian and Chinese accolades between 2004 and 2014 were evaluated through analysis regarding three general aspects. Firstly, scrutiny of child-images appearing in the picture books resulted in an identification of six types of child-images based on different characteristics. Secondly, the award-winning picture books were analyzed according to themes appearing in the storyline. Finally, Radical Change theory was employed to examine the national and contemporary characteristics in the two groups of award-winning titles.

In terms of the responses of Canadian and Chinese classroom teachers and children's literature specialists related to children's picture books, comparisons unfolded in two stages. Initially, the differences and similarities about evaluation and use of picture books in Canadian and Chinese contexts were explored. Next, exploration occurred on how the responses of these eight participants reflected potential patterns and use of picture books drawn from my own investigation related to the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014.

The analysis of child-image, theme, and Radical Change theory were used to address the first research question: *What similarities and differences emerge in a comparison of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014?* The analysis of interview data was employed to address the second question: *What similarities and*

differences appear in the responses of four K-12 teachers and four post-secondary instructors in Canadian and Chinese contexts related to children's picture books? Finally, the comparison and contrast between my investigation of the award-winning picture books and the responses of the eight participants addressed the third question: *How do the responses of these eight participants in terms of the potential patterns and use of picture books compare and contrast to my investigation related to Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014?*

Child-Image Analysis

This investigation began with a reading of 45 selected award-winning picture books published in Canada and China over the past ten years. Of the 23 Canadian award-winning picture books, 15 (65%) depicted child-image; of the 22 Chinese award-winning picture books, 16 (73%) depicted child-image. In terms of emerging themes, the child-image appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books can be roughly divided into six types:

1. Child who encounters difficulties;
2. Child-as-problem-solver;
3. Child-as-narrator;
4. Caring child;
5. Playing/imaginative child;
6. Moral/life model.

It is important to note that the term *child-image* not only refers to child as a human-being, but also includes those animal anthropomorphic characters presented as

children. Kiefer (2010) classified picture books into different categories according to the content and the theme. One of these categories is “animals as people” (Kiefer, 2010, p. 195). Kiefer also suggested that these characters which are revealed as animals “borrow and face the same problems as their child readers, whose lives are mirrored in these stories” (p.195). However, not all the animal anthropomorphic characters can be analyzed in terms of child-image. Some animal characters have presented human-like traits, but they do not have the characteristics of being children. For example, the award-winner of the Governor General’s Literary Awards, *Cat’s Night Out* (Klassen & Stutson, 2010) depicted a group of cats singing and dancing during one city night. These cats can be seen as animal anthropomorphic characters because they dressed and behaved like human-beings. But they are more like human adults instead of human children, thus they cannot be examined as child-image. On the contrary, some award-winning picture books have borrowed animal characters on purpose in order to demonstrate children’s life and psychology traits in a more vivid way. For instance, the winners of the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award in 2012 and 2006, *Without You* (Côté 2011), and *Caramba* (Gay, 2005), both employed animal anthropomorphic characters to depict the problems children might face in everyday life and their unique mental growth. As Kiefer (2010) pointed out, “Animal characters often provide a good venue for stories about moral values” (p. 195). Therefore, such child-like animal characters were explored and categorized as child-image in this study.

Another noteworthy aspect related to child-image is that different kinds of child-images may be reflected through the same child-character. For example, in *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012), which won both the Governor General’s Literary Award

and the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award, different types of child-image have been demonstrated through two child-characters. Virginia, the depressed girl whose shadow appears as a wolf, can be classified as *child who encounters difficulties*; while her sister, Vanessa, reflects at least three types of child-image—*child-as-problem solver*; *child-as-narrator*; and *caring child*. Hence, various child-images may overlap in one child-character, and the data demonstrated in the Tables later in this chapter may also overlap multiple categories.

The detailed definitions of the six types of child-image are as follows:

Child Who Encounters Difficulties

Children's picture books have always been expected to be vehicles to teach a lesson, to transmit values, to encourage children overcome a variety of difficulties in real life (Cai, 1994; Dresang, 1999; Edwards & Saltman, 2010; Kiefer, 2010; Pantaleo, 2008; Zhu Ziqiang, 1997). The difficulties presented in the award winning texts are varied and include the following: physical difference (*I Can't See*, Chao-Lun Tsai, 2012); separation from family, friends, or familiar places (*A New Year's Reunion*, Yu Liqiong & Zhu Chengliang, 2008; *The King of Hide and Seek*, Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008; *I Know Here*, Croza & James, 2010); understanding of self (*Caramba*, Gay, 2005; *The Frog and the Boy*, Xiao Mao, ChenWei, & Huang Xiaomin, 2010); outside pressure, such as false rumors or warfare (*Timmerman Was Here*, Sydor & Debon, 2009; *Infatuated with Peking Opera*, Yao Hong, 2012); and even more trivial matters from daily life such as bickering between friends or siblings (*Without You*, Côté 2011; *Please, Louise!* Wishinsky & Gay, 2007). The children in these texts who encounter difficulties often share similar characteristics—resilience,

self-determination, ability to withstand challenges in a positive way, and skill at overcoming difficulties through imagination. Encountering challenges seems to be one of the most important messages in the study sample of picture books, appearing across both the Canadian and the Chinese sets of titles.

Child-as-Problem-Solver

In many of the award-winning picture books targeted for this study, the child who has encountered difficulties usually also solves the problem. However, there are also titles in which the child-character is not the one who is primarily responsible for problem-solving, including children who need help from adults or peers. For example, in *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012), Virginia can represent the *child who encounters difficulty* because she has experienced depression. But Virginia is not the one who is looking for ways to relieve the depression. Her sister, Vanessa, is the one who cheers Virginia up by painting the imaginative world *Bloomsberry*. Hence, there would be at least two types of child-image in *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012): Virginia—*child who encounters difficulties*, and Vanessa—*child-as-problem-solver*.

There is a similar situation in the winner of the 3rd Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, *The Scariest Day of My Life* (Tom Liu, 2012). The protagonist, a little girl named Linlin, is very afraid of the coming of tomorrow because it is presented as the most terrifying day in her life. The author has used several illustrations to depict Armageddon-like scenes, such as the great flood, volcanic explosion, and alien invasion. All these terrifying scenarios actually reflect Linlin's fear of public speaking for an assignment in tomorrow's class. It is clear that Linlin can represent the child-image of *child who encounters*

difficulties. But she is unable to represent the child-image of *child-as-problem-solver* because her speaking eventually ends up in failure. The solution given by the author is growing up to be a successful adult. Linlin gives another public speech as a renowned architect, and this time she can only feel joy instead of fear. The theme caters to time as a healer. Perhaps such a theme offers a kind of comfort for children who have certain difficulties, but it is implied that children's experiences and abilities are less valuable than adults.

Child-as-Narrator

Telling stories from children's perspectives is a common narrative approach in contemporary children's literature. An advantage of this approach is to enhance young readers' intimacy and familiarity with the stories. *Child-as-narrator* refers to child-characters who tell the story as a spectator or as a supporting character (*The King of Hide and Seek*, Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008; *The Morning Market at Lotus Town*, Zhou Xiang, 2006; *Infatuated with Peking Opera*, Yao Hong, 2012).

Caring Child

Caring about others is a common theme in the study set. Children who know how to care about others share similar characteristics, such as the following: sympathetic, good-natured, and easy-going. While it isn't surprising to see this image of children presented in the study sample, it is interesting that in many books, such as *Caramba* (Gay, 2005) and *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008), this child-image appears in supporting characters rather than protagonists.

Playing/Imaginative Child

Many of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books have

portrayed scenes of children playing. However, if the book has only depicted one or several illustrations about play, it cannot be categorized as the child-image of *playing/imaginative child*. For instance, in *A New Year's Reunion* (Yu Liqiong & Zhu Chengliang, 2008), there is an illustration in which the children are playing in the snow, including the protagonist Maomao, but it is merely a scenario that occupies a small part of the whole story. On the contrary, some books describe a children's game from beginning to end (*A Few Blocks*, Young, 2011; *Mattland*, Hutchins, Herbert, & Petričić, 2008), or portray playing children page to page (*How to*, Morstad, 2013; *Imagine a Day*, Thomson & Gonsalves, 2005). Such child-image can be classified as *playing child*. Imagination appears as a strong component of these characterizations of playing children.

Moral/Life Model

Child-characters emerge as *moral/life model* in this set of books when there are instructive or role-modelling implications for readers. Most of the child-images as *moral/life model* seem to be tailored by authors for a particular educational purpose. The most prominent feature of this child-image is the strong imitative potential instructing children that this behavior is good or that punishment will apply to particular behaviors. The values that are transmitted by *moral/life model* are usually in accordance with the mainstream values in adult society, as reflected in the characterization of the girl in the book *Timmerman Was Here* (Sydor & Debon, 2009) or the characterization of the little boy in the book *Door* (Tao Juxiang, 2010).

Table 1 provides an overview of the results of the categorization of the total 31 award-winning picture books in which various child-images emerged, with multiple images

appearing in particular texts.

Table 1

Frequency (Percentage) of Six Types of Child-Image Portrayed in the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014

Child-Image	Canada	China
Children who encounters difficulties	9 (60%)	11 (69%)
Child-as-problem-solver	7 (47%)	2 (13%)
Child-as-narrator	3 (20%)	8 (50%)
Caring child	4 (27%)	1 (6%)
Playing/imaginative child	11 (73%)	6 (38%)
Moral/life model	3 (20%)	8 (50%)
Totals (N=31)	15	16

As Table 1 shows, *playing/imaginative child* is the most representative child-image in the selected Canadian award-winning picture books (73%); while *child who encounters difficulties* has the highest occurrence frequency in the selected Chinese award-winning picture books (69%). Through the comparison and contrast of the six types of child-image between the two groups of picture books, it appears that the most obvious differences are focused on *child-as-problem-solver* (Canada 47%, China 13%), *child-as-narrator* (Canada 20%, China 50%), *playing/imaginative child* (Canada 73%, China 38%), and *moral/life*

model (Canada 20%, China 50%).

Thematic Analysis

Forty-five selected award-winning picture books were read for thematic analysis. With themes of *moral/life lessons*, *imagination/fantasy*, *early childhood education content and skills*, *the child world of nature*, and *war and its aftermath* drawn from Kiefer's (2010) and Hall's (2012) thematic studies of picture books, and other emerging categories adding themes of *regional/local customs* and *multicultural diversity*, seven themes were eventually identified as apparent in the context of the study set. In summary, the themes appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books can be divided into seven categories:

1. Moral/life lessons;
2. Imagination/fantasy;
3. Regional/local customs;
4. Early childhood education content and skills;
5. Multicultural diversity;
6. The child's world of nature;
7. War and its aftermath.

It should be noted that different themes may be involved in one book. For instance, the winner of Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award in 2010, *Owls See Clearly at Night* (Flett, 2010) can represent two themes: *early childhood education content and skills*, and *multicultural diversity*. On one hand, as an alphabet book, *Owls See Clearly at Night* (Flett, 2010) has positioned itself for early childhood education purposes. On the other

hand, as a Michif alphabet book, it does reflect Metis custom and culture, and has thus differentiated itself from traditional English alphabet books. Therefore, similar to the protocol of child-image, various themes may overlap in one award-winning title, and the data demonstrated in the following table in the rest of this study may be also present multiple themes per title.

The detailed definitions of the seven categorizations of theme are as following:

Moral/Life Lessons

Based on the work of Rochman (1993), Hall (2012) further divided the theme of *moral/life lessons* into more specific categories: immigration, friendship, heroism, family matters, finding love, labor, global awareness, and emotions. For this study, as some categorizations emerged from the analysis, the theme of *moral/life lesson* can also be separated into more specific categories: family stories, friendship, emotions, finding oneself, life attitude, and philosophical stories.

Imagination/Fantasy

The study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books with the theme of *imagination/fantasy* can be divided into two groups: modern stories, and traditional folktales/classical poems. Although not all folktales or classical poems are imaginary stories or fantasy, traditional stories or folk literature adapted into children's picture books in this study generally contain imaginative elements. For example, *Jabberwocky* (Jorisch & Carroll, 2004) and *The Lady of Shalott* (Côté & Tennyson, 2005) both adapted from classical English poems, contain imaginative plots. Similarly, adapted from a popular nursery rhyme from Northern China, *The Day Vegetables Became Goblins* (Zhou Xiang, 2008) is a feast for the

imagination.

Regional/Local Customs

Edwards and Saltman (2010) connect landscapes to culture in the context of children's literature. Landscapes can create cultures, and then cultures further construct identities.

Therefore, in order to display national characteristics in a visible way, many Canadian and Chinese picture book authors tend to depict regional landscapes or local customs.

Regional/local customs is an important theme appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles.

Early Childhood Education Content and Skills

“The pedagogic function of the picturebook in aiding textual decoding and encouraging the acquisition of literacy is seen as another of its critical roles” (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 11). For edutainment purpose, many picture books are related to *early childhood education content and skills*. This categorization includes but is not limited to alphabet books, counting books, and information books within the study sample.

Multicultural Diversity

Multicultural education refers to a wide range of minorities, including age, gender, physical and mental disability, and ethnicity (Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis, 1999). Hence, under the categorization of *multicultural diversity* theme, not only are the award-winning titles related to various ethnic groups included, but titles that refer to physical or mental difference have been included as well.

The Child's World of Nature

Kiefer (2010) asserted, “Sometimes young children seem more attuned to the world

about them than adults do” (p. 186). Among the selected award-winning titles for this study, contents related to the natural world can be divided into two groups: information books and the books about *the child’s world of nature*. As the name implies, information books about the natural world emphasize knowledge acquisition, whereas the books with the theme of *the child’s world of nature* focus on story and their function is to “enhance a real experience and keep the wonder of it alive with their own enthusiasm and appreciation for nature” (Kiefer, 2010, p. 186). For example, the Chinese title *On the Pond, Under the Pond* (Chiu Chen-tsung, 2008) and the Canadian title *Snow* (Clark & Denton, 2006) are both related to natural world. However, *On the Pond, Under the Pond* (Chiu Chen-tsung, 2008) is an information book because it focuses on explaining biological knowledge, while *Snow* (Clark & Denton, 2006) represents the theme of *the child’s world of nature*.

War and Its Aftermath

Although it may be difficult to portray the theme of *war and its aftermath* in children’s picture books, there is evidence that authors are trying. As Kiefer (2010) said, “Art can portray the devastation of war in ways that mere words cannot” (p.208).

Table 2 provides an overview of the results of the categorization of the various themes that were represented in the 45 award-winning picture books, with some titles in the study sample containing multiple themes.

Table 2

Frequency (Percentage) of Seven Themes Represented in the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014

Theme	Canada	China
Moral/life lessons	8 (35%)	12 (55%)
Imagination/fantasy	7 (30%)	2 (9%)
Regional/local customs	3 (13%)	2 (9%)
Early childhood education content and skills	3 (13%)	3 (13%)
Multicultural diversity	4 (17%)	2 (9%)
The child's world of nature	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
War and its aftermath	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
Totals (N=45)	23	22

As Table 2 shows, *moral/life lessons* and *imagination/fantasy* are the two most frequent themes in the selected Canadian award-winning picture books (35% and 30%); whereas *moral/life lessons* is the most representative theme in the selected Chinese award-winning titles (55%). The two biggest differences of theme representation between the study set of Canadian and Chinese titles also appear in relation to the themes *moral/life lessons* and *imagination/fantasy*. Although *moral/life lessons* theme occupies the highest frequency in the Canadian titles compared with other themes, it is more common among the Chinese

award-winning picture books and appears in more than half of the books (55%). In terms of *imagination/fantasy*, there are only two Chinese books (9%) that refer to this theme, while it appears in seven Canadian titles (30%).

The rest of the five themes appear with similar frequency in both groups of Canadian and Chinese titles. However, one thing worth noting is that there is a difference between the study set of Canadian books and Chinese books which relates to *multicultural diversity*, where this theme indicates one or more minority traits related to various ethnic groups, and physical or mental differences. Of the four Canadian books which include the theme of *multicultural diversity*, only *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) connects to disability through mental illness/depression as a subcategory of multiculturalism. Regarding the other three titles, *The Owl and the Pussycat* (Jorisch & Lear, 2008), *Ancient Thunder* (Yerxa, 2006), and *Owls See Clearly at Night* (Flett, 2010) all represent multiculturalism from an ethnic or social class perspective. In contrast, both the Chinese books that represent *multicultural diversity*, *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008) and *I Can't See* (Chao-Lun Tsai, 2012), indicate multiculturalism through portraying physical or mental disability. There is no *multicultural diversity* theme related to ethnic representations in the selected Chinese titles.

Radical Change Theory Analysis

In order to clearly compare and contrast Radical Change (Dresang, 1999) appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles, the analysis was divided into three groups according to the three types of Radical Change:

Type 1 Changing forms and formats:

1. Graphics in new forms and formats;
2. Words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy;
3. Nonlinear organization and format;
4. Nonsequential organization and format;
5. Multiple layers of meaning;
6. Interactive formats.

Type 2 Changing perspectives:

1. Multiple perspectives, visual and verbal;
2. Previously unheard voices;
3. Youth who speak for themselves.

Type 3 Changing boundaries:

1. Subjects previously forbidden;
2. Settings previously overlooked;
3. Characters portrayed in new, complex ways;
4. New types of communities;
5. Unresolved endings.

Twenty-three Canadian and 22 Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014 were examined through Radical Change theory. Figure 1 shows the Radical Change type one emerged in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books; Figure 2 shows the result of the Radical Change type two; Figure 3 shows the result of the Radical Change type three.

Figure 1

*Evidence of Changing Forms and Formats in the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese
Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014*

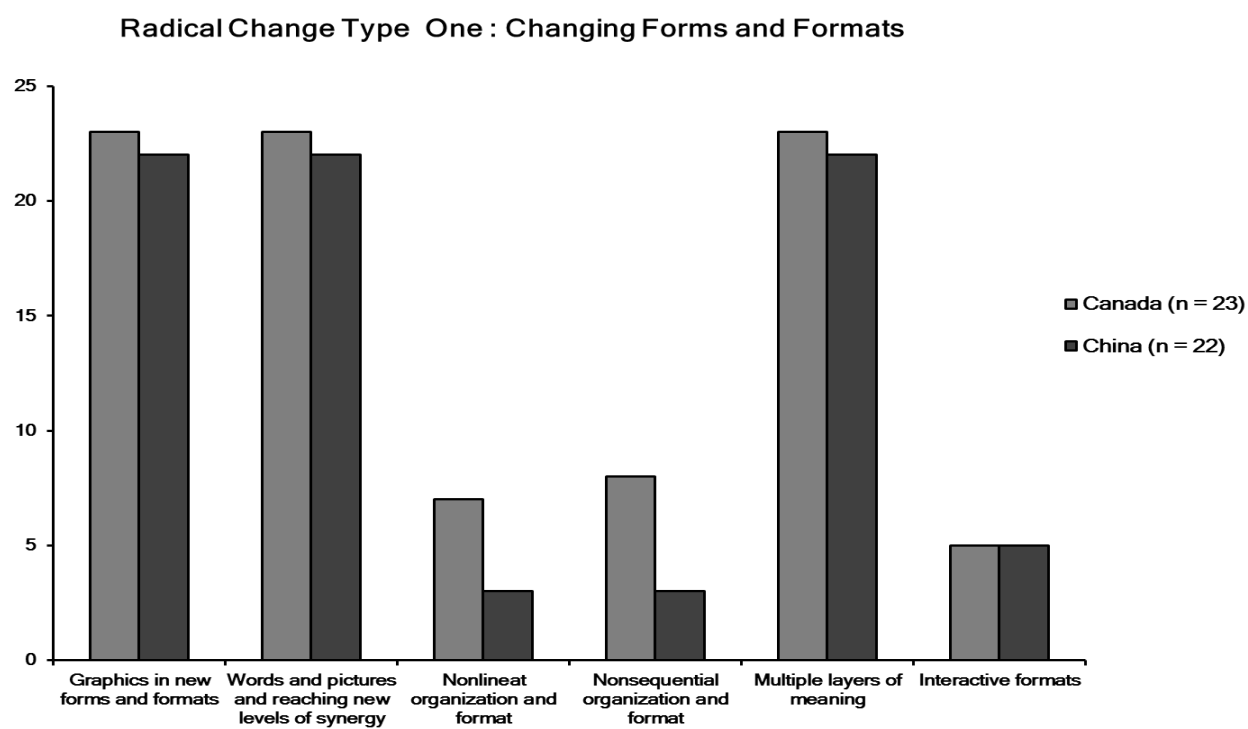


Figure 2

Evidence of Changing Perspectives in the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014

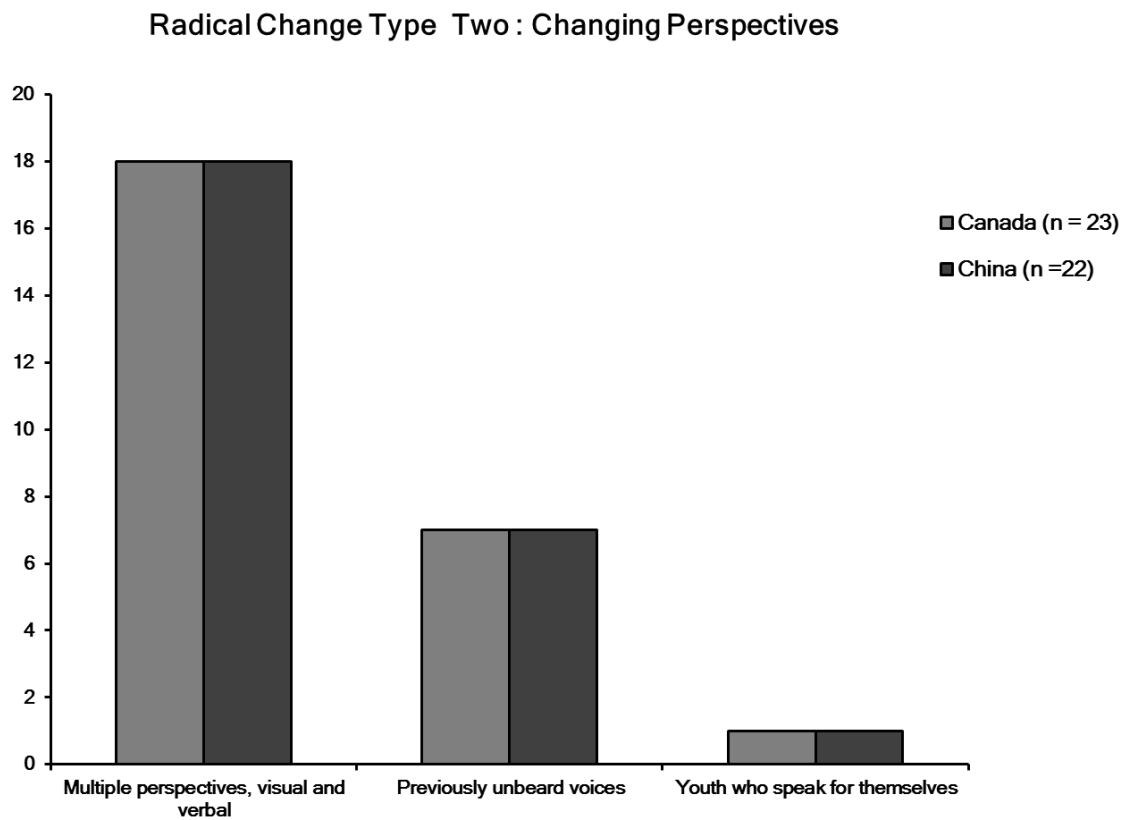
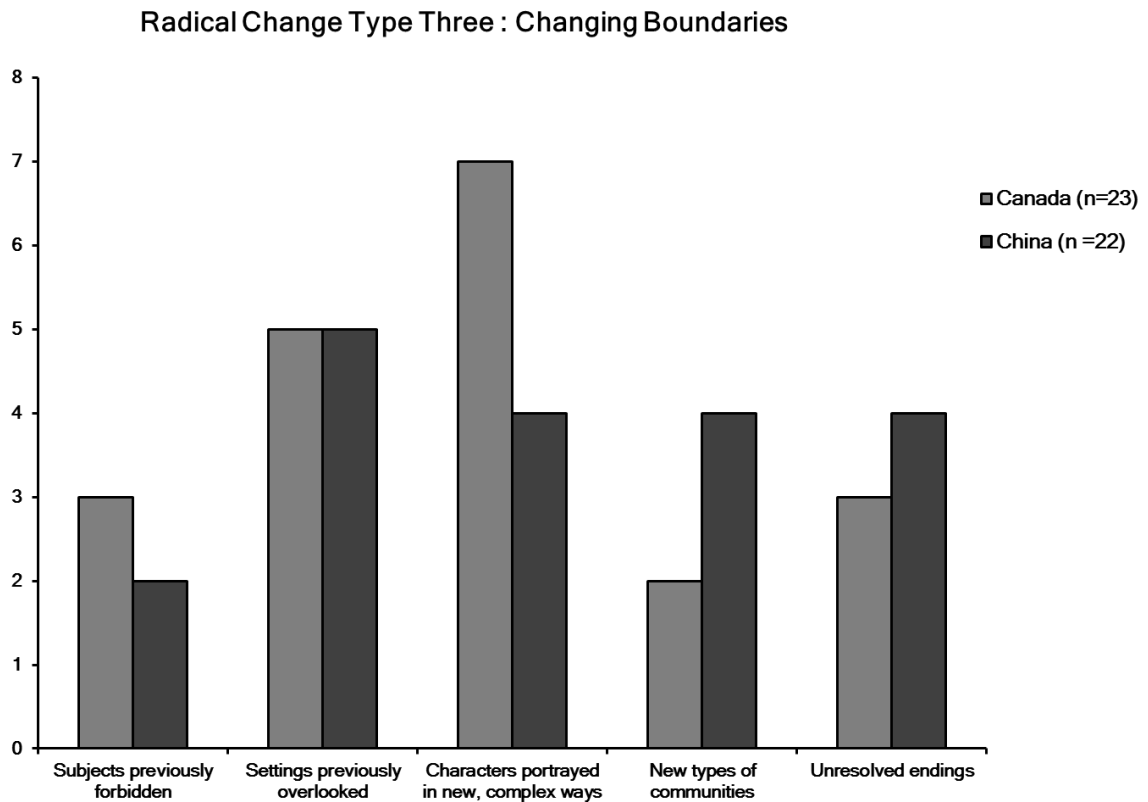


Figure 3

Evidence of Changing Boundaries in the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014



As shown in Figure 1, all the 23 Canadian and the 22 Chinese award-winning titles represented three characteristics identified by Radical Change type one, that is, *graphics in new forms and formats*, *words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy*, and *multiple layers of meaning*. Of the 23 Canadian award-winning titles, seven books showed the characteristic of *nonlinear organization and format*, while three Chinese titles showed the same characteristic. As for *nonsequential organization and format*, eight Canadian and three Chinese books represented this feature. In terms of *interactive formats*, five Canadian and five Chinese books showed this characteristic.

Figure 2 reflects the Radical Change type two which emerged in the two groups of books. With regards to *multiple perspectives, visual and verbal*, the number of the study set of Canadian and Chinese books that showed this characteristic was both 18. As for the characteristics of *previously unheard voices* and *youth who speak for themselves*, Canadian and Chinese titles also had the same number, seven and one respectively.

Under the Radical Change type three, the study set of Canadian and Chinese titles have three and two respectively on the characteristic *subjects previously forbidden*; as for *settings previously overlooked*, Canadian and Chinese titles each had five books that represented this characteristic; seven of the 23 Canadian titles represented the characteristic of *characters portrayed in new, complex way*, while four of the 22 Chinese titles represented the same characteristic; *new types of communities* has been shown in two Canadian and four Chinese books; *unresolved endings* has been represented in three Canadian and four Chinese books.

In summary, *graphics in new forms and formats, words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy*, and *multiple layers of meaning* were the three most common characteristics identified by Dresang's (1999) Radical Change theory that are represented in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014. The biggest differences related to Radical Change theory between the study set of Canadian and Chinese titles were *nonlinear organization and format, nonsequential organization and format*, and *characters portrayed in new, complex way*. Canadian titles reflected more of the three characteristics than Chinese titles. Radical Change type one, *changing forms and formats* was the most obvious Radical Change type represented by both the selected Canadian and Chinese books.

Interview Data Analysis and Category

The interview data was examined on the basis of six pre-established categories: (a) purpose of using picture books; (b) patterns and trends related to child-image in picture books; (c) patterns and trends related to theme in picture books; (d) recommended considerations in child-image; (e) themes deemed lacking in currently available picture books; and (f) suggestions and ideas about using picture books in classroom teaching.

Purpose of Using Picture Books

The purposes of using picture books emerged as six categories according to the interview data:

1. Books as teaching tools;
2. Books as cultural artifacts;
3. Books as leisure/recreation;
4. Books as psychological counselling tools;
5. Books as research resources;
6. Books as parent-child communication vehicles.

This categorization can be more fully examined in the following ways. Table 3 shows the result of the purpose of using picture books according to Canadian and Chinese contexts. It should be noted that participants may have stated multiple purposes for using picture books.

Table 3

Purpose of Using Picture Books in Canadian and Chinese Contexts

Purpose of Using Picture Books	Canada	China
Books as teaching tools	4	4
Books as cultural artifacts	4	1
Books as leisure/recreation	2	1
Books as psychological counseling tools	2	1
Books as research resources	2	2
Books as parent-child communication vehicles	2	3
Totals (N=8)	4	4

Patterns and Trends Related to Child-image in Picture Books

In terms of the patterns and trends related to child-image in picture books, there were five types of child-image that were frequently represented in Canadian picture books according to the Canadian participants:

1. Children with authentic characterization;
2. Children as problem-solvers;
3. Children encountering difficulties;
4. White middle-class children;
5. Compliant children.

According to the four Chinese participants, there were three types of child-image that are often depicted in Chinese picture books:

1. Moral/life models;
2. Compliant children;
3. Children encountering difficulties.

Patterns and Trends Related to Theme in Picture Books

The Canadian participants also indicated several themes that they often saw reflected in Canadian picture books. Five primary themes emerged through the sorting and categorizing of the interview data:

1. Cultural diversity;
2. Particular Canadian settings and landscapes;
3. Serious social issues;
4. Realistic/historical stories;
5. Ability/hope to find joy and solve problems.

In contrast, the four Chinese participants had identical ideas with regards to the theme that frequently appears in Chinese picture books. All four participants indicated this single theme as moral/life lessons.

Recommended Considerations in Child-Image

According to the four Canadian participants, the child-image that is necessary to present in Canadian picture books can be roughly categorized into two groups:

1. Children with more types of diversity;
2. Curious children/Adventurous children.

All of the four Canadian participants considered that *children with more types of diversity* needed to be reflected more in Canadian picture books. The term *diversity* for this categorization not only included cultural diversity, such as Aboriginal children (B. A. Brenna, personal communication, July 1, 2015; B. Campbell, personal communication, July 8, 2015; H. Baergen, personal communication, July 3, 2015) and Muslim children (J. M. Bainbridge, personal communication, July 5, 2015), but also referred to different kinds of disabilities instead of stereotypical portrayal of children with disability (B. A. Brenna, personal communication, July 1, 2015; B. Campbell, personal communication, July 8, 2015; H. Baergen, personal communication, July 3, 2015; J. M. Bainbridge, personal communication, July 5, 2015).

Coincidentally, the four Chinese participants had the similar viewpoints in terms of the child-image that is necessary to present in Chinese picture books. These appeared within the following two groups:

1. Children with more types of diversity;
2. Curious children/Creative children/Motivated children.

Both pairs of Chinese children's literature specialists and classroom teachers indicated that there was a need to represent curious children doing things differently in Chinese picture books, rather than compliant children that conform to traditional values. Differing from the Canadian participants, the term *diversity* used by the Chinese participants mainly referred to mental and physical differences instead of ethnic diversity.

Themes Deemed Lacking in Currently Available Picture Books

The four Canadian participants had similar viewpoints with regards to themes that were

insufficiently reflected in contemporary Canadian picture books:

1. Cultural diversity that is age-appropriate/with contemporary settings;
2. Imagination/fantasy;
3. City living in Canadian settings;

Interestingly, there was a gap between the Chinese children's literature specialists' and classroom teachers' ideas related to themes that were necessary to present in Chinese picture books. The two Chinese children's literature specialists stated that creative fantasy, absurdity, scientificity, and game spirit were absent elements in Chinese picture books (Tan, personal communication, June 2, 2015; Zhu, personal communication, May 19, 2015). Tan also pointed out that China's minority cultures was an absent theme in the current creation of Chinese picture books (personal communication, June 2, 2015). On the contrary, the two Chinese classroom teachers expected to see more themes connected with textbooks, such as picture books that could be used as levelled reading materials (Ma, personal communication, May 21, 2015), and picture books related to children's everyday experience that could be used as extension materials related to teaching (Wang, personal communication, June 19, 2015). Stories related to Chinese ancient civilization was another theme that the two Chinese classroom teachers considered necessary to be represented through the picture book form.

Suggestions and Ideas about Using Picture Books in Classroom Teaching

Through summarization and organization of the interview data, the suggestions and ideas about using picture books in classroom teaching given by the four Canadian participants were as following:

1. Picture books should also be used in additional subjects other than language and

literacy, through a variety of activities;

2. Professional guidance of using picture books needs to be established in order to provide help for teachers;
3. Teachers should become continual readers of children's picture books;
4. The selection and evaluation of picture books should be co-created between teachers and students.

The four Chinese participants not only proposed several similar suggestions to the Canadian participants, but they also offered ideas that were especially suitable for using picture books within the Chinese context:

1. Professional guidance in use of picture books needs to be established in order to provide help for teachers;
2. Teachers should become continual readers of children's picture books;
3. Teachers should be professionally trained for selection and evaluation of picture books;
4. Traditional teaching of reading skills needs to be changed in order to adapt skills-lessons to the picture book form;
5. Ability of interpreting pictures should be emphasized in the picture book teaching;
6. School-family community relationship needs to be built in picture book teaching;
7. Teaching through picture books is only a kind of supplementary teaching method and needs to serve instructional objectives.

Summary

Similarities and Differences that Emerged in a Comparison of the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014

The similarities and the differences that emerged in the comparison and contrast of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books can be demonstrated through three aspects: comparison of child-image, contrast of themes, and examination of Radical Change.

First of all, *child who encounters difficulties* was a type of child-image frequently represented in both Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles. *Child-as-problem solver* and *playing/imaginative child* were more reflected in Canadian titles, while Chinese titles included more *child-as-narrator* and *moral/life model*.

Secondly, in terms of the themes appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, the biggest difference was the theme of *imagination/fantasy*. There were seven Canadian award-winning titles related to *imagination/fantasy*, while only two Chinese titles referred to this theme. *Moral/life lessons* was the theme frequently represented in both the selected Canadian and Chinese books. As indicated above, *moral/life lessons* can be separated into more specific categories as family stories, friendship, emotions, finding oneself, and philosophical stories. Of eight Canadian books that reflected the theme of *moral/life lessons*, friendship and family stories were the two sub-classifications most frequently described by authors whereas Chinese titles related to *moral/life lessons* mostly focused on emotions and philosophical stories. In terms of the other five themes—*regional/local customs*, *early childhood education content and skills*, *multicultural*

diversity, the child's world of nature, and war and its aftermath, the study set of Canadian and Chinese books had a similar amount of representation.

Finally, with regards to the Radical Change demonstrated in the two sets of picture books, from an overall perspective, *changing forms and formats* was the most significant Radical Change represented in the selected Canadian and Chinese titles. *Changing boundaries* was the least represented Radical Change characteristic in the selected books. The biggest difference between the selected Canadian and Chinese titles in terms of the specific characteristics of Radical Change was embodied in *nonlinear organization and format*, *nonsequential organization and format*, and *characters portrayed in new, complex ways*. Canadian titles reflected more of the three characteristics than Chinese titles. Yet the other Radical Change characteristics were reflected similarly in the two sets of books.

Similarities and Differences Appearing in the Responses of Four K-12 Teachers and Four Post-Secondary Instructors in Canadian and Chinese Contexts Related to Children's Picture Books

Through semi-structured interviews, the response of the eight participants related to children's picture books can be categorized into six aspects: (a) purpose of using picture books; (b) patterns and trends related to child-image in picture books; (c) patterns and trends related to theme in picture books; (d) recommended considerations in child-image; (e) themes deemed lacking in currently available picture books; and (f) suggestions and ideas about using picture books in classroom teaching.

Books as teaching tools appeared as the most important purpose of using picture books in both Canadian and Chinese contexts. *Books as cultural artifacts* was another significant

purpose of using picture books in the Canadian context, whereas it was less emphasized in the Chinese context.

In terms of patterns and trends related to child-image, *children encountering difficulties* and *compliant children* were the two types of child-image reflected in both the selected Canadian and Chinese children's picture books. *Children with authentic characterization*, *children as problem-solvers*, and *white middle-class children* were the particular child-images represented in Canadian titles while *moral/life models* was the most common child-image in Chinese picture books.

The Canadian and the Chinese participants had different views in terms of patterns and trends related to theme in picture books. The four Canadian participants gave a variety of themes often represented in Canadian picture books: (a) cultural diversity; (b) particular Canadian settings and landscapes; (c) serious social issues; (d) realistic/historical stories; and (e) ability/hope to find joy and solve problems. In contrast, the four Chinese participants all considered *moral/life lessons* as the most common theme in current Chinese picture books.

Interestingly, the Canadian and the Chinese participants had similar views with regards to recommended considerations in child-image. *Children with more types of diversity* and *curious/adventurous/creative/motivated children* were deemed to need more portrayals in picture books.

The Canadian participants concluded that three themes were insufficiently represented in Canadian picture books: (a) cultural diversity that is age-appropriate/with contemporary settings; (b) imagination/fantasy; and (c) city living in Canadian settings. In contrast, the two Chinese children's literature specialists believed that themes involving elements of

creative fantasy, absurdity, scientificity, and game spirit were necessary to be represented further in Chinese picture books. In addition, the two Chinese classroom teachers hoped to see more themes connected with current textbooks.

With regards to suggestions and ideas about using picture books in classroom teaching, the Canadian and the Chinese participants had several similar opinions, yet the Chinese participants also proposed suggestions that particularly fit into the Chinese context. There were three similar suggestions about using picture books in classroom teaching in both the Canadian and the Chinese context: (a) picture books should also be used in other subjects other than language and literacy, through a variety of activities; (b) professional guidance in use of picture books needs to be established in order to provide help for teachers; and (c) teachers should become continual readers of children's picture books. One particular suggestion proposed by the Canadian participants was that the selection and evaluation of picture books should be co-created between teachers and students. Given that use of Chinese picture books in classroom teaching was still in its infancy, the Chinese participants offered several suggestions and ideas that applied to Chinese context: (a) teachers should be professionally trained for selection and evaluation of picture books; (b) traditional teaching of reading skills needs to be changed in order to adapt skills-lessons to the picture book form; (c) ability of interpreting pictures should be emphasized in the picture book teaching; (d) school-family community relationship needs to be built in picture book teaching; and (e) teaching through picture books is only a kind of supplementary teaching means and needs to serve instructional objectives.

Comparison and Contrast between the Responses of the Participants and My

Investigation

According to my investigation of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014, *playing/imaginative child* was the most representative child-image in the selected Canadian award-winning titles.

Playing/imaginative child can reflect characteristics of curiousness and adventurousness.

However, the four Canadian participants stated that *curious/adventurous children* as a type of child-image was still absent in Canadian picture books. *Child encountering difficulties*

was frequently represented in the two sets of award-winning picture books, and both the

Canadian and the Chinese participants agreed that they often saw such child-image

portrayed in picture books. *Child-as-problem-solver* was another child-image often depicted

in the selected Canadian award-winning picture books, and the responses of the Canadian

participants was in accordance with the investigation result. *Moral/life model* was one of the

child-image that frequently reflected in the selected Chinese award-winning titles, and the

Chinese participants also regarded that *moral/life model* and *compliant children* were the

two types of child-image that often to be portrayed in current Chinese picture books. Some

of the Canadian participants considered that *white middle-class children* and *compliant*

children were often seen in Canadian picture books, however, the two types of child-image

was actually less represented, respectively, in the award-winning titles.

In terms of themes that frequently appear in the two sets of picture books, *moral/life lessons* took the top spot in both the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles.

The four Chinese participants all agreed that *moral/life lessons* was the theme that they often

saw in Chinese picture books. Coincidentally, some of the Canadian participants presented

that *serious social issues* and *ability/hope to find joy and solve problems* were the two themes that often seemed to be reflected in picture books to which they were constantly exposed. Some of the Canadian award-winning titles related to the theme of *moral/life lessons* also referred to *serious social issues* and *ability/hope to find joy and solve problems*. This illustrated that the investigation result corresponded to the interview data. However, although the Canadian participants also stated that *particular Canadian settings and landscapes* was one of the themes that often was seen in Canadian picture books, and some of the award-winning titles did involve this theme, it was still less represented compared to other themes. In contrast, *realistic/historical stories* was still considered to be frequently depicted in Canadian picture books, but there was a great growth of *imagination/fantasy* in the award-winning titles.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine the child-image and the theme of the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books from 2004 to 2014, along with other emerging categories as well as explore responses to children's picture books through the perspectives of four Canadian and four Chinese participants. The discussion section will unfold in this chapter through four sections: (a) discussion related to child-image; (b) discussion related to thematic studies; (c) discussion related to Radical Change; and (d) discussion related to the interviews.

Discussion Related to Child-Image

As illustrated in Table 1, whether in the selected Canadian or Chinese award-winning titles, *child who encounters difficulties* was one of the most common child-images representing in picture books. Many picture book authors tended to narrate stories in a three-stage frame, which is, *encounter with problems—try to solve problems—problems solved/problems unsolved but life is carrying on with hope*. Thus, *child who encounters difficulties* as a type of child-image can contribute in pushing forward the plot development, revealing the psychology of the characters, and molding distinctive personalities. Therefore, it is not surprising that this type of child-image hosted the majority in both the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles.

Moreover, *child who encounters difficulties* can also reflect the changing views of children in contemporary children's literature. From fifteenth century to nineteenth century, Western classic texts often offered challenges to children as punishment (Thacker & Webb, 2002; Townsend, 1974). Coincidentally, Zhu (2000) argued that Chinese children's literature in

the 1950s and 1960s often insisted that adults help children through their predicaments. It was impossible for children to overcome difficulties without adults' guidance and help. However, in the selected picture books for this study, *child who encounters difficulties* was usually the one who solves the problems. The child-image of *child who encounters difficulties* and *child-as-problem-solver* often overlapped. Encountering challenges and overcoming difficulties is strongly contemporary. In today's children's literature, children are viewed as having ability, subjectively in charge of their own lives.

In terms of *playing/imaginative child*, 11 out of the 15 Canadian award-winning picture books in which children take leading roles were portrayed to represent this type of child-image. Interestingly, the four Canadian participants all considered that there was a scarcity of child-characters with imaginative feature in Canadian children's literature. B. A. Brenna claimed that according to her own reading experience, she did see more realistic fiction picture books than other genres (personal communication, July 1, 2015). J. M. Bainbridge addressed how Canadian people "are so earnest about things that it's hard sometimes to let our imagination play" and how Canadian picture books lack fantasy stories and imaginative characters for children compared with American, Australian, and British picture books (personal communication, July 5, 2015). As experienced Canadian classroom teachers, H. Baergen and B. Campbell both believed that there were more realistic picture books in Canadian children's literature, but imagination and fantasy books would be an area of growth for Canadian authors (personal communications, July 3 & July 8, 2015). Most of the Canadian participants believed that Canadian children's picture books tend to create more realistic child-image rather than imaginative child-image. However, the analysis of the actual

data showed that *playing/imaginative child* as an image was not rare in Canadian award-winning titles. For example, the Governor General's Literacy Award winners, *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) and *Imagine a Day* (Thomson & Gonsalves, 2005), the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award winners, *How to* (Morstad, 2013) and *Mr. Zinger's Hat* (Fagan & Petričić, 2012), the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award winners *A Few Blocks* (Young, 2011) and *Snow* (Clark & Denton, 2006), all portrayed *playing/imaginative child*-image.

Although *playing/imaginative child* also occupied a certain proportion in the selected Chinese award-winning picture books (38%), this type of child-image was less common in contrast with the Canadian award-winning titles. The child-image in the Chinese award-winning picture books laid particular stress on pragmatism. Perhaps it is concerned with a more traditional approach in Chinese education—edutainment, which means that education should occur through entertainment, yet entertainment is only the tool to realize the instructional goal, and a pedagogical task should always be placed before playing. Hence, it is not surprising that playing scenes purely for fun was uncommon in the selected Chinese award-winning picture books. For instance, the winner of the 1st Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, *Xi Xi* (Xiao Mao, Li Chun Miao, & Zhang Yan-hong, 2008) depicted dozens of kids playing all kinds of games in the park, yet the purpose was to foil Xi Xi's difference and to emphasize her concentration, rather than conveying the game spirit of children. In this regard, the selected Canadian award-winning picture books relatively reflected the nature of children's playing more than the Chinese titles.

After *playing/imaginative child*, the biggest difference of child-image between the

study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books was the embodiment of *child-as-problem-solver* (Canada 47%, China 13%). As defined above, for this study, a child-character can be categorized into the image of *child-as-problem-solver* primarily depending on whether the child can solve the problem independently. Among the Canadian award-winning titles, *child-as-problem-solver* can be easily found in many of the books, and it reflected one important characteristic of the Canadian child-image in children's literature—resilience. Bella in *Bella's Tree* (Marton & Russell, 2009) is a smart and spunky girl who actively finds ways to solve her Nan's difficulty; the little girl in *I Know Here* (Croza & James, 2010) has to leave the place she is familiar with and move to Toronto, which she knows nothing about, but she finally finds her own way to remember the good times and move forward, releasing her homesickness by herself; Caramba in *Caramba* (Gay, 2005) has tried a variety of methods to learn flying in order to deal with his own confusion and anxiety, and he finally gets back the self-affirmation and builds up the confidence again. In *A Few Blocks* (Young, 2011), Viola cheers up her young brother Ferdie by playing an imaginative game with him. In all these books, children are able to solve their own or other's problems independently and proactively. The high frequency of *child-as-problem-solver* appearing in the Canadian award-winning titles may reflect the motivated and resilient features of children in Canadian children's literature. As B. A. Brenna addressed, children who have self-determination often are reflected in recent Canadian picture books. These children are “treated as problem solvers”, and “they are often central to a solution, if there is going to be a solution in a book, or they work with an adult to establish a solution together, rather than having the adult be the one that finds solution for the child” (personal communication, July 1,

2015).

On the contrary, *child-as-problem-solver* was relatively rare in the selected Chinese award-winning titles. Of all the 16 books in which children were portrayed as leading roles, only two books shaped the child-characters as problem-solvers. The winner of the 1st Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award, *An's Seeds* (Wang Zaozao & Huang Li, 2008), presented three child-characters, Ben, Jing, and An, who are young monks in an old Chinese temple. The abbot of the temple gives each of the three young monks an ancient lotus seed and lets them try to make the ancient lotus re-flower. Ben cannot wait to plant the seed in the yard and forgets it is winter, thus it is impossible for the seed to sprout; Jing looks through many books and carefully plants the seed into a golden flowerpot, but the lotus budlet dies because it cannot get enough sunshine; An still maintains his daily routine, cleaning and cooking, waiting patiently for the arrival of spring. The ancient lotus eventually flowers in a summer day due to An's patience and respect for natural law. Further details tell readers that An received information about the lotus from a farmer at the market and thus did not solve the problem by himself. An was portrayed as a positive child-image, while Ben and Jing were dismissed as negative examples. *An's Seeds* (Wang Zaozao & Huang Li, 2008) implied that adult experience was more valuable and should be revered by children. What Ben and Jing did is exactly what a child would do, because children love to explore the unknown and they are always filled with curiosity to solve problems independently. Even though they may often fail, the attempt should be valued. In other words, the child who has the potentiality to become an independent and proactive problem-solver is throttled by the Chinese traditional education idea. People tend to consider that children always need the help and education from

adults rather than believe in children's own abilities.

In fact, all of the four Chinese participants expressed the similar expectation of seeing more Chinese children's books represent motivated and resilient Chinese children. As an experienced English teacher who often used picture books as extensive reading materials in the class, Ma noted that it is important to cultivate children's ability to solve problems independently, but such child-image was hard to find in current Chinese picture books (personal communication, May 21, 2015). Chinese children's literature specialist Zhu indicated, “[作为图画书作者], 你要让人看到孩子的那种能力和力量。在困境中的力量, 超越的力量.....我是觉得我希望看到中国的孩子更有生气, 更加活泼, 更有行动力, 更有想象力, 更有创意的这样的儿童形象” (“[As a picture book author], you should let people see children's power and strength. The power that can help children overcome difficulties and transcend predicaments.....I wish to see that Chinese children are more animated, more active, more motivated, more imaginative, and more creative”) (personal communication, May 19, 2015).

Child-as-narrator and *moral/life model* were the two types of child-image which had higher frequency in the selected Chinese award-winning titles (*child-as-narrator*, Canada, 20%, China, 50%; *moral/life model*, Canada, 20%, China, 50%). Employing child-character as narrator may not achieve authentic characterization of children as adult authors inadvertently presented their own identity, experience and attitude. Many stories that were told from children's perspectives had the drawback of merely being an adult telling his or her childhood, rather than the story told by a real child (Kiefer, 2010; Zhu, 2000). Of the eight Chinese award-winning titles in which employed children as narrator, five books were about

childhood memories.

The stories of *A New Year's Reunion* (Yu Liqiong & Zhu Chengliang, 2008), *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008), *Me and My Bike* (Ye Ande, 2006), and *The Morning Market at Lotus Town* (Zhou Xiang, 2006) were set a dozen years ago, which can be reflected through characters' dresses and settings, while the story of *Infatuated with Peking Opera* (Yao Hong, 2012) happened several decades ago, during the period of Anti-Japanese War in China. Various authors directly wrote in the afterword, admitting that they created the story according to their childhood memories. For example, Yu Liqiong, the author of *A New Year's Reunion* (Yu Liqiong & Zhu Chengliang, 2008), wrote in the afterward, “这个团圆的故事是我多年来埋在心里的情结” (“The story of the reunion reflects the emotion that I buried in my heart for years”) (*A New Year's Reunion*, Yu Liqiong & Zhu Chengliang, 2008, n.p.). Coincidentally, Taiwan children's literature critic Sarah Chien-Hua Ko (2009) commented on *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008): “Zhang successfully turns personal childhood experience into a beautiful work of literature” (n.p.). The author of *The Morning Market at Lotus Town* (Zhou Xiang, 2006), wrote in the booklet accompanying with the picture book, “正是这样一种追忆和思念的心情，促使我画出了《荷花镇的早市》。它是我童年记忆的再现” (“It is the mood of recalling and missing, that urged me to create *The Morning Market at Lotus Town*. It is the reproduction of my childhood memories”) (*Morning Market at Lotus Town*, Zhou Xiang, 2006, n.p.). The illustrations of a Beijing Opera performance in *Infatuated with Peking Opera* (Yao Hong, 2012), included reappearances of the author's mother's real memory of childhood. Given this, the first-person narration certainly seemed fit to tell those memories.

The high frequency of using child as narrator in the selected Chinese award-winning picture books may reflect a kind of artistic tendency. According to the Chinese children's literature specialist, Tan Fengxia (2011), some Chinese artists tended to construct a *Chinese style* to reach both native and international readers in the way of nationalizing picture books, and such an attempt is easily influenced by "native artists' nostalgia for the old customs, their own childhoods or the ancient aesthetics" (n.p.). On the contrary, many of the selected Canadian award-winning titles preferred to employ third-person narration. Such narration may better reflect and depict children's behavior, mood, and psychology, allowing the nature and the subjectivities of children to be better presented.

In terms of *moral/life model*, its high frequency in the selected Chinese award-winning titles may imply that the educational purpose of Chinese picture books is still strongly present. Many Chinese teachers and parents believe that picture book as well as other children's literature form is the tool of education, and the target audience should only include children. As one of the Chinese participants and an English-language teacher, Wang asserted, "[图画书]肯定得有个教育意义在里面。不是很生硬的说教，但是肯定会有教育意义在里面。因为绘本都是给小孩看的" ("[picture books] must have educational significance. Not the rigid and simplified preaching, but it must have educational significance, because picture books are typically written for children") (personal communication, June 19, 2015). The view that picture books should be particularly written for children and must contain educational meanings might be the most important reason that has led to the high frequency of *moral/life model* in the selected Chinese award-winning titles.

Discussion Related to Thematic Studies

Moral/life lessons and *imagination/fantasy* were the two most important themes represented by the selected Canadian award-winning picture books, while *moral/life lessons* as a theme occupied more than half of the selected Chinese award-winning titles. The investigation result was in accordance to the interview data in terms of all the Canadian and the Chinese participants who regarded picture books as teaching tools. Thus it indicated that instructional function of picture books was still emphasized in both Canadian and Chinese contexts. As B. A. Brenna pointed out “good stories do have a teaching opportunity,” however, teaching through picture books should be “not didactic and...heavy-handed, or overt” (personal communication, July 1, 2015).

Comparing with the selected Canadian award-winning titles in which friendship and family stories occupied a large share under the categorization of *moral/life lessons*, emotions and philosophical stories were the two sub-classifications more frequently reflected in the targeted Chinese award-winning books. Literature can “provide characters and events with which children can identify and through which they can consider their own actions, beliefs, and emotions” (Mendoza & Reese, 2001, p. 3). The books that referred to emotions primarily focused on teaching children how to manage emotions or deal with confusions and difficulties that brought by physical and mental growth. Both the characters and situations in these books offered a chance to young readers to further construct their own views of self and the world. Of the 12 Chinese books related to *moral/life lessons*, four titles can be categorized as philosophical stories. It is clear to see that attaching great importance to philosophical value was a distinctive feature of the selected Chinese picture books.

Although all of the four Canadian participants considered the theme of *imagination/fantasy* to be rare in current Canadian picture books and should be more represented in future, the investigation of the selected Canadian award-winning titles showed a different conclusion. After *moral/life lessons*, *imagination/fantasy* was actually the second frequent theme that represented in the award-winning titles.

Despite the fact that many of the award-winning titles only represented imaginative characteristic as a portion of the plot rather than integral, it cannot be denied that *imagination/fantasy* has already been a common theme in the selected Canadian picture books. It may reflect the subversive trend in recent creations of Canadian picture books. Increasingly, the Canadian award-winning titles have shown the feature of celebrating “daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one’s private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups” (Mendoza & Reese, 2001, p. 3). *How to* (Morstad, 2013), *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012), *Mr. Zinger’s Hat* (Fagan & Petričić, 2012), *A Few Blocks* (Young, 2011), *When You Were Small* (O’Leary & Morstad, 2006), *The Boy from the Sun* (Weller, 2006), *Snow* (Clark & Denton, 2006), and *Imagine a Day* (Thomson & Gonsalves, 2005) all showed such features. However, the imaginative features of these books also demonstrated a sort of Canadian characteristic.

Taking *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) and *Mr. Zinger’s Hat* (Fagan & Petričić, 2012) as examples, the former includes the plot of creating the imaginative world *Bloomsberry*, yet the whole story actually alluded authoress Virginia Woolf’s life story. In *Mr. Zinger’s Hat* (Fagan & Petričić, 2012), the protagonist, a little boy named Leo, is travelling through the real world and the story world, and the depicting of the real world occupies

nearly half of this book. In addition, most of the imaginative plots in the selected Canadian award-winning picture books are built on the basis of reality, or in other words, the imagination is constrained within a logical framework. The little boy Leo (*Mr. Zinger's Hat*, Fagan & Petričić, 2012) creates the story according to his own life. In another award-winning title, *Snow* (Clark & Denton, 2006), the boy Sammy has been imagining what it is like under the snow; he has imagined the frozen sea where seals and whales swim, the cave where a polar bear mother and her cub sleep, the workplace where Santa Claus and his elves make Christmas gifts, and so on. All the imagination conforms to logic because all the imaginative places portrayed in the books represent the characteristics of cold and winter. Sammy has not imagined a tropical rainforest under the snow. Therefore, despite the finding that *imagination/fantasy* was a frequent theme in the selected Canadian award-winning picture books, the imagination might not have been completely unleashed. Works like the classical picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), or the Caldecott Medal winner in 2014, *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* (Santat, 2014), where the imagination is represented in a very enthusiastic way, were still rare to see in the creation of Canadian picture books.

To some extent, perhaps it corresponds with the four Canadian participants' opinions related to *imagination/fantasy* theme in Canadian children's literature, that is, there were more realistic stories as well as realistic child-images in Canadian picture books. Or, the *imagination/fantasy* in the selected Canadian award-winning titles reflected the characteristics of Canadian imaginations—realistic, precise, and logical.

The most important feature of the picture book form is that it can offer the most

intuitive visual reading experience through illustrations (Edwards & Saltman, 2010; Pantaleo, 2008). *Regional/local customs* as a theme can be directly reflected through illustrations.

Wilderness was the most distinct feature in the three Canadian books that referred to *regional/local customs*. Canada's vast land and splendid scenery are depicted in *Northwest Passage* (James & Rogers, 2013); *Bella's Tree* (Marton & Russell, 2009) portrays Canada's forest and winter scenery; Saskatchewan's geographical features are reflected in *I Know Here* (Croza & James, 2010). These depictions resonate with a Canadian identity often found in Canadian children's literature, as Edwards and Saltman (2010) pointed out, "Canada is a wilderness nation of diverse and distinctive regional identities" (p. 192). However, according to Nodelman (2008), Canadians' attitude towards wilderness differ from Americans.

"Americans see an empty natural space as something to conquer and build on, something that allows them to enlarge themselves" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 298), while Canadians have developed a "garrison mentality" (Frye, 1971, p. 225) to distinguish their own identities.

Nodelman (2008) argued that while "native Canadian writers of recent times often describe Canadian landscapes as potentially dangerous, they are less prone to describe them as purely monstrous" (p. 298). *Northwest Passage* (James & Rogers, 2013) is a good example to endorse this view. Although wilderness as a hostile environment was finally tamed by explorers, the fear of the wilderness and unknown still existed. The illustration in the book that depicted skeletons on the route of exploration conveyed this fear properly, and corresponded to Nodelman's (2008) viewpoint related to Canadian identity and national characteristics.

In contrast, the two Chinese award-winning titles that refer to *regional/local customs*

both depicted a southern Chinese riverside town. Water flowing beneath a little bridge, beautiful idyllic scenery, life in rural area—all the illustrations distinguished the Chinese unique landscape and easily evoked nostalgia.

Edwards and Saltman (2010) asserted that landscapes can create cultures, and then cultures further construct identities. Although depicting landscape or local customs might be a good way to reflect national or cultural characteristics, the story and the setting would be probably limited. That would be a dilemma that Canadian and Chinese picture books have to face. For instance, in order to reflect Canadian regional features, the settings would be probably limited to the north, winter, ocean, and forest. In contrast, Chinese picture books that refer to *regional/local customs* were usually set in the past. Perhaps it is related to globalization, in the way that people look, dress, and act seems increasingly more similar than ever before. Consequently, diversity in picture books has been ever gradually concealed and ignored. In addition, picture books with distinctive national or cultural identity may bear the risk of failure in global marketing. As Edwards and Saltman (2010) pointed out, many publishers hold the belief that “distinctive regional and national markers in children’s books will lessen the possibility of international sales” (p. 213).

Multicultural diversity was a theme embodied by both the selected Canadian and Chinese titles. However, the emphasis was a little different between the two sets of books. Of the four Canadian books that referred to multicultural diversity, *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) implied mental disability; *The Owl and the Pussycat* (Jorisch & Lear, 2008) suggested racial and class difference; *Ancient Thunder* (Yerxa, 2006) was about Aboriginal folktales and reflected First Nation’s culture; and *Owls See Clearly at Night* (Flett, 2010) not

only reflected Metis's culture, but "can play a role, however small, in repairing the damage to Aboriginal languages" (Wiltse, 2015).

In contrast, the two award-winning Chinese titles both referred to mental and physical difference. *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008) is about a boy who appeared to have mental disability, while *I Can't See* (Chao-Lun Tsai, 2012) intends to arouse public attention to people with visual disability. According to the interviews, in spite of the four Canadian participants all considering that *multicultural diversity* was an important and common theme in Canadian picture books, it was still rare among the award-winning titles. Perhaps it would be an area that needs more attention in the future. In terms of Chinese picture books, there appears to be a need for more titles that refer to cultural diversity instead of mental and physical difference. As one of the participants, Tan pointed out, "在中国图画书中，与多元文化主题相关的少数民族题材较为欠缺" ("Among Chinese picture books, there has been a dearth of ethnic minority subject that related to multicultural diversity") (personal communication, June 2, 2015).

Both the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles involved a theme of *early childhood education content and skills*. Of the three Canadian books, *Ten Birds* (Young, 2011) and *Cat's Night Out* (Klassen & Stutson, 2010) are counting books; *Owls See Clearly at Night* (Flett, 2010) is a Michif alphabet book. Of the three Chinese books, *Now Do You Know Who I Am?* (Laima, 2006) is a counting book, whereas *On the Pond, Under the Pond* (Chiu Chen-tsung, 2008) and *I See a Bird* (Liu Bor-Leh, 2011) are about biological knowledge and can be categorized as information books.

Children's literature can serve several purposes, some of which are aesthetic,

psychosocial, and informative/instructional (Mendoza & Reese, 2001). Rosenblatt (1995) categorized readers' involvement and responses to literature into aesthetic reading and efferent reading. Undoubtedly, the primary purpose of the six books that referred to *early childhood education content and skills* is efferent reading. However, in addition to the instructional function, the six books are also written and illustrated in a manner that provides aesthetic as well as learning experiences. For example, *Ten Birds* (Young, 2011) not only involves numerical counting, but also presents “a witty fable about ingenuity and common sense” (*Ten Birds*, Young, 2011) and involves a delicate and intricate artistic technique. Coincidentally, although being defined as a counting book, *Now Do You Know Who I Am?* (Laima, 2006) is also an imaginative artistic creation with which readers can interact. All of the six award-winning books demonstrated a trend of information picture books—the combination of aesthetic and efferent functions.

Discussion Related to Radical Change

As indicated above, with regards to the Radical Change that was demonstrated in the selected Canadian and Chinese picture books, from an overall perspective, *changing forms and formats* was the most significant Radical Change type represented whereas *changing boundaries* was the least apparent Radical Change type.

All of the selected Canadian and Chinese titles represented characteristics that could be identified by Radical Change type one *changing forms and formats*: graphic in new forms and formats; words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy; and multiple layers of meaning. Such changes may be primarily due to the development of printing industry.

Advanced technology has greatly improved graphic and word design, making it possible for

bolder and more creative picture book products. Handwriting and printing forms co-exist in some of the award-winning books, such as *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) and *Xi Xi* (Xiao Mao, Li Chun Miao, & Zhang Yan-hong, 2008), and go beyond enriching the layers of graphic and words to also convey characters' emotions and establish their own identities.

The relationship between pictures and texts has also reached a new level. In *Northwest Passage* (James & Rogers, 2013), the text moves between lyrics of the song *Northwest Passage* and the description of the dramatic story of the search for Northwest Passage.

Current Canadian landscapes and historical scenarios alternatively appear accompanying a change of text. The Chinese title *A Wednesday Afternoon, Chasing Tadpoles* (An Shih-liu, 2004) represents the style of postmodernism. Dialogues in handwriting and the third person narration in printing form are mixed in the pictures; the linear nature of time is broken by the montages of multiple voices; the author even created an imaginative language for fish and tadpoles. The illustrations and texts have reached a kind of harmony with a sense of humor.

All of the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books involve multiple layers of meaning. The story may be told from multiple perspectives, or philosophical concepts may be implied below the surface of the storyline, or various themes may be involved in one story. For instance, *Northwest Passage* (James & Rogers, 2013) unfolds from the perspectives of the singer Stan Rogers and the author Matt James; the wisdom of patience through Chinese philosophical poetry is represented in *An's Seeds* (Wang Zaozao & Huang Li, 2008) and *The Very Slow Snail* (Chih-Yuan Chen, 2011); *Virginia Wolf* (Maclear & Arsenault, 2012) can be explored from various themes—multicultural diversity, love of families, and the life-history of Virginia Woolf, and different readers may discover

different themes according to their own experiences.

As indicated above, the biggest difference between the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles in terms of the specific characteristics of Radical Change was embodied in *nonlinear organization and format*, *nonsequential organization and format*, and *characters portrayed in new, complex ways*. The Canadian titles reflected more of the three characteristics than the Chinese titles. It reflected that Canadian picture book authors and illustrators have gone further than Chinese authors and illustrators in terms of innovation of artistic forms and characterizations. In addition, the selected Canadian award-winning picture books do involve more titles appropriate for older readers. As for the Chinese titles, the age level of the intended audience is relatively low. It is probably due to the award criteria that “the content and style should be eligible for children aged 3-12” (Feng Zikai Chinese Children’s Picture Book Award, 2015, “Regulations and Judging Guidelines,” para. 2). Thus the award itself may restrict Chinese authors and illustrators in employing more complex artistic forms and characterizations.

In summary, the selected Canadian award-winning picture books represented more characteristics of Radical change than the Chinese titles. However, the Radical Change involved in the two sets of books was superficial and generally stayed on the level of *changing forms and formats*. The more fundamental changes that related to content and concept, such as *changing perspectives* and *changing boundaries*, appear infrequently in the selected titles. This is an area where Canadian and Chinese picture book authors and illustrators might be encouraged to expand. Although consideration was given to emerging categories consistent with the larger framework of Radical Change, no new categories

appeared in this scrutiny of the study set, a result that in no way impedes further categories from appearing in future research, given the opportunity for consideration.

Discussion Related to the Interviews

As analyzed above, there are some similarities as well as differences between the investigation of the two sets of picture books and the responses of the eight participants. To some extent, the similarities can reflect certain creative tendency and characteristics. These details have been discussed in the child-image and thematic studies' sections, and need not be repeated here. The discussion related to the interviews centered on the differences between the investigation of the selected books and the responses of the participants.

The significant difference between the investigation of the selected Canadian award-winning titles and the responses of the four Canadian participants focused on the child-image of *curious/adventurous children* and the theme of *imagination/fantasy*. All of the four Canadian participants believed that there was a dearth of *curious/adventurous children* and *imagination/fantasy* in current Canadian picture books.

B. A. Brenna stated, "I think we have a real lack of science-fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, I think those genres have not been maybe used as much by authors. There are a few good examples, but typically, I think realistic fiction has been the most commonly used genre" (personal communication, July 1, 2015). She further addressed in the later interview:

[W]e can look at the fantasy world, and we can take a strong lesson from that world and apply it to our own world, in kind of the safe space that literature offers, and that fantasy particularly offers....we still need to make sure children are getting fantasies, not just only realistic fiction. (personal communication, July 1, 2015)

J. M. Bainbridge also agreed with this viewpoint, when she compared Canadian titles with books from other countries, and said:

The Australians are very good at doing very imaginary stuff for children in picture books, so are the English. They are doing picture books that are fantasy books for children, but they are very readable and we don't seem to be able to quite do that in Canada, sometimes people tried to do that but they just don't work. I think in Canada, we are so earnest about things that it's hard sometimes to let our imaginations play. But I think that's something we could use more of, some good little fantasy stories, imaginative characters for children in books. (personal communication, July 5, 2015)

As an experienced classroom teacher who often uses picture books in daily teaching, H. Baergen said "Imagination and fantasy, that's really growing" (personal communication, July 3, 2015). Also as a classroom teacher, B. Campbell acknowledged that he did not know much about the theme of *imagination/fantasy* in Canadian picture books by saying "it is kind of the first time that I started to think about Canadian books....I'm not sure if there is, but I think it would be an area of growth for Canadian authors" (personal communication, July 8, 2015).

However, according to my investigation, *playing/imaginative child* was the most representative child-image in the selected Canadian award-winning titles. Moreover, the theme of *imagination/fantasy* was in second place among the selected books; of the 23 Canadian books, seven titles refer to *imagination/fantasy* (*A Few Blocks*, Young, 2011; *How to*, Morstad, 2013; *Imagine a Day*, Thomson & Gonsalves, 2005; *The Boy from the Sun*, Weller, 2006; *The Owl and the Pussycat*, Jorisch & Lear, 2008; *Virginia Wolf*, Maclear & Arsenault, 2012; *When You Were Small*, O'Leary & Morstad, 2006).

Coincidentally, there was a similar situation between the targeted Chinese award-winning picture books and the responses of the four Chinese participants. Although the investigations of child-image and theme in the selected Chinese picture books corresponded with participants' experiences and opinions, there was still a gap between the award-winning titles and practical application of Chinese picture books. The gap was especially reflected through classroom teaching in Chinese contexts.

When asked what kind of child-image and theme are necessary to present in Chinese picture books, Ma, as an experienced English-language teacher, listed several categorizations that including children with special needs, traditional folktales, and books that can reflect children's authentic characterization and life (personal communication, May 21, 2015). Another Chinese classroom teacher Wang also addressed that she hoped to see children with authentic characterization, such as adventurous, humorous, and motivated, “其实如果书里面这个人物形象很幽默, 哪怕调皮捣蛋, 但是他很幽默, 积极乐观, 我觉得这样就很好” (“If the character in the book is humorous, even if being naughty, as long as he is humorous, positive, and optimistic, I think it would be good”) (personal communication, June 19, 2015).

In fact, there was considerable evidence in the study sample related to the child-image and the theme which the two Chinese participants believed insufficient in Chinese picture books. For example, *The King of Hide and Seek* (Zhang Xiaoling & Pan Jian, 2008) and *I Can't See* (Chao-Lun Tsai, 2012) referred to children with special needs; *The Day Vegetables Became Goblins* (Zhou Xiang, 2008) and *Going to the Marketplace* (Cookie Lin & Chien-Hung Liao, 2010) adapted from traditional Chinese nursery rhyme and folktale; *Me*

and My Bike (Ye Ande, 2006), *A Wednesday Afternoon, Chasing Tadpoles* (An Shih-liu, 2004), *Xi Xi* (Xiao Mao, Li Chun Miao, & Zhang Yan-hong, 2008), *The Frog and the Boy* (Xiao Mao, Chen Wei, & Huang Xiaomin, 2010), and *The Scariest Day of My Life* (Tom Liu, 2012) all reflected children's everyday experience and depicted children with authentic characterization.

However, most of the participants were not familiar with the award-winning titles, thus it would be difficult for them to recognize the trends and changes that are reflected through these books. Of the four Canadian participants, only B. A. Brenna was familiar with almost all of the award-winning titles due to her research of Canadian picture books. H. Baergen knew some of the books due to her frequent use of picture books in classrooms and in her context training future teachers as a university instructor. J. M. Bainbridge was also a children's literature specialist like B. A. Brenna, but she admitted that she did not know most of the award-winning books. She explained, "I have not been teaching children's literature for quite a while now. I'm just not paying attention to which books won awards, and I'm more likely to read reviews than read the books" (personal communication, July 5, 2015). B. Campbell said he was not familiar with most of the award-winning titles as well, because he had just realized that he needed to be exposed to more Canadian books and authors. But he added, "I don't know if I really focus on award-winning picture books. Like I said, I have a booklist from a few really good resources...people I knew and trusted..." (personal communication, July 8, 2015).

Due to his work in two subsequent years on a judging panel of Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award as well as a Chinese children's literature specialist, Zhu was

the only one participant who was quite familiar with all of the award-winning titles, and provided several suggestions and ideas related to picture book creation, evaluation, and application. However, the two Chinese classroom teachers and the other Chinese children's specialist I interviewed for this study recognized that they did not know or only knew a small amount of these award-winning titles.

Ma said she was familiar with many of the titles due to various advertisements but she only read a few of them. Most of the award-winning titles were still new to her. Ma also emphasized that an award was not her criterion for buying or selecting picture books (personal communication, May 21, 2015). As a novice at using picture books in teaching, Wang said she did not know these award-winning picture books at all. Picture books were used as English-language teaching materials in Wang's class, therefore she mainly focused on picture books that were originally written in English (personal communication, July 19, 2015).

Nevertheless, all of the above analysis and discussion indicated that there was a huge gap between the award-winning picture books and the evaluation and the practical use of them. There have been a considerable amount of good picture books produced in Canada and China, and they can be used for various purposes in many different ways, but the participants in this study tended not to be practically familiar with them.

Canadian and Chinese picture books faced the same difficulty: how to bridge the gap and let more people recognize the award-winning picture books? One other question might be asked here: is this even a valuable target for future work? Both Canadian and Chinese picture books are greatly influenced by British and American picture book creations and publishing.

As Nodelman (2008) argued, “Canadian children have their lives constructed by schools and institutions heavily affected by American trends and interests” (p. 293), “Canadian children are being encouraged to understand themselves as ordinary Americans who happen to live outside the United States, not just by the American books they usually read but by Canadian books that are increasingly and normatively ‘American’” (p. 295). Coincidentally, according to the interviews for this study, both the Chinese classroom teachers and children’s literature specialists were more familiar with picture books originally published in America or Britain. The American picture book award, the Caldecott Medal, was much more popular and widely known in China. The imbalance between the creation, evaluation, and use of indigenous picture books is worth pondering for both Canadian and Chinese educators who are concerned about picture book reading, teaching, as well as the constructing of national identities.

My Journey as a Researcher

This research study provided an instructive and eye-opening journey for me. I have been learning more about the picture book form, as well as its relationship with education and identity construction in different cultural contexts. My viewpoint has also been shaped and changed during the investigation of the selected picture books, as well as the conversations with all of the participants.

In the first place, there was a discrepancy in terms of the definition of picture books. Some of the Chinese classroom teachers categorized levelled readings into the picture book form. However, for this study, the picture book is defined as an art form. I agree with B. A. Brenna’s viewpoint when she talked about the characteristics of picture books:

I think the characteristics that come to my mind first are literacy value, and beauty of illustration. The books I had when I was a child, didn't really have noted illustrators who are artists, involved in their creation. The books I see published now, have real artists creating the illustrations. These books are presented as art forms, really. (personal communication, July 1, 2015).

In my opinion, aesthetic value is the most important characteristic of picture book form, thus, although levelled readings also tell stories through visual and textual narrative, they perhaps cannot be defined as an artistic work. In other word, levelled reading is like a rose without fragrance; it only has the appearance of picture book form but without the soul.

The obscure concept and unclear definition of the picture book form that many Chinese teachers and parents hold may lead to particular use of picture books. For example, the two Chinese classroom teachers I interviewed for this study emphasized the function of picture books in terms of language-teaching and thinking ability cultivation, rather than aesthetic education. In contrast, picture books may often be used to teach serious topics in Canadian context, such as social justice and cultural diversity. If more Chinese teachers and parents are aware of the potentialities of picture books these texts may be used in a broader way. Similarly, if more Canadian teachers and parents consider the impact of adult-child reading on language learning and thinking facilitation, more time might be taken during reading to explore a book rather than simply reading it aloud from beginning to end.

In addition, there also is a gap between the interpretation of the children's literature specialists and the classroom teachers. According to the interview data, three of the four children's literature specialists recognized that picture books can be used for leisure and

recreation, yet none of the four classroom teachers realized this function; all of the children's literature specialists regarded picture books as research resource, while none of the four classroom teachers had such a consideration. The two differences can reflect that in the context of classroom teaching, the informational function of picture books is emphasized more than the entertainment function. Moreover, although picture books have been increasingly used for classroom teaching, perhaps the picture book form has not received enough attention as an artistic form.

Secondly, there is a tendency for picture book authors and illustrators to seek national and cultural distinction in the creation of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books (Edwards & Saltman, 2010; Tan, 2011; Zhu, 2000). However, one has to wonder if the books represent current national identity and whether they actually appeal to children, or whether they reflect an adult perspective that reveals the nostalgia for tradition and the past, rather than the present. It may not be uncommon for a picture book identified as nationally or culturally representative, and highly praised by adults, to actually be unappealing to children due to lack of absorbing plots. Further research is suggested on this topic. When being asked how to evaluate the selected Canadian award-winning titles for this study, B. A. Brenna addressed:

I do see them as having high literacy value, and high illustrative value, beautiful art work, often very beautiful language. Sometimes they're not appealing to children, because they're based on complex satirical themes, and they maybe don't encourage a common kid who just wants a good story ... They just maybe are too much directed to appeal to adults. I'm not suggesting that none of these books would appeal to kids, or

even be a kid's favorite book, but I do think that adults on the committees pick those books for the high literacy value, and even higher estimated value as great literature for children, and that these books may or may not catch a child's fancy. (personal communication, July 1, 2015)

Similarly, Chinese scholar Tan (2011) commented on Chinese award-winning picture books from another perspective. "Overemphasizing nationalization will probably lead creations of native picturebooks towards a narrow way" (n.p.). Therefore, one problem that both Canadian and Chinese picture book authors have to face is that excessively relying on myths, legends, folktales, or ancient classic literatures may repress the innovation of picture books. Another problem that the two sets of picture book authors have to figure out is how to balance appeal and literacy value.

Thirdly, I suggest that people need to begin to change their expectations of picture books. Many teachers and parents believe that the picture book as well as other children's literature forms are the tool of education, and the target audience should only include children. Chinese teacher Ma stated that as her child grew older, her personal need of picture books was not as much as before, because picture books were created for young children (personal communication, May 21, 2015). Another Chinese teacher Wang also said, "绘本都是给小孩看的.....既然要写绘本的话,应该都是写给小孩看的,那写给小孩看的,要不就是儿童文学作家,要不就是跟教育相关身份的人写出来的" ("Picture books are typically written for children.....As long as it's a picture book, it should be written for children, thus the author is either a children's literature writer, or people working in the field of education") (personal communication, July 19, 2015).

However, it might be the time for such stereotyped view of picture books to change.

Canadian children's literature specialist, B. A. Brenna indicated that picture books should be considered "as a vehicle to engage all readers, not just young children." She further addressed accessibility in the following way:

I would hope that we get to have more accessibility to reading through the picture book vehicle than we have today. I think picture books still today are pretty pigeon-holed as only reading materials for children, young children. And even teachers are reluctant to bring in picture books, even if they have older characters into Grade 3 or 9, into high school. Simply because they have stereotyped that picture books should only be for little kids. And I see they're also really important for adults, especially adults with limited comprehension, people getting into their senior years, who maybe lose some of their memory capacity. I think picture books could still hook them into reading for fun, and enjoyment, and learning, in a way that other types of literature can't. (personal communication, July 1, 2015)

Coincidentally, as a classroom teacher and a university instructor, H. Baergen also suggested that picture books "are just opening the world of books to children, and not just children, to adults, too. I tried very hard to get my adult students here to be interested in children's books. I hope that they recognize that they are valuable" (personal communication, July 3, 2015).

In summary, the instructional function of picture books is becoming more and more important in classroom teaching, parent-child communication, and other related fields of education. But there is room for traditional views of the picture book form to change. Picture

books do not equal illustrated books or levelled readers; rather, they should be created, evaluated, and used as artistic works. Both Canadian and Chinese picture book awards should consider the balance between readability for children and literacy value. Picture books are not merely written for children, they may be a vehicle to engage all readers.

Summary of Discussion of the Results

This research was focused on an exploration of three key questions: What similarities and differences emerge in a comparison of Chinese and Canadian award-winning picture books? What similarities and differences appear in the responses of four K-12 teachers and four post-secondary instructors in Chinese and Canadian contexts related to children's picture books? How do the responses of these eight participants in terms of the potential patterns and use of picture books compare and contrast to my investigation related to Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books?

Key findings support the idea that *child who encounters difficulties* was frequently represented in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, which reflected that children are often viewed as having ability, subjectively in charge of their own lives in contemporary children's literature. *Child-as-problem solver* and *playing/imaginative child* were more reflected in the Canadian titles, demonstrating potentially valued national characteristics in terms of resiliency as well as a possible trend in recent creations of Canadian picture books. In contrast, the Chinese titles included more *child-as-narrator* and *moral/life model*, through which was reflected the concept of edutainment, and the artistic tendency of *Chinese style* and nostalgia.

In addition, the results indicate that *moral/life lessons* was the most important theme

represented by both the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles, whereas the biggest difference was reflected through the theme of *imagination/fantasy*. The two sets of picture books had a similar amount of representation in terms of *regional/local customs*, *early childhood education content and skills*, *multicultural diversity*, *the child's world of nature*, and *war and its aftermath*. The theme of *regional/local customs* in the selected Canadian and Chinese picture books reflected distinctive national characteristics, but may also limit the innovation of the picture book form and lead to failure in global marketing. Although *multicultural diversity* had a certain representation, it was still less apparent compared to other themes in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. The six books referring to *early childhood education content and skills* demonstrated a trend that combined aesthetic and efferent functions within individual texts.

The Canadian award-winning picture books represented more characteristics of Radical Change than the Chinese titles. However, the Radical Change involved in the two sets of books was superficial and generally stayed on the level of *changing forms and formats*. *Changing perspectives* and *changing boundaries* was reflected infrequently in the selected titles. Moreover, no new categories related to Radical Change appeared in this scrutiny of the study set.

In terms of the similarities appearing in the response of the eight participants, *books as teaching tools* seemed to be the most important purpose of using picture books in both Canadian and Chinese contexts. *Moral/life lessons* occurred as the most important theme represented by both the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles, implying that a moralistic/instructional function of picture books was still emphasized in both Canadian and

Chinese contexts. The Canadian participants had a variety of views in terms of patterns and trends related to child-image and theme, whereas the opinions of the Chinese participants were relatively unified.

Furthermore, we may consider the relationship between my own investigation and the thoughts of the participants to be slightly different. Curiously, there was a considerable amount of particular child-images appearing in the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning titles, yet the participants believed there was a dearth of the particular child-image or theme in current picture books. Such differences showed that there may be a gap between the award-winning picture books and the evaluation or practical use of picture books in the field.

Implications for Future Research

A number of directions for further research have been suggested by this study. My study sample included award-winning picture books selected through the Governor General's Literary Awards, the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award, the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, and the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award from 2004 to 2014, and it would be interesting to explore more Canadian and Chinese picture book awards in order to have a more comprehensive comparison of the two countries' picture books. In addition, in light of the discrepancies between the children's literature specialist views on children's literature in more general terms, and patterns and trends from the study sample, it would be interesting to conceive studies comparing the contents of award winning books to the contents of other books generally available to young readers. The question of whether award winning titles are actually representative of the field of children's literature in

any given time period is one worth pursuing.

Further research is also necessary to inquire into children readers' responses to award-winning picture books. It would be intriguing to investigate children's evaluation of a set of award-winning picture books, and to explore if there is a gap between books that children rate highly and books that adults consider appropriate for children. In addition, what kind of child-image and theme would children like to see further appearing? Children would be valuable informants in this respect, and may offer innovative ideas and new directions in terms of picture book creation.

Adults consciously or unconsciously inherit culture and transmit this culture to children through the creation and sharing of picture books. The different child-images and themes emerging from the set of Canadian and Chinese awards-winning picture books not only provided us various views on children, cultural identities, and related educational implications, but also raised more questions: What kind of child-image and theme do adults want to show in picture books? What kind of child-image and theme would be considered inappropriate for young readers? In what ways are various countries, their education pedagogy, and their images of childhood reflected through picture books? How can Chinese picture books, for example, be used in support of multicultural education? What kinds of reform might they bring to the Canadian context?

Further connections are also waiting to be explored in terms of how digital age principles including interactivity, connectivity, and access (Dresang, 1999) support radical changes in children's picture books. In the digital age, people have more opportunities to present material that we have never had before. For example, various digital means allow

people greater ease of publication or access to self-publishing opportunities. In addition, the concept of animation and digital publishing may increase the potentiality of movement in children's picture books, shifting from a flat textual context to something quite different—not only moving illustrations, but engaging storylines more clearly through interactive text. How the digital world can affect the reading mode and reading habit are certainly topics worth pursuing. What kind of radical changes reflected by contemporary picture books compare with previous picture books? What kind of potentialities might the picture book form have in the future related to new elements of Radical Change yet to evolve? These are the questions that need to be explored by further research.

This study applied case study methodology with relatively few participants. Other studies might include more participants in order to obtain a more comprehensive perspective resulting in a more substantiated discussion of trends and patterns related to the picture book topic. In addition, a future selection of participants could include people with more varied backgrounds and professional experiences beyond the current study's work with university instructors and elementary teachers. I believe including more participants could provide more thought-provoking insights with regards to selection, evaluation, and use of picture books.

Conclusion

In the digital age, the picture book form still has its unique value and function that cannot be replaced by other literary forms. As Manifold (1997) pointed out:

Unlike moving images, images in picture books allow the sustained viewing time necessary for developing critical viewing skills through exploration, critique, and reflection. Although commonly considered part of the literary arts, picture books are

useful tools for teaching many abstract and complex concepts of the social studies at the elementary level. (p. 2)

Picture books have always played a significant role in my life. Personally, I believe that these treasures provide the door to a vast world of aesthetic, pleasure, identity development, and efferent possibilities. As a researcher, I have always believed that children's literature can articulate the "values, tension, myths, and psychology that identify a national character" (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 11), and provide insights into lives of others. As a parent, my endeavor is to nurture my son's literacy development through books in order to give him the key to this fascinating world.

Although there are still aspects to improve, the study set of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books have shown irreplaceable advantages for their readers. B. A. Brenna said of the selected Canadian award-winning picture books:

Something that occurs to me of the books I know from this list is that there is a quite lot of critical thinking involved. They seem quite original, and there is an emphasis of positivity on critical thinking, or critical problem solving. The authors' creativity, and the illustrators' creativity, is clearly part of the package of the book. And I think it's a good model for children. They probably learn about originality... (personal communication, July 1, 2015)

Coincidentally, Zhu also had great expectations for Chinese picture books:

总之我对中国的原创图画书还是怀着很强烈的期待，但是我们还是不能心急，说期待它三年或五年一下子就发展起来了。它需要一个时间。我曾经说过我更寄希望于年轻一代的图画书作家，他们童年有阅读好的图画书的经验，然后在现在这

样一个很讲创意的社会环境中生活、成长、工作，得到的这种滋养，然后如果再加上他们对儿童生命世界认识能力的提升，以及获得洞察的眼光的话，我觉得还是很有希望的。 (personal communication, May 19, 2015)

[In summary, I have a strong expectation for Chinese picture books, but we cannot be impatient, hoping it could develop abruptly in only three or five years. It takes time. I once said I expected more of the younger generation of picture book authors and illustrators, because they have experience of reading good picture books in their childhood. They are living, growing, and working in a social environment that respects creativity and originality. They get such nourishment, and if they are able to improve their ability of knowing the children's world and gaining insights, I think there is a hope.] (personal communication, May 19, 2015)

Research concerning comparative studies of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books is practically non-existent. Therefore, many of my findings are based on my own perspective as a researcher who is interested in both Canadian and Chinese children's literature and as a parent who often reads these picture books to my young child. I hope this qualitative case study provides insights related to evaluating and using picture books as well as promotes cross-cultural awareness in multicultural education. I also believe the brightest and most innovative days of both Canadian and Chinese picture books are ahead of us.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. In what way are children's picture books important to your daily work?
2. What are your ideas or suggestions about using children's picture books in classroom teaching?
3. Has the content of children's picture books changed, in your experience, over time?
Please discuss.
4. What type of characteristics do you often see in the children's picture books to which you are constantly exposed? Are there patterns and trends related to diversity, in picture books, of which you are aware? (e.g., naughty child; moral or behavior model; struggling child)
5. Are there particular characteristics of children that you hope to see represented in fictional picture book characters but which you find to be insufficient in contemporary children's picture books?
6. What theme(s) do you often see in the children's picture books to which you are constantly exposed? (e.g., imagination/fantasy; moral/life lessons; cultural diversity)
7. What themes do you think are necessary to present in children's picture books that are currently insufficient in the body of books to which you have access?
8. (If the participant is familiar with the award-winning titles involved in this study) How do you evaluate these Canadian/Chinese award-winning titles?
9. Is there any further information you would like to provide about your response to connections between picture books and your current work?

APPENDIX B

Sample Analysis Charts Related to Radical Change Characteristics

Title	Author/Illustrator	Date/Award	Radical Change Characteristics *

*Type 1 Changing forms and formats:

1. Graphics in new forms and formats;
2. Words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy;
3. Nonlinear organization and format;
4. Nonsequential organization and format;
5. Multiple layers of meaning;
6. Interactive formats.

Type 2 Changing perspectives:

1. Multiple perspectives, visual and verbal;
2. Previously unheard voices;
3. Youth who speak for themselves.

Type 3 Changing boundaries:

1. Subjects previously forbidden;
2. Settings previously overlooked;
3. Characters portrayed in new, complex ways;
4. New types of communities;
5. Unresolved endings.

APPENDIX C

Bibliography of the Study Set of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture Books from 2004 to 2014

Governor General's Literary Awards Winning Books (2004-2013)

2013

James, M., & Rogers, S. (2013). *Northwest passage*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2012

Maclear, K., & Arsenault, I. (2012). *Virginia Wolf*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2011

Young, C. (2011). *Ten birds*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2010

Klassen, J., & Stutson, C. (2010). *Cat's night out*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books
for Young Readers.

2009

Marton, J., & Russell, J. (2009). *Bella's tree*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2008

Jorisch, S., & Lear, E. (2008). *The owl and the pussycat*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2007

Weller, D. (2006). *The boy from the sun*. Vancouver, BC: Simply Read Books.

2006

Yerxa, L. (2006). *Ancient thunder*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2005

Thomson, S. L., & Gonsalves, R. (2005). *Imagine a day*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

2004

Jorisch, S., & Carroll, L. (2004). *Jabberwocky*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award Winning Books (2006-2014)

2014

Morstad, J. (2013). *How to*. Vancouver, BC: Simply Read Books.

2013

Fagan, C., & Petričić, D. (2012). *Mr. Zinger's hat*. Toronto, ON: Tundra Books.

2012

Côté, G. (2011). *Without you*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2011

Croza, L., & James, M. (2010). *I know here*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2010

Sydor, C., & Debon, N. (2009). *Timmerman was here*. Toronto, ON: Tundra Books.

2009

Hutchins, H., Herbert, G., & Petričić, D. (2008). *Mattland*. Toronto, ON: Annick Press.

2008

Wishinsky, F., & Gay, M. (2007). *Please, Louise!* Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2007

O'Leary, S., & Morstad, J. (2006). *When you were small*. Vancouver, BC: Simply Read

Books.

2006

Gay, M. (2005). *Caramba*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

The Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award Winning Books

(2005-2013)

2013

Morstad, J. (2013). *How to*. Vancouver, BC: Simply Read Books.

2012

Maclear, K., & Arsenault, I. (2012). *Virginia Wolf*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2011

Young, C. (2011). *A few blocks*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.

2010

Flett, J. (2010). *Owls see clearly at night: A michif alphabet*. Vancouver, BC: Simply Read Books.

2007

Jorisch, S., & Lear, E. (2008). *The owl and the pussycat*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

2006

Clark, J., & Denton, K. M. (2006). *Snow*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.

2005

Côté G., & Tennyson, A. L. (2005). *The lady of Shalott*. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.

丰子恺儿童图画书奖历年获奖作品名单

2009 年第一届书奖得奖作品

《团圆》（最佳儿童图画书首奖） 作者：余丽琼 绘者：朱成梁

明天出版社（南京信谊儿童文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2008-01

《躲猫猫大王》（评审推荐文字创作奖） 作者：张晓玲 绘者：潘坚

明天出版社（南京信谊儿童文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2009-07

《一园青菜成了精》（评审推荐图画创作奖） 作者：编自北方童谣 绘者：周翔

明天出版社（南京信谊儿童文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2008-07

《我和我的脚踏车》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：叶安德

和英出版社 出版日期：2006-10

《安的种子》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作者：王早早 绘者：黄丽

海燕出版社有限公司 出版日期：2010-01

《我变成一只喷火龙了!》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：赖马

和英出版社 出版日期：2004-11

《星期三下午，捉•蝌•蚪》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：安石榴

信谊基金出版社 出版日期：2004-04

《荷花镇的早市》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：周翔

二十一世纪出版社（北京蒲蒲兰文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2010-01

《现在，你知道我是谁了吗？》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：赖马

和英出版社 出版日期：2006-05

《想要不一样》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：童嘉

远流出版公司 出版日期：2004-10

《池上池下》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作、绘者：邱承宗

天下杂志童书出版 出版日期：2008-09

《西西》（优秀儿童图画书奖） 作者：萧袤 绘者：李春苗、张彦红

海燕出版社有限公司 出版日期：2010-01

2011 年第二届书奖得奖作品

《进城》（评审推荐创作奖） 作者：林秀穗 绘者：廖健宏

信谊基金出版社 出版日期：2010-12

《门》（评审推荐创作奖） 作、绘者：陶菊香

明天出版社（南京信谊儿童文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2010-12

《下雨了》（评审推荐创作奖） 作、绘者：汤姆牛

天下远见出版股份有限公司 出版日期：2010-11

《迷戏》（评审推荐创作奖） 作、绘者：姚红

译林出版社（北京蒲蒲兰文化发展有限公司策划） 出版日期：2010-12

《青蛙与男孩》（评审推荐创作奖） 作者：萧袤 绘者：陈伟、黄小敏

海燕出版社有限公司 出版日期：2012-06

2013 年第三届书奖得奖作品

《我看见一只鸟》（丰子恺儿童图画书奖首奖） 作、绘者：刘伯乐

青林国际出版股份有限公司 出版日期：2011-05

《很慢很慢的蜗牛》（丰子恺儿童图画书奖佳作奖） 作、绘者：陈致元

和英文化事业有限公司 出版日期：2011-11

《阿里爱动物》（丰子恺儿童图画书奖佳作奖） 作者：黄丽凰 绘者：黄志民

小熊出版 出版日期：2011-03

《看不见》（丰子恺儿童图画书奖佳作奖） 作、绘者：蔡兆伦

小兵出版社有限公司 出版日期：2012-02

《最可怕的一天》（丰子恺儿童图画书奖佳作奖） 作、绘者：汤姆牛

小天下/天下远见出版股份有限公司 出版日期：2012-11

Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award

2009 Winning Books

Yu Liqiong, & Zhu Chengliang. (2008). *A New Year's reunion*. Jinan, Shandong: Tomorrow Publishing House.

Zhang Xiaoling, & Pan Jian. (2008). *The king of hide and seek*. Jinan, Shandong: Tomorrow Publishing House.

Zhou Xiang. (2008). *The day vegetables became goblins*. Jinan, Shandong: Tomorrow Publishing House.

Ye Ande. (2006). *Me and my bike*. Taiwan: Heryin Publishing Corp.

Wang Zaozao, & Huang Li. (2008). *An's seeds*. Zhengzhou, Henan: Haiyan Publishing.

Laima. (2004). *I've become a fire breathing dragon!* Taiwan: Heryin Publishing Corp.

An Shih-liu. (2004). *A Wednesday afternoon, chasing tadpoles*. Taiwan: Hsin Yi Publications.

Zhou Xiang. (2006). *The morning market at Lotus town*. Nanchang, Jiangxi: 21st Century Publishing House.

Laima. (2006). *Now do you know who I am?* Taiwan: Heryin Publishing Corp.

Tong Jia. (2004). *I want to be different*. Taiwan: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd.

Chiu Chen-tsung. (2008). *On the pond, under the pond*. Taiwan: Common Wealth Magazine Co. Ltd.

Xiao Mao, Li Chun Miao, & Zhang Yan-hong. (2008). *Xi Xi*. Zhengzhou, Henan: Haiyan Publishing.

2011 Winning Books

Cookie Lin, & Chien-Hung Liao. (2010). *Going to the marketplace*. Taiwan: Hsin Yi Publications.

Tao Juxiang. (2010). *Door*. Jinan, Shandong: Tomorrow Publishing House.

Tom Liu (Chen-Kuo Liu). (2011). *It's raining!* Taiwan: Global Kids Books.

Yao Hong. (2012). *Infatuated with Peking opera*. Nanjing, Jiangsu: Yilin Press.

Xiao Mao, Chen Wei, & Huang Xiaomin. (2010). *The frog and the boy*. Zhengzhou, Henan: Haiyan Publishing.

2013 Winning Books

Liu Bor-Leh. (2011). *I see a bird*. Taiwan: Children's Publication Co., Ltd.

Chih-Yuan Chen. (2011). *The very slow snail*. Taiwan: Heryin Publishing Corp.

Li-Huang Huang, & Chih-Ming Huang. (2011). *Ali loves animals*. Taiwan: Walkers Cultural Co., Ltd./Little Bear Books.

Chao-Lun Tsai. (2012). *I can't see*. Taiwan: Little Soldier Publishing Company Ltd.

Tom Liu (Chen-Kuo Liu). (2012). *The scariest day of my life*. Taiwan: Global Kids Books.

APPENDIX D

Participant Recruitment Script

Hello _____,

I'm writing this letter to invite you to participate in a research study related to children's picture books. I am currently working on my masters in curriculum studies at the University of Saskatchewan. I am doing a study of Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books. Specifically, I am interested in inquiring into the perspectives of teachers at the K-12 and post-secondary level related to children's picture books. I was wondering if you would be available to take part in this study. What I am asking is for you to allow me to interview you about your experiences and stories related to reading, evaluating, and using picture books in your daily work. The interview would take between 60 to 90 minutes. We can also conduct the interview through email if that is more convenient to you. I would be writing about these experiences as a requirement for my masters but also in hopes that I will have an article published and information to support research presentations. I am interviewing several people related to children's literature and education. I won't be basing my findings on your interview alone. I will be using pseudonyms to protect identities and all material will be confidential.

If you are interested I would love to schedule a time to meet and discuss any questions you may have before you make a decision. However, please know that I understand how incredibly busy people are and I don't want to impact your time in a negative way. I appreciate if you are unable to take part for any reason and do not want you to feel pressured to do so.

If you would like to meet and discuss your participation please let me know by contacting me at 306-881-5732 or email me by jinjing257@gmail.com. I look forward to your response to my query.

Sincerely,

Jing Jin



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Telephone: (306) 966-7601

(306) 966-7658

Participant Consent Form

**The Responses of Canadian and Chinese Teachers and University Instructors to Picture Books:
A Case Study Rooted in a Content Analysis of Canadian and Chinese Award-Winning Picture
Books (2004-2014)**

Researcher: Jing Jin, Graduate Student, Department of Education Curriculum, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, 306-881-5732, jjj030@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Beverley Brenna, Associate Dean, College of Education, 306-966-7563, bev.brenna@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objectives of the Research:

- The purpose of this study is two-fold:
- First, I intend to explore the child-image and the theme in the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books, along with other emerging categories of comparison.
- Second, this study will employ social constructivism and Radical Change theory as theoretical frameworks within which to explore various experiences and stories from eight participants from different cultural contexts in order to further extend understandings about picture books, and to address gaps in the literature, particularly as previous research relates to the subject of picture book evaluation and use.

Procedures:

- Content analysis will be employed to examine the child-image and the theme that appear in the selected Canadian and Chinese award-winning picture books and classify these images and themes according to categories that emerge from the data.
- Interviews will be conducted in person and audio-recorded or conducted through email due to distance challenges.
- All interviews will be transcribed using pseudonyms.
- Interviews will last between 60 to 90 minutes each.

Potential Risks:

- There are no foreseeable risks, side effects or discomforts to the participants.
- Participants are encouraged to only answer questions that they are comfortable answering.

Confidentiality:

- Participants will be assured of confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms.
- Audio-recordings and transcriptions will be for the use of this study only.
- The audio-recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be kept with the data in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Beverley Brenna College of Education as well as in password protected computer files.
- After the required period of five years, then the data will be appropriately destroyed.
- The data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations from the interview will be reported, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (school name and school division, and/or your university) will be removed from the report.
- After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.
- The data may be presented in articles and at conferences. Direct quotations may be reported in both articles and presentations. Pseudonyms will be used, however, due to the small group and distinctive features of the events, personally identifying information may potentially be included in the report.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions with which you are comfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without explanation up to the point at which you have approved the transcripts.
- When a participant withdraws, his/her data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed, if desired.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study please contact the researcher at jjj030@mail.usask.ca and a written copy will be provided to you.

Questions or Concerns:

- Please contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975. Participants located out of North America can call (306) 966-2975 collect.

Consent:

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put your initials on the corresponding line(s) that grant me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio taped:

Yes: ____ No: ____

I wish to remain anonymous:

Yes: ____ No: ____

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:

Yes: ____ No: ____

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Yes: ____ No: ____

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Date _____

Date _____

jjj030@mail.usask.ca

306-966-7563

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APPENDIX F

Sample Transcript of Interview with Participants

Sunday, July 5, 2015 (Skype voice interview ongoing between Jing and Joyce)

Jing: What about children from different cultures? Do you often see such cultural diversity in Canadian picture books?

Joyce: You do see a range of backgrounds, people from different cultures, but I think the one part that's missing currently, are books about Muslim children that are written by Muslims. So Canadian Muslim people, to tell their stories, and to present their worldview, that I think has been lacking. I don't know if there has been anything published just in the last few years, but I think it's been hard to find that kind of material.

Jing: Yeah, that's indeed hard to find.

Joyce: I mean there are some books by Gilmore who came from India, and she has been in Canada for a very long time, maybe most of the Muslim population has not been here yet long enough to be writing about their experiences and their lives here, in picture books for children. So maybe that's something we will see happening in the future.

Jing: Are there particular characteristics of children that you hope to see represented in fictional picture books but which you find to be insufficiently represented in contemporary children's picture books?

Joyce: That's a hard question to answer. I think we should portray more children with disabilities, I think we should portray children from a range of ethnic backgrounds as well. And I think we are doing over time, we have seen, but I think they are in minority. I think when Canadians think of what it means to be Canadian, they still think of white European people rather than the great number of people who live here, who came from many, many other countries around the world, who have been here for a long time. I think we still have to overcome that, those stereotypes of Canadian as being white, English-speaking. So I would hope that we would see more children in leading roles in books who are from different backgrounds, Muslim children, children with disabilities, such as hearing disabilities, or whatever. I would like to see more of that in the books.