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Investigating the academic motivations and social experiences of students from the People's Republic of China pursuing graduate degrees in the United States of America : a participatory study

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INVESTIGATING THE ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONS AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCES
OF STUDENTS FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA PURSUING
GRADUATE DEGREES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A
PARTICIPATORY STUDY

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Brad Demetrius Washington
San Francisco
May 2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Investigating the Academic Motivation and Social Experiences of Students from the
People's Republic of China Pursuing Graduate Degrees in the United States of America:
A Participatory Study

There is limited research addressing how graduate students from the People's

Republic of China (PRC) are supported academically or socially while studying in the

United States of America (U.S.). The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the

literature by utilizing a participatory action research model in order to collaborate with

Chinese students pursuing graduate degrees at a university in the San Francisco Bay

Area. The study involved five collaborative discussions over the course of the 2009-2010

academic year addressing the participants' interests in U.S. higher education as well as

their social experiences within and beyond the university setting. The participatory

action research model provided the opportunity for the researcher and participants to

work as colleagues to jointly discuss, analyze, and record how students from the PRC

enrolling in American colleges and universities can be supported more effectively by

their host institution.

The significance of the study was based on the need to seek how to better serve

one of the fastest growing populations of U.S. colleges and universities. There is the

expectation that the dissertation will demonstrate how participatory action research aids

in identifying the significance of participant narratives in scientific inquiry to promote

educational change. The goal of the study was to strengthen the preparation of students

from the PRC planning to pursue graduate studies in the United States, as well as raising

the awareness of university administrators about the specific challenges this population

experiences. The research concluded with a plan of action where participants along with the researcher decided upon a format to present the study's findings to the university community.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Brad D. Washington   May 6, 2010
Candidate   Date

Dissertation Committee

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

With the largest number of college students in the world, the People's Republic of China (PRC) searches to accommodate a population that currently surpasses the capacity of the nation's universities ("China tops world," 2003). According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, there were approximately 120,000 college students from the People's Republic of China studying abroad in 2003 ("Work related to students," 2008). Of the 2003 total, approximately one half chose universities in the United States of America (Kujawa, 2005). From 2007 to 2008, interviews conducted with seven graduate students from the PRC currently studying in the United States of America explored their interests in pursuing American higher education (Washington, 2008). When the Chinese students were asked why they decided to study abroad, their responses were clear: they decided to come to America for the opportunity. During the study, the students discussed amongst themselves what they meant by opportunity. Their reasons for studying abroad included an array of decisions based on education, finance, community, and faith.

The United States Department of Education states that the number of Chinese students studying abroad will continue to increase. According to a press release by the Institute of International Education, the total number of Chinese citizens studying abroad in the United States in 2008 was an estimated 80,000 students, an increase of 20% from 2007 (Gardner and Witherell, 2008). In 2004, foreign students contributed $12 billion in the form of college tuition to the United States' economy (Altbach, 2004). By 2007, the 2004 number had increased by an average of $1 billion in each subsequent year (Lewin, 2007). Although the number of Chinese students studying at U.S. universities has

continued to rise, the availability of financial aid for international students in general has remained limited. In addition to having little prospect for financial aid, Chinese students face the challenges of adapting to a different language and culture when studying in the United States. Nonetheless, a large and sustained increase in Chinese citizens studying in the United States reflects a great interest in U.S. education.

Statement of the Problem

Few studies demonstrate how graduate students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) are supported academically or socially while studying in the United States. In a 2007 study, Lee and Rice interviewed a Chinese student to inform their study regarding discrimination in U.S. university communities, and how verbal taunts are as frightening as physical threats. By contrast, Perrucci and Hu (1995) find that some Chinese students have support from American students when facing discrimination, and as a result feel reaffirmed in their decision to study in the United States. Within the literature, Chinese students also comment on how they have preconceived notions of race in the United States, and assume that isolation from certain cultures could protect them from harm. In regards to Chinese students' social integration, existing research observes the coping strategies of international Asian students who are isolated from U.S. culture for reasons of ethnicity, language, or nationality (Wei, Ku, Russell, Mallinckrodt & Liao, 2008). Existing literature lacks a comprehensive review of the social integration experiences of PRC graduate students, or programs by U.S. institutional leaders to support Chinese students studying on American campuses.

Huang (1997) discusses how Chinese students' academic preparation before attending a U.S. college or university impacts their personal goals and their relationships

with fellow classmates. Chinese students also face the adjustment of studying almost exclusively in the English language, which is understood as a potential source of stress in academic performance (Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). Yet, the English language preparation Chinese students go through to prepare for U.S. higher education also demonstrates the willingness of international students to invest in the opportunity to pursue a degree abroad. Data is also lacking regarding how Chinese students express their personal learning outcomes following their preparation to study in the United States.

Despite earning undergraduate degrees in the PRC, satisfactory performance on standardized tests, and extensive language preparation in English, many Chinese students are encouraged to enroll in basic education courses upon entrance into a U.S. college. English language preparation represents only one aspect of how Chinese citizens prepare for study in U.S. universities and further research is necessary to identify how to strengthen those preparations. As the number of Chinese students studying in U.S. universities continues to increase, it is imperative that American administrators strengthen their awareness of the specific academic needs of this student population.

Although some studies have addressed how U.S. universities could gain a greater understanding about the culture of its Chinese student body (Lin & Yi, 1997; Mortensen, 2006; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001), research that addresses the social experiences of Chinese citizens studying abroad in the United States is limited. Mortensen (2006) addresses how Chinese students facing academic difficulty can be supported through coping strategies in institutions of higher education in China. Yet, studies that demonstrate how Chinese graduate students reflect upon their identity or community in the United States are lacking.

Gaining a stronger understanding of how graduate students from the PRC can be supported while pursuing a degree in the United States is significant for several reasons. First, students (graduate and undergraduate) from the PRC represent the largest number of students studying abroad in the world (Gardner & Witherell, 2008). Currently, China ranks second only to India in number of students coming to study in the United States; universities in the state of California host the most Chinese students in the country. If institutions of higher education in the United States are to continue to be defined as leaders in international education to attract international students, it is important that PRC students are recruited and supported in U.S. universities.

Second, because higher education plays a role in diplomacy ("International Education", 2008), supporting student exchange between the United States and China is important in the realm of politics. In terms of economic and military capacity, the U.S. and PRC represent two of the largest nations in the world (Kaplan, 2005; McKibbin & Tang, 2000; "The List," 2007). As some foreign policy analysts project how the diplomatic relationship between American and Chinese governments could lapse and lead to armed conflict, grasping how higher education can foster understanding and an exchange of ideas between the two countries is imperative. Chinese students pursuing university studies in the United States represent a frontline in diplomacy between the PRC and U.S.

Finally, the basic premise that an institution of higher education strive to see its student populations succeed because its graduates are a reflection of a university's quality supports the need for the proposed study. American university administrators are committed to fostering the intellectual development and supporting the professional

aspirations of all students, both domestic and international. Graduate students from the PRC who study in the U.S. are a growing part of many American universities and surrounding communities. Learning more about what this population needs to succeed promotes the healthy development of Chinese graduate students in particular, but also strengthens the reputations of U.S. universities in general.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore Chinese graduate students' academic motivations and social experiences while pursuing U.S. college degrees. The participatory methodology utilized in the study supported my goal to have the participants act as co-researchers, as well as play a role equal to mine in guiding the direction of the study. An additional goal of the research was to discover through participant narratives and analyses why the sharing of information and culture may reveal more about the value of the study abroad experience. This goal could aid in Chinese graduate students making more informed decisions regarding where they may study abroad. The study could also prompt American university leaders to be more conscious of the academic and social questions Chinese students may have when entering their campuses.

Research Questions

The research questions were the following:

1.   What is the academic motivation for Chinese graduate students to study at universities in the United States?

2.   How do Chinese graduate students prepare to apply to universities in the United States?

3.   How do Chinese graduate students reflect upon their social experiences while studying in the United States? How do their social experiences impact their lives in and beyond the classroom?

4.   How can universities in the United States strengthen their support for Chinese graduate students?

Theoretical Rationale

This participatory study utilized the theoretical rationales of constructivism, motivation, and social identity. Each theory selected for the study was chosen to help frame the conversations with the participants that occur throughout the research. In addition, the theoretical rationale acted as a type of detection device when personal analysis superseded the perspective of the participants. My own opinions on data that emerged throughout the study neither masked nor replaced the realities of that information as seen by the participants. Though none of the theories selected are in perfect alignment with the body of research, the goals and qualities each rationale entailed help to guide the reader as each research question is addressed.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory has either been lauded or criticized for its stance that people construct knowledge from their experiences (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008). Within the context of education, constructivist learning theory asserts that the traditional role of the teacher encounters a paradigm shift to a facilitator. The implication is that students inform their own education through dialogue, and that they must develop critical thinking skills without the constant support of the teacher (Yilmaz, 2008). This research utilizes constructivist learning theory by participants creating a space to inform

the study. Moreover, the researcher approached constructivist learning by engaging

in dialogue with the participants to address the research questions versus conducting an

interview.

In terms of methodology, the research was conducted by acknowledging each

participant as a fellow researcher (participatory model) versus asking questions and

extrapolating answers in a focus group (case study). It is to be acknowledged that

constructivism is dependent on the ability to engage with ones surroundings. For the

purpose of investigating the academic motivation and social experiences of Chinese

students in U.S. higher education, it was problematic that the theory could not be applied

to prospective students from the PRC hoping to study in the U.S.   Nonetheless, the

resulting research from current Chinese students studying abroad was important in

informing future prospective applicants about the potential opportunities and challenges

they may encounter.

Motivation Theories: Hierarchy of Needs and Fundamental Needs

In addition to constructivist learning, the theoretical framework also benefited

from motivation theory. Specifically, the theory of motivation was assessed from the

perspectives of Maslow (1943) and Max-Neef (1991; 1995). Within the field of

psychology, Maslow proposed a human motivation theory by which individuals fulfilled

physiological, safety, and self-esteem needs in a linear progression. Maslow's hierarchy

of needs model (Hagerty, 1999) sees motivation as occurring throughout an individual's

life. However, Maslow's concept of human motivation is tied strongly to the fulfillment

of each stage of need versus a maturation of the hierarchy according to age or time.

Many psychologists, beginning with Maslow, understood the limits of his theory, and

encouraged development and debate regarding its legitimacy. Max-Neef (1991)

argued that human needs cannot be arranged in a hierarchical manner, but rather are

addressed according to relevance at any given time. In short, Max-Neef considers

Maslow's first level of physiology (e. g. food and water) as inherently tied to his fourth

level of esteem (e. g. confidence and achievement), but with no assertion as to which

takes precedence over the other. This is based on Max-Neef's theory of fundamental

needs, where while the needs of all human beings may remain the same, the strategies to

acquire those needs change with time (Ekins & Max-Neef, 1992).

There is evidence that Maslow's theory of motivation can be applied to the

academic motivation of Chinese students pursuing graduate degrees in the United States.

The coinciding growth of China's middle class reflects a growth in mainland Chinese

students pursuing higher education abroad ("Chinese students pursuing," 2008; Simons,

2007). The prior statement is based on the assumption that basic needs (food and

shelter), employment, and family security have been met. Thus the goal of higher

education in the hierarchy scale can now be pursued.

Yet, in addition to critically evaluating to what extent Maslow's hierarchy of

needs theory applies to educational research, there is also the consideration that some

Chinese families invest and devote most if not all of their resources in giving their

children an opportunity to study abroad (Clegg, 2009). Potentially sacrificing the

security of basic needs for the achievement of a university degree and the prospect of

greater opportunities in life may be closer aligned with Max-Neef than Maslow. In the

context of this literature review, additional research offers alternatives to both Maslow's

and Max-Neef's motivational theories. Yet, because many of these motivational theories

(including academic specific motivational theories) are based on the work of Maslow and Max-Neef, their work was used as anchors for the perspective of academic motivation as the research developed.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was used as a part of the theoretical rationale of the study. Tajfel's (1982) definition of social identity is based on group relations and social self-awareness:

> It will be seen that in many cases the effects of group membership on intergroup behavior can hardly be considered without simultaneously taking into account the nature of the relations between the individuals' membership group and other groups which are interdependent with it. (p. 3)

The study sought to examine Tajfel's theory regarding the unison of a social group with its shared perception of *outsiders*. The goal of providing balanced consideration to both aspects of social identity theory was important for several reasons. First, there was the building of a supportive community by the participants, and how that community has evolved since their arrival on a university campus in the United States. As the researcher, I acknowledge that contention and controversy from within or outside of a social group was a natural occurrence and documented such instances as it occurred in the study. However, the study did not shift away from mainly exploring how Chinese students in U.S. universities define themselves versus how people outside of their community chose to define them.

Limitations of Study

The study covered the academic motivation and social experiences of seven students from the PRC currently pursuing higher education in the United States. Research took place over the course of one academic year (2009-2010). As a result, data from the study can only be seen as a moment in time over the course of the participants' collegiate career. The participants' experiences stemmed from one university in the U.S., and they all originated from large metropolitan areas along the east coast of the PRC. Participatory research methodology focuses on increasing the understanding of how researcher and participants alike engage in society. Therefore, the focus of the research was not to generalize its findings to a larger population, but was rather to show how the participants' experiences could be presented as steps towards gaining a greater understanding of the themes that were revealed.

As researcher, I also accounted as a limitation of the study. I am an African-American researcher taking part in the study of participants from the People's Republic of China. I considered my ethnicity and culture as confounding variables or potential unforeseen challenges in the research. Confounding variables are most often associated with quantitative studies (Creswell, 2005). However, how subtle differences in interactions between myself and participants may have influenced the results must also be considered. In addition to previous research I have conducted to prepare for the study, I relied upon my dissertation committee and associates in the field of international education to account for further limitations to the greatest extent possible.

Finally, language was a limitation in the study. All international students must demonstrate a certain level of fluency in the English language before studying in the

United States. However, it should be acknowledged that English was not the native

language of any of the participants in the study. Conversely, I have an elementary level

understanding of Mandarin Chinese, the national language of the PRC but only one of

hundreds of languages commonly spoken in the country. To account for information

being misinterpreted, participants were provided opportunities throughout the research to

reflect upon and review recorded conversations, as well as written information I deduced

from meetings. Participation by students in interpreting the research serves as the

foundation of participatory research and was critical in regards to this limitation.

<center>Significance of the Study</center>

The significance of understanding the academic motivations and social

experiences of Chinese students studying in the United States was based on the need to

seek how to better serve one of the fastest growing populations on U.S. college and

university campuses. It is not my intention to suggest the study can explain why Chinese

graduate students study abroad. However, it is my goal to make explicit several themes

relevant to Chinese graduate students studying abroad in the United States.

First, the academic motivations of Chinese students studying in the United States

are based on a combination of preparation and expectation. A general understanding of

the United States as well as the application of the English language begins at the

elementary school level in the People's Republic of China. At the same time, the

expectation that acquiring a university degree from the United States can strengthen

employment prospects in the PRC and abroad plays a role in Chinese student interest in

U.S. higher education. Learning more about the academic motivations of Chinese

students can help U.S. institutions review how their populations of PRC students are being served.

Next, the study sought to gain a perspective of how Chinese students reflect upon their social experiences in the United States. Learning more about the communities Chinese students build in the classroom and beyond campus can aid U.S. university administrators in seeking how to make the experience of international graduate students more enjoyable. Finally, the chosen methodology of the research (participatory) provided the participants the space to share their voices and experiences. Ultimately, the study adds to existing literature regarding Chinese students pursuing degrees in the United States.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

The definition of terms section was developed to keep the focus on the lives of the participants in the study. In addition, I wanted to ensure that the research did not attempt to undertake multiple themes beyond the scope of the hypotheses. It is my intent that the definition of each term described provide clarification for terms that have been used in the realm of politics seamlessly to refer to several things at once.

Chinese: For the purposes of the study, the term *Chinese* refers to students from the People's Republic of China, and the term *China* refers only to the PRC or mainland China. It is important to make these distinctions for several reasons. First, it is with respect to the world's population that associate themselves with being Chinese that I make the distinction of using the term to refer to students who are citizens of and raised in the PRC. Many nations, including the United States, have a population of citizens that are of Chinese descent.

Second, *Chinese* as a description referring to people in the Asia Pacific could be considered a political identification. For example, depending on an individual's political beliefs and nation of birth, Taiwan could be defined as an independent nation, a part of the *One-China Policy*, or referred to as Chinese-Taipei, a hybrid title that attempts to identify Taiwan as independent and simultaneously a part of the People's Republic of China. As a result, people who have lived their entire lives in Taiwan may be identified as being pro-independence or pro-China by referring to themselves as either Taiwanese or Chinese.

American: The use of the term *American* in the following study is associated with the United States of America, or citizens of the United States of America. It is imperative to make this clarification to assure the reader that the statements and opinions made by the participants are only concerning their experience living in the United States. At the same time, who I defined as *American* may prove to be different from how the participants defined who is *American* by multiple factors including a U. S. citizen's ethnicity, how long one has lived in the United States, and an individual's perceived mastery of the English language. I have been reminded by friends and scholars (Phinney, 1996) that *America* is a description that can be applied to multiple nations, several regions, two continents, and an entire hemisphere depending on the context. I hope this explanation resolves any confusion with the use of the term in the research.

Co-researchers: Following Chapter I, the participants in the study will primarily be referred to as *co-researchers*. Identifying the Chinese graduate students as co-researchers most accurately reflects their intimate roles with providing and analyzing data. The participatory methodology of the study reinforces the need for the participants

to become co-researchers to strengthen triangulation in terms of validity and reliability.

Academic Motivation: With regards to the term *academic motivation*, the proposed meaning is defined specifically for the purpose of the study. Academic motivation refers to any interests expressed by participants that led to their studying in the United States of America. Some examples include school reputation, academic rigor, family suggestions, university recruitment, and geographic location.

Social Experience: In regards to the term *social experience*, it is defined in the study as communication, social networks, or social spaces that participants either observe or are a part of as a student in a U.S. university. Examples of social experiences include membership in a religious community, daily experiences in the university community, or conversations in the classroom.

Bay Area University: The university where participants in the study pursued their degrees will be referred to as Bay Area University. This is a fictitious name to protect the anonymity of the participants and the university in the study. References to Bay Area University begin in Chapter IV, the findings section of the research.

Respecting the Rights of Participants

Following approval by the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), the participants were given a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and how the information would be used. I also gave an introduction to the study to give each participant a chance to ask additional questions. It was also stated clearly that participation is voluntary, and a waiver to be signed by the student agreeing to participate in the study was distributed. Once data

collection was completed, the results of the research were shared with the students. I

presented an overview of the study to the Chinese participants currently studying at a

U.S. university in the San Francisco Bay Area.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Increasingly, students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) find it challenging to understand their position in the globalization of higher education. The growth of the middle class in the PRC has led to greater wealth within a segment of the nation's population. Evidence suggests that the increase in Chinese citizens studying abroad could be directly related to greater economic prosperity at home (Davey, 2005). As English remains the language of choice for global trade and international diplomacy, students from China understand the value of investing in an education in which the language of instruction is English. It is equally important to consider that several nations where the dominant language is English (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States of America) are among the most prosperous in the world, and account for some of the highest populations of Chinese students studying abroad (Tao, Berci, & He, 2008). As of 2009, The United States of America continued to represent the world's largest economy (Tingting & Jing, 2009) and was among the most successful nations in attracting Chinese students wishing to study abroad.

There remains a lack of space in Chinese universities to accommodate all students who qualify for placement in higher education. As the PRC government has attempted to build universities to meet this demand, the quality of the new universities has been called into question (Farrell & Grant, 2005).   In part to combat criticism and to promote the dedication China has to preparing its future leaders, China's universities have recruited professors internationally to foster some diversity in educational instruction including programs conducted in the English language (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). U.S. universities

have also played a role in serving prospective Chinese university students.

Extensions of highly regarded universities in the United States have been built in the PRC

to assist Chinese students who for various reasons may not be able to gain visas to study

abroad but are determined to obtain a U.S. university degree. Chinese students have

helped to expand the name of U.S. colleges and universities into the world's third largest

economy, while often paying the full cost of tuition with little prospect of financial aid.

The significance of U.S. universities recruiting PRC students goes beyond education, as

international students paying full tuition have been cited as instrumental in helping

American colleges avert economic crisis (Lewin, 2008a).

PRC students and U.S. university administrators benefit in different ways from

degree programs offered to international students. Why Chinese students choose to study

in the United States is a question that attracts opinions from administrators, students,

politicians, and citizens from both nations. Issues of race, nationalism, and xenophobia

have been heightened as one Chinese student's opportunity to study at a U.S. college can

be construed as potentially taking a dream away from an American student (Andrade,

2006).   There remains the question of whether it is appropriate or necessary that students

from the PRC be asked to become aware of the speculations or fears of some in the

United States. Still, there may be questions and uncertainties Chinese students have about

the academic and social culture of the U.S. that, if addressed, could build upon the

established relationship between U.S. universities and students from the PRC (Andrade,

2006).

Like many students who do not learn English as their first language, Chinese

citizens planning to study in the United States spend years preparing for academic

programs in English before matriculation (Bolton, 2003; Scovel, 1983). Yet, there exists a contradiction regarding the performance of Chinese students in the classroom as either exceeding the expectations of their professors with regards to coursework or failing to contribute adequately in group assignments (Hseih, 2007). Upon graduation from a U.S. institution of higher education, many Chinese students also weigh the opportunities with the challenges of pursuing employment in the United States (Chen, 2006). How Chinese citizens reflect upon their life outside of the classroom as students and as employees outside of the office play a critical role in determining whether the next stage of their careers will begin in the PRC or the U.S.

In investigating why graduate students from the People's Republic of China pursue university degrees in the United States of America, I addressed the following themes: higher education in the PRC, English language acquisition, classroom performance, student immigration, and social integration. These served as the foundation for my research. The actual and perceived quality of Chinese universities buoy interests in study abroad (Zhao, 1996). Obtaining an undergraduate degree from a Chinese university is becoming more a stage of education versus a completion of a student's academic career. The opportunity to study in the U.S. represents a chance to learn a new culture, expand social groups, and strengthen employment prospects (Pak, 2008).

Higher Education and Student Participation in the History of China

Higher education in the PRC is defined by the leaders of the nation. The Chinese university's purpose, structure, and location are determined by the government. However, throughout the history of Chinese higher education, students have initiated challenges to the role of government in education through both words and action.

Resulting reforms to higher education from student movements over the last several centuries detail the university's role in the formation of Chinese international policies, the foundation of political revolutions, and the sustainability of government initiatives. The purpose of this section is not to attempt to recount the entire history of Chinese higher education. Instead, the following historical synopsis of higher education in China presents an overview of the major events and people that impacted the development of Chinese higher education since the 19th century. For the purpose of this study, the section will give special consideration to when and why Chinese students have pursued university degrees abroad, and how those students impacted the Chinese educational and governmental systems.

Education in 19th and Early 20th Century China

The 19th century marked the first documented encounters between students from China and universities in the United States. Prior to this, institutions of higher education in China produced scholars who were solely dedicated to the nation and acquired positions in the Chinese government. Confucian teachings that regarded the monarchy of China's dynasties as the undisputable and divine leader of society determined the aspirations of Chinese citizenry. Performance on the civil service examination, a test dating back to the sixth century and based on rote memorization and acceptance of Confucian principles, determined who could enter into service on behalf of the monarchy (Miyazaki, 1981). The examination also represented an opportunity to enjoy a life without the potentially lethal reality of poverty many Chinese endured. It has also been debated that the civil service examination only enforced established social strata and political leadership. As Elman (1991) states, "[c]lassical examinations were an effective

intellectual, social, and political construction that met the needs of the state bureaucracy while simultaneously supporting late imperial class structure" (p. 8).

Beginning with policies resulting from the Opium War (1839 – 1842) that forced China to trade with Britain (Buoye, Denton, Dickson, Naughton, & White, 2002), however, many leaders in the country began to see higher education as a venue to learn from the military technology Western nations possessed (Fairbank, 1979). At the same time, Jesuit missionaries played a role in translating Western texts and teaching Chinese scholars about Western philosophy and religion. Debates within China ensued about the importance of Western education and its place within Chinese culture and society.

In the 1800s, Chinese students studying abroad in the United States of America were not originally promoted for the purpose of cultural exchanges or buoying prospects of employment. Fairbank (1979)—an American scholar widely credited for introducing China to the U.S. and producing American scholars that studied China—explains that the idea of Chinese students studying Western concepts through missionaries at home or abroad was done for the purpose of national preservation. Yet, the integration or sharing of the ideas taught by U.S. citizens was met with cynicism and suspicion. Fairbank states that when Yung Wing, one of the first known Chinese citizens to study abroad in the U.S., graduated from Yale in 1854, he decided to return to China to play a role in the construction of his country. However, the ideas Yung hoped to spread in China were hindered because of the traditional educational merit system still in place in China.

Fairbank (1979) contends that it was "the jealousy of a scholar class whose fortunes were tied to Chinese learning" (p. 199) that hindered the development of Chinese industrialization. In this particular conversation, it appeared that there was a

lack of consideration by Fairbank that the posture of Chinese scholars could still be linked to an anxiety that education could be used to infringe upon the autonomy of China. Beginning in the 20th century, scholars like John Dewey hoped to teach Chinese students in the United States about the ideals of Western education. Although Chinese students learned about the Western perspectives of democracy, religion, science, and education, it is difficult to determine whether Dewey desired to put those ideas into practice in China.

As Dewey's former Chinese students returned to China seeking positions in education and government, he visited Chinese universities over a two year period (1919-1921) to further explain his vision of education. Dewey lectured on the importance of placing the student as the center of school curriculum and educational reform. Yet, according to Feng (1989), Dewey's approach to "pragmatism became a significant current of thought in the political and philosophical debates [within China]": Dewey's work also placed him at odds with "the Chinese Communist Party [which] was founded during the two years that [he] was in China" (p. 20). As China searched for a new identity, engaged in armed conflict with Japan, and faced rebellion amongst its own citizenry, interest and trust in American education began to wane.

Covering a comparable time period in China to Fairbank (1979), Wang (1966) held the position that both Chinese and U.S. officials were suspicious of international scholars in their nations. In the 1920s, Chinese scholars and politicians were angered at the status afforded to students who studied abroad in the United States, while American politicians placed restrictions on the age and progress of any Chinese student studying in a U.S. institution of higher education. Wang explained a scenario that captured the relationship between the U.S. and China regarding higher education:

Because of family and other connections, [Chinese students who were

educated in schools based off of an American philosophy] tended to bring other

Chinese with them to the United States, thus increasing the number and the

influence of the American-trained in China. Second, on their return these men

formed a select group whose influence was felt in both political and academic

circles. Third, in spite of the unfavorable public image, a number of [the U.S.

educated] students became first-rate scientists and left important marks on the

Chinese world of learning. (p. 114)

Wang's (1966) analysis occurs in a period where European, and not American

education, was still seen as the preeminent measure of scholarship. This is a point many

Chinese leaders referenced to explain their opposition to sending Chinese students to

study abroad in the United States. Wang's research also began to identify some of the

concerns China had regarding the adoption of U.S. culture by students who had studied

abroad as an invasion upon local Chinese traditions. Although many of the concerns

listed were literally cosmetic in regards to dress and hair length, the changes were

referenced as a point of concern for Chinese officials. Both the work of Fairbank and

Wang are deemed critical by fellow scholars in understanding the development of higher

education in China, and both texts display personal narratives of male Chinese students.

Female Scholars and Women's Education during the Qing Dynasty

However, there is a recorded absence of Chinese female scholars at the turn of the

twentieth century. With respect to the time (covering roughly a century) in which both

authors wrote and the period (1800s) each researched, it would seem reasonable that there

were influential women scholars in the fields of education, science, and politics that

impacted U.S.-Chinese relations. Throughout the Qing dynasty [1644 – 1911],

documentation of the lives of Chinese women by men emphasizes sexual purity and

cultural femininity (Mann, 1997). At the same time, "[f]estivals, folktales, and religious

practice echo the sentiments found in women's writings [during the Qing dynasty], which

continually reject the promise of desire, cloaking it in sadness, loneliness, and pain."

(Mann, 1997, p. 16)

In regards to what is recorded about the lives of women in the Qing dynasty, their

impact as scholars is focused in the field of literature. In explaining the expectation that

women commit to marriages to maintain the social status of aristocratic families, have

their mobility restricted physically by foot binding as well as mentally by their female in-

laws, and that they accept a lack of professional opportunities despite their level of

education, Qing women scholars provide a more complete picture of how life during this

period of Chinese history was predicated on systematic gender assignments in society

(Mann, 1987; Larson, 1998). With the support of many facets of Qing society, education

for women began to expand. The challenge in gaining an accurate understanding, from

our 21st Century viewpoint, of the plurality of women scholars in 19th century China is

that entire genres of writing may have been emphasized or marginalized (arguably a

reality not unique to China) without respect to its contributions to Chinese history (Chang

& Saussy, 2000).

Higher education in 19th century China marks a continuation of a classical

Chinese education that emphasizes civil service examinations, Confucian values, and

loyalty to the Qing dynasty. As a result, access to education was limited to families

closely tied to the Qing court, including scholars, aristocracy, and civil servants. The

civil service examination rarely represented an opportunity for students without historical ties to the Qing court to become a civil servant. It became apparent that lack of opportunity for Chinese students referred mainly to male students. During the 19th century, female Chinese students and scholars were expected to support the societal position of families in the Qing court through marriage while quelling their own aspirations. Literature emerged as a major avenue for women scholars to detail their lives and impact Qing society. Due initially to military defeats, China began to reform the existing educational system to increase its knowledge of technology. As China began to send its students abroad to study in Japan and the United States, tensions rose regarding how educational reforms should unfold and who should lead those reforms.

Early 20th Century Reform to Higher Education in China

The turn of the 20th century represented the end of the last ruling dynasty in China and the beginning of a new system of higher education. Described by Zhao (2007) as having a "significant impact on the establishment of a modern education system in China" (p. 65), the 1898 Hundred Days Reform was the Qing dynasty's response to the military and political turmoil it faced. Military defeats and subsequent concessions to foreign powers had left the societal and political structure of China vulnerable. As a result, new approaches to government and education were sought out and adopted.

Although Kwong (2000) states that the Hundred Days Reform continued to have an impact on Chinese higher education throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, he questions the manner in which the historic event has been commemorated and recorded. Kwong presents a summary of the purpose and goal of the Hundred Days Reform:

[Beginning in June of 1898], Guangxu [emperor of the Qing dynasty]

announced an impressive array of educational, economic, military, and

administrative measures: some to address long-standing complaints such as the

removal of the required, highly formulaic…civil service examinations; some to

promote economic change…to oversee innovations in agriculture, industry and

commerce; some to replace old practices with Western ones such as in the training

and outfitting of troops; some to improve administrative efficiency such as the

attempt to streamline…and simplify government rules and regulations. (p. 668)

The scope of the reforms the Guangxu Emperor detailed combined with the speed at

which he demanded the changes take place advocated for the building of new schools and

imperial colleges throughout China. Kwong concludes that the existing form of

government in the Qing court, which comprised all the officials the emperor wanted to

replace, successfully ignored his policies, thus leading to the end of the reforms he had

envisioned. Kwong challenges the assertion by Chinese historians that the Hundred Days

Reform marked a clean break from the past that moved China forward on a linear path to

political and educational modernization. Instead, reforms lead by the Guangxu Emperor

held traditional Chinese and new Western approaches to society in balance to both protect

and develop China.

1911 Revolution

By the 20th century, the Qing dynasty's attempt at reforms would provide

justification for its adversaries to attempt a coup. Beginning in 1902, China began to

adopt the organizational frameworks of Japan and the United States that ultimately

resulted in one of the largest expansions of higher education in Chinese history (Zhao,

2007). The educational reforms included the construction of schools, more educational opportunities for women, and the abandonment of the civil service examination. At the same time, accusations of corruption and nepotism had rallied the growing number of educated Chinese who believed a break from the Qing dynasty would place China in a stronger position to protect itself. By 1911, the Qing dynasty was overthrown by a revolution lead by university students in China, as well as Chinese students who had studied abroad in Japan and the United States (Dow, 1971).

The historic figure tied to the 1911 Revolution is Sun Yat-sen, an American educated Chinese student who helped to fashion the Republic of China after the end of the Qing dynasty. With regards to the actual uprising, those who fought and became the new leaders of China's provincial governments were mostly educated in China and Japan (Dow, 1971). Yet, the role Sun played in stifling financial support to the Qing dynasty and negotiating support for the new republic granted him the trust of the revolutionaries in China (Berger, 2000). Berger states that Sun was able to initiate educational reforms including the use of the Beijing Mandarin dialect as the medium of language in schools and engineering the educational system of the new republic. His portrayal of the Qing court as the puppet of foreign leaders and the center of his justification for a new republic was unsustainable.

The 1898 Hundred Days Reform represented one of the Qing dyansty's final efforts to reform education in China. At the dawn of the 20th century, it is uncertain whether the wide and multi-faceted reforms initiated by the Guangxu Emperor were made to solely sustain the power structure of the Qing court or to strengthen the position of China after encroachment by foreign military powers. Recent research contends that

proposed reforms to Chinese education in the early 1900s were not a call to completely break from classical Confucian education. Instead, efforts were made to incorporate the knowledge and strategies heralded by the West and Japan for survival.

As China looked outside of its borders for education, Chinese students studied abroad ultimately to help build a stronger China. However, Chinese students who returned from studying abroad clashed with the existing but changing dynastic structure of China. By 1911, Chinese students who studied domestically and internationally had strong aspirations to lead China in a new direction, seeing the Qing dynasty as the root cause for the deterioration of their homeland. As the Republic of China emerged, there remained a need to identify and formulate what the role of higher education should be void of an imperial court system.

<div align="center">20th Century Higher Education in the People's Republic of China</div>

During the 20th century, the development of Chinese higher education was driven by the domestic responses to international conflict, and by the political and social policies of China's communist party. By 1912, Sun Yat-sen's government had lost the confidence of the Chinese revolutionaries who had swept him to power; students and politicians throughout China began to form their own governments, each vying to unify the country (Berger, 2000). For much of the decade between 1910 and 1920, competing ideologies that hoped to frame the future of China dominated the nation. An unknown number of deaths took place as the toll of war, poverty, and famine simultaneously took effect in China. The idea of education began to take hold more in the form of political juxtaposition and propaganda than the student-centered education John Dewey and U. S. educated Chinese students advocated.

May Fourth Movement

The end of World War I became symbolic of a call for unity within China. A fractured Chinese government, an attempt to reestablish Chinese dynasties, and foreign claims over Chinese land lead to little consideration of China's autonomy at the 1919 Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I (Schwarcz, 1990). Galvanized by the treaty, which left much of China's transportation systems and trade routes in the hands of Japan, Chinese students and intellectuals staged protests against the government in Beijing on May 4, 1919. Chow (1980) explains how Chinese students returning from Japan and the United States approached the protests from different perspectives: while Chinese students educated in the United States sought to rebuke the treaty through social and educational reform, Chinese students educated in Japan were more focused on political activism and replacing the Beijing government.

Chow (1980) states the May Fourth Movement proves critical in uniting Chinese students with the Chinese Nationalist movement. Through the development of magazines and press that supported their aims, the alliance that grew out of the May Fourth Movement saw the emergence of a unified Chinese communist government. However, in the mid 1920s, Chow also states that the new government of China and the movement that helped to create it struggled with Western ideals and Russian influence:

> [T]he major challenge to Chinese traditional ethics, customs, and institutions in the period was Western…ideas like liberalism, democracy, and science…Yet, with nationalist sentiments on the rise, fed by the example of Soviet Russia defying the West, socialist ideas became more influential…The shift in emulation from liberalism to socialism may be explained in terms of such factors as China's need

to industrialize rapidly, her humiliating defeats, her authoritarian political

heritage, and the appeal of socialist idealism to a society based on

cooperation…as well as the policies of the Nationalists in and after the

movement. (p. 15)

Mao Zedong and Chinese Education

An empowered Chinese government and a citizenry determined to modernize the

nation still faced the challenges of armed conflict and political infighting. During the

Second World War (1937 – 1945), political power in China shifted between the

nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

By the end of World War II, China was recovering from its second war in 50 years with

Japan (Hung, 1994). By 1949, the CCP would emerge as the recognized government of

the People's Republic of China (PRC), lead by its chairman Mao Zedong.

Chinese university students, though playing pivotal roles in ending the Qing

dynasty, formulating a republican government, and creating a resistance movement

against foreign powers, were not central in Mao's rise to power. Schram (1989)

maintains that Mao saw education as a tool to support Chinese citizens facing poverty.

Referred to as the peasant class, impoverished Chinese who lived in rural communities

instead of urban centers were the center of a political revolution in China. At the same

time, Mao did not seek to completely alienate a sector of Chinese society that had

successfully challenged the authority of governments in the past. Schram summarizes

Mao's strategy:

During the early years after 1949, both technical and managerial cadres were, of

necessity, to a very large extent people inherited from the old society, 'bourgeois'

in their social origins, and/or in the sense that they had been trained in the West or in universities staffed by graduates of European, American, or Japanese schools. Mao believed that the loyalty of these people could be gained, and that being already expert, they could be made red as well. (p. 119)

The Great Leap Forward. Though there is a body of research that considers educational reform after Mao (Agelasto & Adamson, 1998; Lin, 1993), there are few studies that look at the impact of his policies through the lens of education. Research that does analyze Mao's view towards education does so in terms of how the Chinese leader breaks down the existing educational system. Beginning in 1958, Mao enacted what came to be known as the Great Leap Forward (1958 – 1961). This movement pushed for the mass production of steel and industrial supplies to accelerate the economic development of the PRC. Peng (1987) quantifies the consequences of "hastily introduced institutional changes…for which China was ill prepared" (p. 666) by explaining the dramatic decrease in food production, poor quality of industrial steel produced, rise in mortality rates, and mass movement of people from rural China to the coastal cities.

During the Great Leap Forward, the idea of education was reintroduced to promote the will of the government and subjugate criticism from university scholars and intellectuals. Mao relied largely on rural Chinese citizens moving to urban areas and focusing on construction and steel versus agriculture and farms. At best, Mao was ambivalent towards the idea of expanding or maintaining secondary schools and higher education institutions (Schram, 1989) and saw meaningful education as often occurring outside the walls of a school. Efforts were made to "substantially increase the proportion of students of worker/peasant origin among newly enrolled college students," (Deng &

Treiman, 1997, p. 398), but the subsequent drop in the ability of students upon entry

lead to the creation of a new national examination. Socialist education that emphasized

the role of the Chinese worker in rebuilding China was a nationwide campaign created by

the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and had as its target audience the peasant

population. They were leaders not because of formal education but due to their roles as

advocates for the CCP.

At the dawn of the Great Leap Forward, "academic, if not intellectual, freedom

was official policy" (Bachman, 1991, p. 24). It became clear to Mao and the CCP that

intellectuals and students sought to slow the government's policies in order to fully

understand the impact it might have on other facets of the country. As a result, the CCP

moved to increase the influence of those without formal education in the party and

accused intellectuals of being detrimental to the continued sovereignty of the nation

(Bachman, 1991).

The Cultural Revolution. Despite the uncertainty that arose out of the Great Leap

Forward, Mao retained his leadership as well as the confidence of his supporters. Still

uncertain of the allegiance intellectuals and an emerging middle class had to his goals,

Mao recruited scores of youth anxious to show their commitment to the CCP. Mao

effectively targeted Chinese he thought of as capitalists and fashioned a system to

promote those with *red and revolutionary* backgrounds within the roles of government

(Deng & Treiman, 1997). As a result, the majority of Chinese people who had either

studied or taught at universities were seen as untrustworthy and promptly removed from

their positions.

Meng and Gregory (2002) report the profound impact the period known as the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1977) had on education in the People's Republic of China: "[Beginning in 1966,] most schools in urban China ceased regular operation for 6 years. Universities stopped normal student recruitment for an even longer period of time" (p. 935). As schools began to reopen after the purge of Chinese students and scholars deemed traitors to their nation by the Chinese Communist Party, Meng and Gregory state that there were thousands of students who had missed between 3 and 6 years of primary and middle school education. The CCP government did not comprise a way to successfully account for the years of education lost for these students.

The policy the Chinese government decided upon was to send "over 17 million urban 'educated youth'…to live and work in rural areas" (Zhou & Hou, 1999, p. 13). These students became known as the *sent-down* youth and were comprised of high school graduates, many who were from intellectual and middle class families targeted during the Cultural Revolution, charged with supporting the doctrine of Mao Zedong. The sent-down youth were charged with re-educating entire families so they could contribute to the socialist revolution. According to Zhou & Hou, those who had the opportunity to return to their homes in urban areas were dedicated to the CCP, others, due to their inability to endure labor in rural areas, either died or fled the country. By 1978, damage to the educational and economic sectors of the People's Republic of China was on such a large scale that it has been difficult to quantify (Law, 2003).

Deng Xiaoping and the Modernization of Chinese Universities

With the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the future of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China would be determined by Deng Xiaoping. As

the government publicly acknowledged the tragic mistakes of the Cultural

Revolution, Deng began to take aim at dramatically shifting the role of education, in

general, and universities, in particular, in the PRC. The new Chinese leader called upon

the Chinese Ministry of Education, intellectuals that had been denounced during the

Cultural Revolution, and the socialist government to promote science and research along

with industrial manufacturing to secure China's economic future. Hayhoe (1989) details

the expansion of Chinese universities by Deng:

> Between 1980 and 1985, the number of higher institutions increased from 675 to
>
> 1,016. About 140 of the new institutions are vocational universities with short-
>
> cycle programs administered by city governments…It is in [vocational
>
> universities] that the major future growth is expected to take place. Another high
>
> growth area is teacher training institutions, which increased from 172 in 1980 to
>
> 253 in 1985. (pp. 42 – 43)

In addition, Deng pressed for educational policies that led to a new generation of

Chinese students and scholars to work abroad in the West and Japan. "Between 1979 and

1985, a total of 29,000 [students and scholars]" (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 53) traveled abroad to

grasp and utilize foreign knowledge for the benefit of the PRC and Chinese universities.

With the support of the government, international knowledge transfer and research

strengthened Chinese higher education. Moreover, partnerships with scholars and

universities abroad enabled a new generation of Chinese students to be better prepared

for emerging industries that would drive the national economy. Despite these reforms by

Deng, there were widespread accusations of government corruption, concerns by

university scholars regarding the growing power of the CCP, and an openly expressed

desire by many Chinese university students to reform the PRC government (Zhao, 2004).

Tiananmen. Two of the largest student protests in the history of China took place at Tiananmen (translated as the Gate of Heavenly Peace) Square in Beijing. In each of the two occurrences, Deng Xiaoping was a central figure. Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution and the life of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, a former premier of the CCP, was a prominent voice in the reform of education and politics in the PRC. Zhou, whose family would have been targeted as counter-revolutionary and a part of the intellectual middle class, challenged the policies of Mao by supporting democratic reforms in China akin to what he himself had learned while studying in Europe (Jiaqi & Gao, 1996). Zhou's death in 1976 and subsequent branding as a traitor to China by the CCP led to a mass memorial and protest in Tiananmen Square.

> At present there are only two roads from which we may choose: we may act as conscientious Chinese and as conscientious Party members, and struggle for democracy and the prosperity of China; or we may act as "up-to-par Party members" and actively respond to the call of the Central Committee, in order to preserve our Party membership and secure our individual futures. How are we to choose?
>
> I remember how Zhou Enlai once answered the question of a foreign friend by saying, "I am first and foremost a Chinese, and only then a Party member…"
> As a Party member, I no longer wish to weep over governmental corruption and apathy of the people. I only want to be a true communist, and to let my blood flow with the struggle for democracy and freedom. (Calhoun, 1994, p. 49)

Yan & Gao (1996) state that Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping were ideologically close in welcoming democratic reform in the People's Republic of China. Through propaganda and the power of a national military, Mao saw his decisions and policies as absolute. Upon Zhou's death and the Tiananmen protests by university students for democratic reform, Mao attempted to have Deng removed from government and the CCP. Deng was willing to listen to the students' calls for change and in turn enacted educational reforms that expanded higher education. Yet, with regards to political reform, "all the reforms [Deng] initiated had to be carried out within the limit of socialism, or "socialism with Chinese characteristics," a slogan that has the vaguest of meanings for most people, but perhaps not for Deng himself" (Mu & Thompson, 1989, p. 59).

Unlike Mao, Deng believed he could move the PRC forward with an expansion of higher education, although he was fearful of the visual and political show of power university students had the capacity to demonstrate (Calhoun, 1994). By 1989, the Chinese Communist Party faced another student protest in Tiananmen. Like the protests of 1976, there was an outcry regarding political corruption in the Chinese Communist Party. Frustration amongst university students grew because allegations of corruption regarding employment practices and government suppression were either not addressed or refuted. Zhou Enlai had represented a voice in the CCP that attempted to address the concerns of the students. Hu Yaobang became, for the students, the only voice of reason encouraging dialogue between students and the government. Although Hu "was a long-time Communist and protégé of Deng Xiaoping…, [he] encouraged intellectuals in their growing openness to Western ideas" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 35). The death of Hu in 1989,

less than a month before the 80th anniversary of the 1919 May Fourth movement,

resulted in a demonstration surpassing 100,000 which included university students as

well as Chinese citizens not associated with higher education (Oksenberg, Sullivan, &

Lambert, 1990).

Although there are sources that claim to retell the actions of the protestors as well

as the actions of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) that led to the many deaths of

the 1989 Tiananmen demonstration, the variations in the research are so great that it

would be difficult to verify. What is known is that while Deng Xiaoping was not the

acting chairman of the CCP in 1989, he played a pivotal role in deciding to end the

protests in Tiananmen Square by martial law (Oksenberg, Sullivan, & Lambert, 1990;

Sullivan, 1995). It would also be the final year Deng held official office in the

government of the PRC.

In the wake of Tiananmen, Chinese Communist Party leaders committed

themselves to strengthening the PLA, promoting socialist ideals, and building the

Chinese economy (Sullivan, 1995). In the decade to follow, the events and circumstances

surrounding Tiananmen were suppressed in the People's Republic of China. At the same

time, the PRC would lack a communist partnership in Europe with the fall of the Soviet

Union. Zhang (1998) and Zhao (1998) explain how the PRC government used the

critiques and political isolation of the country as platforms to promote nationalism

through education. As the everyday economic reality of Chinese citizens improved and

the prowess of the CCP increased, new university students saw higher education more as

a way to support their families and improve their individual lives and less as a space to

promote reform in education and government.

As the aftermath of the World Wars settled and the promise of new international partnerships formed, China looked inward and became transformed into the People's Republic of China. Policies surrounding education called for the removal of many Chinese scholars as well as new declarations under which Chinese universities would operate. Leaders in the United States of America and Europe saw education as an important tool to communicate with China and sought to define the purpose of higher education in relation to democracy. At the same time, the PRC looked towards the United Soviet Socialists Republic (USSR) and Marxist ideology to fulfill the goals of the nation.

Large and ambitious programs initiated by the CCP fell short of their original purposes and gave rise to a sustained state of discontent from middle class Chinese (many of whom had been educated abroad) alienated by CCP policies. Throughout the 20th century, China's leaders struggled to balance incorporating educational and political reform with maintaining control of the country. Ultimately, continued progress towards the economic and industrial goals of the PRC precipitated any change in higher education.

21st Century Challenges of Universities in the People's Republic of China

In the latter half of the 20th century, economic growth, national exams, and academic corruption were central to understanding the status of higher education in the PRC and why many Chinese students studied abroad. In the 1990s, China's economic growth began to outpace the infrastructure of the nation's universities. As employment in varying sectors became more abundant, the need for skilled workers to fulfill jobs began to take precedence over the political foundation of Chinese education. However, since

the era of Mao Zedong the ideals of the Chinese Communist Party had been

interwoven with education. Sautman (1991) concludes that the Chinese government

ultimately will decide to "do away with intensively politicized and ideologized education

and substitute educational policies that are economically pragmatic and limited to the

inculcation of patriotism and an apolitical civic morality" (p. 671).

The professors who needed to fulfill the new priorities of higher education in the

PRC included non-Chinese citizens that were knowledgeable of developing sectors of

industry initially unavailable on a wide scale at Chinese universities.   As a result,

Chinese leaders welcomed more international professors, particularly from Western

Europe and North America, into Chinese universities. Conceding that not all instructors

stressed or had knowledge of Communist principles, diversity in philosophical approach

to higher education began to emerge. With the rise of international trade and investment

in the global economy over the latter half of the twentieth century, new educational

leaders in the PRC were able to teach some principles of Western capitalism to their

students (Jacobson, 1987; Mok, 2005).

As the economy of the PRC continued to grow in the 21st century, various fields

like the automobile and high technology industries gained prominence in China (Gan,

2003). Through globalization, multinational corporation officials were now seeking a

presence in the PRC and hoping to employ Chinese citizens prepared for the jobs they

could offer. Though job opportunities that would pay greater salaries increased in the

PRC, competition to acquire an education that would lead to these jobs also grew. Chen,

Chen, and Shi (2005) note that "China is a huge country, and there are significant

disparities between regions in terms of economic development, social structure,

technology and education" (p. 42). Economic prosperity for the People's Republic of China signaled an opportunity for a better life for some of its citizens. However, Chinese political leaders have had to carefully work with Chinese university administrators on how to grant access to higher education to the nation.

Chinese University System

Based on 2002 data acquired from the People's Republic of China's Ministry of Education (n. d.), there are a total of 2,003 higher education institutions (HEI) enrolling an estimated 12 million students in the nation. Geographically, a majority of the universities are located along the eastern shore of the PRC, while some western autonomous regions like Tibet and Xinjiang have a much smaller number of universities available. Vocational schools, seen as important in providing practical technical skills to high school age Chinese students, are not considered to be part of the higher educational system. Although the PRC Ministry of Education details how HEIs have been given a level of autonomy to spur research and innovation, vocational schools are guided by the Chinese government; as of 2002, there were an estimated 17,000 vocational schools in the PRC ("Ministry of Education," n.d.).

In the 21st century, there is an emphasis on strengthening the academic reputation and institutional research of Chinese universities to match those of global university leaders. Beginning in the 1990s, the CCP enacted legislation on the 211 Project to identify 100 universities to participate. Mok (2001) explains that "the criteria for being selected to be a member institution of the [211] project depend[ed] on…performance in teaching and research as well as their ability to build up a status of leadership in both the national and international academic arenas" (p. 132). The PRC Ministry of Education is

directly invested in the economic and academic results of the 211 Project. Therefore,

the governance of universities selected for the project became more closely scrutinized by

the national leaders (Mok, 2001). Progress on the project is due to be reported by the end

of 2010.

<center>*National Examinations*</center>

National examinations or *gaokao* became a centerpiece to determining admission

to universities in the People's Republic of China (Epstein, 1982). For centuries, large-

scale tests have taken place in the PRC. Suen and Yu (2006) propose that although the

reason for taking national examinations has changed from civil service to university

admission, the historical nature of large-scale tests continued to artificially combine

student ability with social status. For example, "when a geography test score is indicative

of an examinee's family income rather than that examinee's geography knowledge, there

is a problem of construct irrelevance" (p. 51). Throughout the history of national

examinations in China, education officials have attempted to minimize social factors that

could reduce the validity of test results.

From the perspective of Chinese students, the national examination has remained

an inaccurate measure of their academic potential. In 2008, over 10 million Chinese

students took the exam for university studies in the PRC. The fact that less than half of

these students qualified for entrance into any Chinese university was compounded by

their status as the only child in their family's generation. Many students in China

represent the lone continuation of their ancestry and represent the future health and well-

being of their families. Performance on the national examination in some ways

determines the long term stability of an individual's family. Chinese students'

performance throughout their educational career is of lesser importance than the national exam, and their results are the most important factor in determining their professional lives (Meerman, 2008).

Faced with the pressures of sustaining the future of their families, some Chinese students have been party to academic corruption in Chinese higher education. As recent as January of 2009, the PRC government has conducted investigations based solely on internet rumors that details of the national exam had been leaked (Xiang, 2009). Getting access to the tests and preparing students for the *gaokao* has become a viable industry in the PRC. Though the consequences for cheating could be severe, students and those who have taken it upon themselves to gain access to the test felt the benefits outweigh any punishment. Additionally, because data from the universities reflected a number of degrees rewarded that surpassed the total number of students enrolled, scholars familiar with the Chinese university system call into question the validity of the degrees granted by Chinese higher education institutions.

Qiang and Wolff (2007) respond directly to the current status of honesty in Chinese higher education:

> Students cheating on tests, students engaging in plagiarism, students manufacturing fake diplomas and credentials, and school administrators' falsification of students' records are rampant practices throughout China's universities and colleges, both public and private. Of this there is neither doubt nor dispute. The question is: Why? (p. 182)

In 2009, a limited number of universities in China retained a strong reputation for high academic standards. As China's Ministry of Education and China's government work to

improve the status of universities, more Chinese students are currently looking

towards the United States for higher education to prepare for employment at home and

abroad (Ying, 2008).

<center>English Language Acquisition for Chinese Students</center>

A challenge for Chinese students who study in the United States has been the

extent to which they acquire the English language. Discussions on Chinese students

learning English in order to study in American universities include how learning English

has changed dramatically over the last decade (Nunan 2003; Shi, 2006). Nunan (2003)

reviews how the English language became compulsory for Chinese students in grade 3 in

2001. Moreover, English comprehension was a component of the *gaokao* that

determined entry into Chinese universities. Chinese students who plan to apply to

universities in the U.S. have studied the English language for most of their lives.

Yet, language is not the only skill required for Chinese students to successfully

communicate in English on U.S. campuses. Graham (1987) challenges the results of

English language tests as predictors of an English language learner's success in the

collegiate classroom. Graham also states "that the relationship between English

proficiency and academic success is complex and unclear and that language test scores

should not therefore play a disproportionate role in admissions decisions (516). Fox

(1994) argues that American professors mistakenly view international students' utilization

of the written English language as bound by limited comprehension rather than

influenced by their culture. As a result, time is dedicated to supporting international

students in the development of technical English skills versus helping students explore

different writing styles in English. Furthermore, Fox contends that challenges Chinese

students do have in acquiring the English language is not due to lack of effort but rather compounded by transitioning to studying in a new country.

Other studies have focused on how specific teaching strategies could aid in building Chinese students' capacity of the English language. Su (1990) documents the use of role-play activities to help Chinese students with conversational English. Anderson (1993) promotes the use of communicative activities but warns that such methods must be carried out with cultural understanding and acknowledgment of the great investment each Chinese student has in her or his education. According to Anderson (1993), "Chinese [students]...tend to associate games and communicative activities with entertainment exclusively and are skeptical of their use as learning tools. They take their learning quite seriously; they must, for so much depends on it" (p. 474). The literature also stresses the need for additional training and recruitment of teachers teaching English as a foreign language in non-native English speaking countries (Hayes, 2009; Holliday, 2005; Liu, 1999).

Burnbay and Sun (1989) interviewed 10 Chinese teachers who taught English as a foreign language in Chinese universities. The study focused on the teachers' concern of teaching English from a Western perspective. The teachers in the study expressed that a communicative approach to teaching English as a second language was appropriate for Chinese students planning to study in an English speaking country. Burnbay and Sun concluded that the Chinese teachers did not necessarily see an improvement in student performance in what the research described as a wider context of language instruction endorsed by Western professors.

A significant level of literature exists that provides insights on the education and lives of Chinese students beyond the scope of the study. Students from the People's Republic of China are at the center of research for many scholars investigating second language acquisition and societal influences on Chinese education. Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons (2004) observed how PRC students acquired the English language in Chinese universities. As an additional stage of the study, Gan et al. followed participants in their interactions outside of the classroom to understand how the students were able to retain and practice the English they learned in an environment where the dominant written and spoken languages were of Chinese origin.

In addition to the learning styles of English within Chinese universities (Dirksen, 1990), other studies have reviewed how Chinese students who have immigrated to predominately English-speaking countries are able to perform at the university level. In an Australian study, Dobson, Birrell, and Rapson (1997) reviewed the ability of non-English-speaking-background (NESB) people to participate in higher education. Dobson et al. looked at the issue of access to higher education as a moral concern for Australia and sought to identify educationally disadvantaged students based on lack of exposure to the English language. In the conclusion of their study, Dobson et al. contend that the factor of socio-economic class is critical in determining the success of NESB students, as PRC students on average outperformed native English speakers in higher education enrollments. The study did not cover rates of graduation or social interaction for PRC students in Australian higher education.

An understanding of both U.S. culture and the English language when Chinese students pursue degrees abroad is equally critical to their academic success. Oller,

Hudson, and Liu (1977) discovered that there was a positive correlation between Chinese students' successful attainment of the English language and their interaction with U.S. students beyond the classroom. The study reaffirmed that if Chinese students are supported in their English studies by host institutions in the U.S., they reflect upon their experience abroad as being positive. As Chinese students continued to study abroad, the academic talents and financial support they brought to U.S. universities played a greater role in the sustainability of American higher education. However, the expectations of Chinese students in U.S. classrooms have continued to be an area of confusion and contention.

<div align="center">Chinese Students' Performance in the Classroom</div>

U.S. professors who have Chinese students in their classrooms have not necessarily visited the PRC, but have formed opinions about the Chinese learner before engaging with them. Chinese students perceived as being silent in U.S. classrooms (Liu, 2002) have led professors to conclude that they lack interest or are unprepared for their courses. The practice of rote memory in the context of Chinese education (Kember, 1996) has lead American university administrators and faculty to conclude that Chinese students are not equipped to participate in U.S. classrooms, and that they lack the capability to engage in new methods of learning. In a study based in the United Kingdom, Gieve and Clark (2005) challenge the idea that Chinese students are not able to complete assignments similar to their British classmates. When provided the same framework to complete several assignments, Gieve and Clark (2005) concluded that Chinese students were capable of working within the context of traditional teaching methods in British higher education.

Many studies have compared the performance of Chinese students to U.S. students. The majority of these studies focused on how the results from standardized tests or comparative educational programs measured how well students in either nation are developing (Benjamin, 2006; Byrnes, Hong, & Xing, 1997; Cai, 1995; Polland, 1993; Zhou & Boehm, 2001). As an extension of these studies, research has also been conducted on the goals and interpretations of education between Chinese and U.S. students (Chen, 1991; Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 2006). In their study, Chen, Lee, and Stevenson (2006) explained how "difference in response style between North Americans and East Asians was in line with the distinction often made between individualist [American] and collectivist [Chinese] cultures" (p. 174). The studies often highlight the political differences between the two countries by drawing data from what was referred to as cultural preferences.

Social Integration of Chinese Students in U.S. Universities

Students from China studying in the United States have attempted to adjust to life beyond the classroom. College students and professors in U.S. universities were interviewed to evaluate what special cultural challenges the Chinese population faces while studying abroad (Cross, 1995; Huang, 1997). Within the theme of cultural challenges, studies have also compared how Chinese students and American students seek out support for coping with stress (Taylor et al., 2004). Even encounters Chinese students have experienced with U.S. citizens when performing routine tasks (e.g., acquiring a bus pass or shopping at a grocery store) has led to researchers concluding that PRC students need additional support in navigating American society (Wan, 1999).

Qian (2002) details his experiences as a Chinese student and professor in the

United States working with students from the PRC. Qian's work not only documented

his experience in the United States, but also chronicled the academic and social

experiences of Chinese students studying at American universities during the 1990s. The

research focuses on the narratives of Chinese citizens enrolling as undergraduate and

graduate students in the U.S. However, Qian also dedicates a portion of the study on how

the diplomatic loosening of visa requirements immediately after the 1989 demonstrations

of Tiananmen Square led to a change in philosophical and academic posture amongst

American educated PRC students towards the U.S.

<div align="center">The People's Republic of China's One-Child Policy</div>

One of the most discussed topics regarding PRC citizens is the impact of China's

one-child policy (Bongaarts & Greenhalgh, 1985; Hesketh, Lu, & Xing, 2005; Short &

Fengying, 1998). Yet, literature regarding China's one-child policy as it compares with

education has only recently emerged. Yang (2007) discusses how the one-child policy

allowed the PRC government to expand educational opportunities for children at the

elementary and primary school levels. Under certain circumstances, many families are

allowed to have a second child despite the one-child policy. At the same time, Yang

provided empirical evidence that *sibship* or relations between two or more siblings and

gender disparity continue to play roles in Chinese society and school attendance:

> Chinese parents particularly favor their eldest sons for their economic and cultural
>
> worth. If the child is both an older child and a son, the parents will invest more in
>
> his education. Therefore, the presence of an older brother always poses a risk to
>
> other siblings' schooling. Although younger sons are also highly valued, and

parents are also willing to invest in their schooling, parents may not be able to treat them the same way as they did the first-born son because of financial constraints. (p. 490)

Although Yang's study focused on the implication of the one child policy within the realm of secondary education, the resulting data and policies have ramifications for PRC students who plan to pursue higher education.

Deutsch (2006) interviewed over 80 Chinese students pursuing higher education at PRC institutions. The study sought to evaluate the responsibility or filial piety PRC students from the one-child policy generation felt to support their parents. As one possible result of China's one-child policy, Deutsch revealed that the 12 participants in the study who were women were encouraged by their parents to break from supposed traditional norms for women such as bypassing plans for education and prioritizing marriage over employment. Investment in education and an improvement in employment opportunities for women have impacted the social structure of Chinese families as well as generated a new understanding of how parents can be supported by their daughters in the latter half of their lives (Zhan, 2004). As the first generation of China's one-child policy enter adulthood and prepare to begin their own families, scholars are beginning to investigate how prospects of marriage impact whether PRC students studying abroad return to China (McLoughlin, 2005).

<center>Chinese Students and the Brain Drain Debate</center>

The motivation of Chinese students coming to study in the United States has become a point of debate. The focus of the debate is on expatriates from the People's Republic of China who achieve higher education degrees from the United States, never to

return to their homeland (Ackerberg, 1989; Hertling, 1997; Welch & Zhen, 2008). The concern of China's brightest students remaining in the United States after graduation caused friction between the two nations throughout the 1980s (Orleans, 1988). Currently, the brain drain fears of the People's Republic of China have also been assessed from the perspective of potential Chinese students traveling to America in the 21st century (Altbach, 2004; Zweig, 1995).

Yet, it is the opinion of Bhagwati (2003) that to focus on preventing the migration of students would be a failed policy and that there are ways that individuals and nations can all benefit positively from the movement of international students. Nonetheless, few studies have recently reviewed the impact of Chinese students who received an American education attempting to reintegrate into Chinese society. The Chinese government does continue to support study abroad programs with the United States but prefers that Chinese citizens return to the PRC upon graduation (Pang & Appleton, 2004). Instead of hindering Chinese students from studying in the United States, the PRC government has opted to promote incentives for Chinese graduates abroad.

The *Beijing Review* (2007) describes how the Chinese government proposed to offer monetary rewards to attract Chinese students back from the U.S.

By the end of 2006, over 1 million Chinese students had studied abroad, with only 275,000 coming back...Therefore, it [was] felt that if these new policies can lure the top tier of enlightened minds back and encourage them to work for China's economic and social development then the preferential treatment will have been well worth it (p. 47).

Hvistendahl (2008) summarizes that the early stages of the incentive program have been successful for China, and students studying in the United States have began to return to China to compete for employment and salaries comparable to those in the U.S. Chinese students returning to contribute to the economic and political rise of China are participating in the *brain circulation* movement (Cao, 1996) that marked the end of highly skilled personnel working abroad indefinitely. At the same time, Cao suggested that it remains difficult to determine the number or rationale of Chinese citizens returning to the People's Republic of China after studying in the United States.

Literature addressing PRC students' acquisition of the English language and lives under the one-child policy in China are but two of the many subjects related to their academic development. Other topics that focus on PRC students review issues relating to preparation for entrance into higher education; studies that review performance of Chinese students at the college level are often within the context of Chinese universities. This study captures the perspectives of PRC university students studying abroad in the United States of America. In addition, the research includes experiences before and after the commencement of their collegiate careers. Though the co-researchers in the study represent a small (relative to the total number of Chinese students pursuing graduate education) and privileged segment of the Chinese population, they also represent a rapidly growing and important population in the U.S. as well as in the PRC.

Education of Chinese Students in the PRC and the U.S.

The global impact of Chinese students currently studying in the United States remains uncertain. Yet, the estimated 1 million Chinese students that have studied abroad since Deng Xiaoping's 1978 Open Door Policy continue to play roles in influencing

Chinese education, politics, economy, and culture. Political analysts predict that the People's Republic of China will become the preeminent superpower in the world, surpassing the strength and influence of the United States (Zakaria, 2005). At the same time, Chinese officials have released multiple statements assuring the world that China has little interest in challenging the international positioning of the United States (Bijian, 2005). Both the U.S. and the PRC have taken diplomatic steps to learn from each other, and higher education has been a tie between the two countries. Chinese students have cited their desire to study in the United States to gain a competitive edge in the global job market (Pak, 2008). The competitive edge Chinese students bring to U.S. universities has been defined as English language preparation, analytical thinking, and employment preparation (Zhang & Xu, 2007). However, there is limited research detailing the operation of contemporary Chinese universities and what challenges PRC university administrators face to strengthen the reputations of their institutions.

Chinese institutions of higher education are attempting to apply American education to its universities (Lee, 2007; Mooney, 2007). This trend reflects the growth of Chinese students who have pursued undergraduate degrees at PRC universities and continue their graduate studies at U.S. institutions. However, within this data further consideration about the population surveyed should be reviewed. First, though Chinese students abroad receive attention due to the historical significance of educational programs between China and the United States, they do not represent the totality of students from the PRC studying in the U.S. The majority of the Chinese population that studies abroad in the United States is comprised of graduate students. This is significant because they neither account for the number of secondary (high school) Chinese students

who annually take the Chinese National Examination nor do they account for the students who fail to qualify for enrollment as undergraduates at a Chinese university.

Second, emerging studies that review the educational satisfaction of Chinese students in comparing Chinese and American educational systems and practices may be faced with a population that has little if any direct experience with Chinese higher education. More Chinese citizens who wish to study in the U.S. are finding ways through cram schools and state-sponsored recruitment fairs ("CHINA", 2002; Zhe, 2009) to prepare for undergraduate as well as graduate degrees abroad. Because of the economic investment needed by Chinese families to attend a Western school in the PRC or abroad, academic ability is not the only factor taken into account before enrollment. Finally, the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese graduate students in the U.S. are not necessarily the immediate purpose of existing studies covering this population. Instead, the rate at which Chinese students complete U.S. university degree programs and an analysis of their endeavors after graduation (Finn, 2000; Solimano, 2008) are more often data points used to assess the quality of study abroad programs and the need to support future educational opportunities similar to Chinese students enrolling in American institutions.

Both the Chinese and American governments benefit from promoting higher education abroad. For example, there is historical evidence that Chinese leaders in higher education have received degrees from universities in the United States (Bieler, 2003). Yet, the learning process is fluid between U.S. and PRC universities, as hundreds of Sino-American 1-2-1 programs are fashioned to allow Chinese students to simultaneously study at and obtain degrees from American and Chinese colleges (Fischer, 2009a). U.S.

citizens studying abroad in the PRC have grown exponentially in the 21st century, though currently the majority of American students in China are non-degree seeking and focusing on learning the Mandarin Chinese language (Honor, 2008; Lewin, 2008b). In addition, leading universities in both countries have developed programs that allow collaboration in addressing issues like global climate change and medical research (DiMarco & Wu, 2009; Erickson, 2007). Such partnerships have aided the PRC and the U.S. in bolstering the educational influence of its universities. Moreover, higher education has become a platform on which non-governmental organizations can work towards resolving potentially contentious issues the governments of Beijing and Washington, D. C. may not be able to openly engage in diplomatically.

In addition to official government relations and university degree programs, there are a number of established organizations dedicated to promoting a greater understanding of culture and university development between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. The National Committee on United States – China Relations or (NCUSC) dedicates its work towards educating all sectors of the American public to gain a greater understanding about the PRC (Orlins, 2008). The NCUSC also sponsors discussions and forums between youth leaders in the U.S. and PRC as well as current public officials for the purpose of expanding existing partnerships and working to bridge political and cultural differences.

The Center on Chinese Education or CoCE, hosted by Teachers College at Columbia University, works to develop a stronger picture on the goals and expectations of higher education in China and the United States. The CoCE seeks to "achieve [its] mission through three categories of activities: research and development, education and

training, as well as outreach and exchange." ("Mission of the Center," n.d.)

Meetings inviting visiting scholars from both the United States and China, discussions

regarding an assessment of national educational curricula, and strategies expanding

educational opportunities for Chinese students are some specific programs sponsored by

CoCE.

Despite the collaboration among organizations and universities in the United

States and China, U.S. university administrators face a negative perception concerning

the monetary benefits of American colleges admitting a record number of Chinese

students. As the global economy continues to grow outside of the United States,

American alternatives to services like higher education are striving to become

comparable or stronger throughout the world (Yang, 2002; Gordon, 2007). Many leaders

in U.S. higher education have acknowledged that their universities cannot operate outside

of the marketing aspect of the global economy. As a result, American college leaders

have taken measures to aggressively recruit international students that are prepared for

college.

However, international student recruitment for U.S. universities has also come

with a reliance on third party agencies who are often paid on a per student successfully

enrolled basis; this has raised ethical questions on the relationship between student and

institution (Fischer, 2009b). Recruitment also involves seeking students that come from

families capable of paying tuition without financial assistance. Due to financial

constraints, disadvantaged students within the United States or the global community

may be denied equitable access to higher education (Zernike, 2009). Therefore, U.S.

institutions that recruit Chinese graduate students must, on some level, weigh the need to

financially maintain what has made it a success with expanding the opportunities for education to develop new cadres of professionals and alumni from underrepresented populations.

What university administrators around the world have acknowledged is that it would be financially and diplomatically costly not to invest in recruiting students from China (Kinzie, 2009). Beyond seeking a student population that is capable of paying full tuition, the future success and professions of alumni from the PRC could play a role in the recruitment of additional scholars from China. Zhaoxiang (2002) reviews how Chinese university leaders have developed schools and departments dedicated to preparing undergraduates to learn the English language and offering preparation for proficiency examinations. Such programs have aided Chinese universities in attracting students to their universities. Chinese and American students, universities, and governments have a stake in the development of international education. However, economic and political ties between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China dictate, to a large degree, whether higher education in the United States remains a reality for Chinese students.

Economic and Political Relations between China and the United States

Over the last ten years, diplomacy and mediation provided the foundation for US-China economic and political progression. The North American Free Trade (NAFTA) Agreement of 1993 not only marked the beginning of a new economic strategy by the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere, but it also marked the first year the Clinton administration decided to designate China with favored nation status (Lippman, 1993). Lippman reports that the decision to do so was made on the basis that China could be a

strong ally to the United States regarding trade and economic development.

Although in practice no one definition exists for what favored nation status means, its use

between the US and China marked a large expansion of trade and exclusive access to

each other's financial markets. In 2010, the benefits and sacrifices of the economic ties

between the two countries continued to be debated as being either in the favor of or to the

detriment of both China and the United States.

An ongoing point of contention between China and the United States focuses on

job creation in the global market. Sectors of the U.S. job market have moved abroad,

increasing the profits of its investors (Bhagwati, Panagariya, & Srinivasan, 2004). Among

some U. S. media and academic studies, China has born the responsibility for the loss of

U.S. jobs. Other reports have charged that the move abroad by multinational

corporations founded in the United States have substituted an equitable labor practice for

American employees for the equivalent of slave labor in China (Dobbs, 2004; Fishman,

2005). Other nations, particularly in Western Europe, have faced similar backlash from

its citizenry after seeing companies send jobs to the PRC. Over the course of several

years, leaders of multinational corporations (MNCs) fashioned the response to

government leaders and private citizens that if U.S. companies are to survive, an

investment in the Chinese market is necessary (Steiner, 2009).

Another aspect of the economic relationship between the U.S. and the PRC

includes the evolving interpretation of the trade deficit. Scott (2007) reports that between

1997 and 2001, the United States lost an estimated 2 million jobs due to China's entry

into the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the subsequent trade imbalance with the

PRC. Other analysts have cited job loss in the United States as due to the lack of a

national plan to retrain workers in sectors that would be vital to the continued success

of the American economy (Frauenheim & Yamamoto, 2004). At the same time, business

professionals from the United States and China debate whether the trade deficit is in itself

a measure of the current or future health of any economy (Barker, 2004).

Nonetheless, the annual growth of the Chinese economy (Barboza, 2009),

America's reliance on the Chinese government's financing of U.S. debt (Schneider, 2005),

and Chinese ventures to invest in ownership of U.S. companies and infrastructure (de la

Merced & Bradsher, 2007) has led to debates on the limits of capitalism and free market

for the sake of national security (Powell, 2005). Huntington (1999) believes that some

nations, including the People's Republic of China, possess the ability to operate in the

world market without consideration for American interests. As a result, there remains

uncertainty on how much more of an ally the PRC has become for the United States since

1993.

In comparison, the political positioning of the People's Republic of China in the

21st century held a larger global perspective to the United States and the world than the

20th century policies of the PRC. In regards to international support to combat medical,

military, or economic crisis, China's participation is becoming as critical as U.S.

intervention. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) categorizes the current era of

expansion and development as China's peaceful rise to prominence in the global

community (Guo, 2006). China has been called upon to respond to moves deemed as

provocative by its international partners like the expansion of the Chinese military (Peter,

2009) and acquiring oil reserves on the continents of Africa and Australia (Waldmeir,

2009).

The PRC has used its propaganda ministry, granted interviews to international media, and dispatched government officials to reassure the world that the ambitions of its government are for its national security and sustainability. A challenge for the PRC is that diplomatic language has aided the nations it interacts with in defining China as a partner rather than an ally. How the PRC is categorized abroad allows a space for either collaboration or indignation by international governments that can alter China's image to the world. As a nation led by a communist government, the People's Republic of China is still philosophically at odds with Western governments.

Recent political stances by the Chinese Communist Party have drawn international angst and suspicion of China as a global leader. The promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad remains a focus of international observers of Chinese policy. Over the last three years, protests against Chinese policy and the response of Chinese officials to demonstrations underscored how the PRC was viewed throughout the world. Along with Russia, China moved to block a 2007 decision by the United Nations (UN) to bring sanctions against Sudan in the face of mounting evidence of forced displacement and genocide within Darfur (Bristow, 2008). The PRC's role as one of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council meant it could with one vote stop UN intervention on any issue. Though Chinese leaders held the Darfur decision as a call to not interfere with an independent nation's affairs, Bristow reports that critics saw the vote as China protecting economic expansion and political influence in Africa.

In the summer of 2008, protests in Tibet garnered global attention as the People's Republic of China prepared to host the Olympics. Although Tibet is recognized as an

autonomous region within the PRC by the United Nations and world governments,

the CCP policies to assimilate ethnic Tibetans and migrate thousands of Han Chinese to

the region have drawn sharp criticism (Yardley, 2008). Calls by Tibetan protestors to

promote independence from China were met with military force and critiques in the

Chinese media that characterized the protestors as desperate and their charges of abuse

unfounded. Yardley states that the current Dalai Lama, Tibet's religious and political

leader in exile, was targeted by Chinese officials as being the cause of the 2008 protests,

despite his calls for peace and public statements that Tibet did not seek independence

from the PRC. International observers in Australia, England, France, India, Japan, and

the United States staged protests supporting the Tibetan protestors as the Olympic Torch

toured the world.

The Chinese government would ultimately put an end to the 2008 protests in

Tibet. However, questions were asked during the broadcasts of the Olympics as to why

the PRC was granted approval to host the event as its government's human rights record

continued to be challenged by the international community (Best, 2008). Debates in the

2008 U.S. presidential election dedicated segments to focus on what candidates would do

to promote human rights in China (Nichols, 2008). On matters of human rights and

national sovereignty, the international community continues to discuss how to best

engage China in the future.

Despite controversies regarding Chinese policy, global critics and supporters

within Asia and throughout the world have to some degree successfully called upon

leadership from the PRC. The six- party talks in East Asia that address nuclear

proliferation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) received some

measure of success when Beijing placed political pressure on Pyongyang (Flintoff, 2009). Thus far, the PRC has worked closely with Europe and the United States to resolve the global economic crisis (Ho, 2009). Although considered a move to strengthen the image of China throughout the global community before the beginning of the Olympics, the PRC supported an August 2007 resolution by the United Nations to send 26,000 peacekeeping troops into Sudan (Peter, 2007).

Even as calls from its partners demand that China change its political posture, the Chinese government has taken steps to defend its record. For example, the PRC cites how either the United States of America or its allies supported its war on terrorism against the Uighar community in Xinjiang province (Kan, 2007; Chung, 2009). For China, permitting evidence of U.S. support in its policies challenges the notion that the PRC acts in secret and alone on its foreign policy and adds another dimension to discussions regarding how the infringement of human rights begin and end in Beijing. Chinese leaders also moved to increase contributions for humanitarian aid, assisting civilian refugees in Sudan (Qian & Wu, 2007) and rebuilding communities within its own borders. Through these efforts, China strives to create a more complex picture of its international policy and intent.

The actions PRC officials have taken to work alongside the U.S. in counterterrorism activities and to provide aid relief for humanitarian causes may improve the PRC's reputation. However, they cannot act as a shield against policies that may have suppressed or endangered the lives of people who openly challenge the decisions of the Chinese government. At the same time, it would be difficult to conclude that every policy and measure the Communist Chinese Party has taken since its inception has been

to the detriment of China as well as to its global partners.

In 2009, the People's Republic of China is in an economic and political position to act alone in many of its affairs. Yet, China is not immune to diplomatic pressures that can impact how it negotiates with the rest of the world. Students from the People's Republic of China who pursue higher education in the United States to some extent observe how U.S. - Chinese relations translate across borders (Dewan, 2008) and whether they have a role in shaping future policy between the two nations. How the development of political and economic policies between the two nations affects the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese graduate students in American universities is inconclusive.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework incorporates the theories of constructivist learning, motivation, and social identity. I use three theories because one theory seems inadequate to investigate the academic motivations and social experiences of students from the People's Republic of China pursuing graduate degrees in the United States. These theories form a framework that is best suited to my investigation and align with the participatory methodology I use.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory relies on the ability of the learner to inform her or his own educational experience. Within the framework of the study, constructivist learning will be applied as participants become co-researchers and help the researcher address the central questions of the study. Addressed in the field of science education, Yager's (2000) assessment of constructivist learning applies directly to the focus of the proposed research: "[C]onstructivists do not consider knowledge to be an objective

representation of an observer-independent world…knowledge refers to conceptual structures that epistemic agents consider viable" (p. 44). Recording how the co-researchers experience and understand U. S. higher education is central to the validity of the study.

Honebein (1996) illustrates a seven step plan of how to create a constructivist learning environment in the classroom. Honebein's approach to constructivist learning is predicated on the self-awareness of the learner in collaboration with fellow students: "[T]hrough collaborative activities, the designer lays the foundations for the sharing of multiple perspectives, as well as the social interactions learners undertake in their roles of practitioners: teamwork, leadership, negotiation, and cooperation" (p. 21). The role of the designer or researcher is to assist in providing a space for the study to be addressed, but the participants assist the researcher in gathering and identifying themes or phenomena through the sharing of knowledge.

Academic Motivations

The theoretical framework of the study also incorporated the motivational theories of Maslow (1943) and Max-Neef (1991), while investigating motivational literature specific to education. Few studies have examined academic motivations in students from the People's Republic of China or Chinese students studying abroad in the United States. Educational motivational theorists generally build on Maslow's hierarchy of needs motivational theory and on Max-Neef's challenges to Maslow's theory. I do the same, largely in order to examine how the term *academic motivation* was originally constructed and how it has changed.

As indicated in the theoretical framework of Chapter I, Maslow's (1943) theory of hierarchical needs detailed a linear progression regarding how people make decisions to fulfill their basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, and housing. Although education is a desirable goal in Maslow's theory, it cannot be considered without basic needs being fulfilled first. Walker's (1996) research involving the self-esteem of Navajo youth is representative of a genre of academic motivation studies that focus on promoting education as a deterrent to gang violence and substance abuse.

By his own account, Maslow noted that a point of expansion on his research would be to investigate communities and societies that are either underserved or low-performing in the context of education. Ford (2004) refers to Maslow's hierarchical needs theory to demonstrate that students of color in academically gifted programs in U.S. public education are susceptible to failure due to a lack of safety or belonging in their classes. Even with ability and an array of resources to support a student's education, a lack of representation either in community or culture can have a negative impact on academic motivation.

Additional scholars have identified individual motivational theorists as the centerpiece of their research. Elton (1996) draws on established motivational theories relating to academia and employment to determine how individual student work and standardized test results can be analyzed to encourage student employment. Elton proposes that students are aware of the weight many aspects of academia and society place on testing even as the validity of standardized examinations is challenged. Therefore, reinforcing teachers' efforts in guiding students to reflect upon the content of their subjects of study is critical to cognitive thinking skills. Nonetheless, it may be

difficult to draw reliable conclusions from comparisons in student motivation

between test preparation and course retention.

Social Identity Theory

The theory of social identity will be applied to gain an understanding of how the

participants in the study form a community while studying in the United States. Tajfel

(1982) observes the construction, collaboration, and conflict of individuals becoming a

part of social groups as they create their own identity within a group. Through

researching social dynamics throughout the world with diverse social groups, Tajfel

reveals that an individual's social identity is fluid, and is dependent upon the environment

inside and outside of one's community. Although Tajfel analyzes how social identity

impacts "minority-majority relations or, more generally, about future possibilities of

eliminating the more acute forms of intergroup tensions," (p. 483) he cautions researchers

not to come to a more optimistic or pessimistic conclusion on the matter. As societies

and social groups evolve, opportunities for new forms of communities will give rise to

new ideas regarding social identity. Within the context of the study, the social identity of

the co-researchers may vary depending on how they created their communities in the

United States.

Tajfel (1981) also presents the psychological challenges that can be felt by

individuals forming a personal identity to join or form a social group. Agreements to

either embody social stereotypes held by one's community or reinforce social stereotypes

about communities outside of one's social group may be concessions made to form an

individual identity. Tajfel states that issues regarding discrimination and assimilation

take place within the lives of children at an early age, perpetuated in part by the

expectations of a person's first known social group that also provides an initial understanding of a child's social identity. A student's mobility to interact with new countries and cultures does not isolate her or him from that community's understanding (or lack thereof) of traditions and societies outside of its own. How the Chinese students in the study identify with the surrounding U. S. community where they live will aid in understanding their lives beyond the classroom.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

It is the intent of the study to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by presenting the narratives of PRC students that share the interests, reasoning, challenges, and successes of pursuing graduate degrees in the United States. Although there is an extensive history chronicling Chinese students studying abroad in the United States, there is limited research on how they reflect upon their rationale for pursuing education in another country. When considering the role of Chinese students studying abroad in the United States, contrasts and comparisons in educational systems, government relations, cultural perceptions, and border crossings may impact the lives of the students. This study builds upon research involving study abroad programs with Chinese students in the United States that detail challenges with language and culture. Through a participatory research model, Chinese graduate students pursuing degrees in the U.S. aim to inform the study without the filter of a researcher.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A participatory research design was selected for this study. According to Creswell (2005), participatory research "has a distinct ideological foundation that shapes the direction of the process of inquiry in the type of issue that commands attention of the action researcher...[while also] study[ing] issues that relate to a need to address social problems that constrain and repress the lives of students and educators" (p. 555). This study took place over the course of nine months, exploring the significance of American higher education from the perspectives of Chinese students currently pursuing graduate degrees in the United States. A participatory research design best provided me with an opportunity to formulate relationships with the co-researchers, reflect consistently on my own biases in the study, observe the formulation of participants' experiences, and work collaboratively with the co-researchers to develop a plan of action addressing emerging themes in the research.

The study was informed by a sample of seven graduate students from the People's Republic of China. The research investigated the co-researchers' academic motivation for studying abroad, the quality of their education in the classroom, and their social experiences in the United States. The co-researchers were selected from an American university in the San Francisco Bay Area. I have established relationships with administrative staff and faculty in the departments and programs from which I selected participants. The co-researchers, therefore, represent a convenience sample, selected from a university where I have standing professional ties. However, the professional

relationships I have with the university did not play a role in the recruitment of the co-researchers for the study.

<div align="center">Strategies in Participatory Research</div>

As I pursued my study, I included Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) methodology of alternative histories and Maguire's (1987) methodology of critical inquiry. The research was also grounded in the discipline of participatory research in that co-researchers determined how their experiences contributed to a foundation of knowledge that had been marginalized (Freire, 2007; McTaggart & Kemmis, 1988; Sandoval 2000). The study addressed how a greater body of understanding needs to be built to consider the interests of all international students. Moreover, the study demonstrated how participatory research identifies the narratives of the co-researchers and how they can use their own voices to promote educational change.

Valach, Young, & Lynam (2002) describe the approach to participatory research I utilized for the study:

> Participants can be directly involved in action theoretical research as represented in the principles that underlie the approach as well as in the practical way it can and has been implemented. The principles that guide this approach do not cling to the primacy of preformulated constructs and theories. Rather, the research enters immediately into the participants' experience, and respects it as being the agentic experience of those involved. (p. 76)

<div align="center">*Alternative Histories*</div>

Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) approaches history as a "modernist project which has developed alongside imperial beliefs about the Other" (p. 30). What Tuhiwai-Smith calls

into question is the idea that the concept of Western history and research is all-encompassing:

> It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. (p. 1)

The research utilized the methodology of alternative histories by exploring systems of knowledge like oral accounts that were based within the co-researchers' communities. The purpose of using alternative histories was to share the perspective of the co-researchers and respect their knowledge as a potential component of higher education reform. The alternative histories presented by the co-resarchers gave voice to a view of higher education and study abroad in contrast to the dominant narrative. It was vital that I, as a Western researcher and student of Western history, recognized that the study could neither summarize the complete educational experience of the Chinese participants, nor fail to acknowledge how their stories informed my research.

Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) challenge to Western history as being defined as a summation or totality of all events serves as a guide to think critically about how our voices can contribute to history. The term *history* is utilized with multiple clichés in the Western world (e. g., *history tells us, know your history, never in history, first time in history, repeating history*). Varying the use of the word history can modify its meaning in a particular phrase. Yet, the finite and all encompassing nature of what history

represents—a guide to the past that can help create a map for the future—seldom

changes. One of Tuhiwai Smith's tenets is that it must be understood history is not

representative of everyone, and therefore it should be considered that history as it has

been manifested has pertinent flaws.

 One of the most prominent flaws of history explored in the research was its

patriarchal nature. Though the implications of patriarchy are acknowledged to an extent

by female authors through the lens of politics (Collins, 2000; Moi, 2002), it is not as

prevalent to observe challenges to the patriarchal structure of history. Moreover, there is

an absence of a healthy debate on how history does not reflect the vital contributions of

women in how civilizations, innovations, and communications have come about. It was

important to understand that throughout my educational career, I, a male researcher, have

accepted the patriarchal nature of history Tuhiwai Smith challenges. Therefore, the

knowledge I received from the co-researchers, a panel comprised solely of women, may

be usurped in the continuation of *history as we know it*, but with consideration to the

perspectives of both women and men. This revelation forced the study to define why

there was a need for a new history, and whether it was grounded in the same scientific

process it was meant to combat (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). By detailing our lived history,

were we attempting to accomplish an alternative to what has been accepted as fact? If so,

to whom were we presenting this alternative, and in what context is the research an

alternative?

 It was my hope that the transformative nature of participatory research could aid

in beginning to answer some of the questions Tuhiwai Smith presents. The act of

producing knowledge gives voice to the marginalized, and shows the power of becoming

self-determinative (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). Even those that

have a certain degree of privilege in terms of access or ability can be susceptible to

discrimination and oppression based on gender, ethnicity, or nationality. Producing

knowledge may not lead to a debunking of existing history, but does provide a platform

from which conventional ideologies can be challenged, and a space where the knowledge

producers can promote social change.

Critical Inquiry

As an individual and a researcher, my positioning within the study was critical to

how it was informed. Patricia Maguire (1987) asserts that research is rarely objective,

and that subjectivity is important in understanding both dominant and alternative

paradigms in social research. Based on Maguire's use of critical inquiry, I believe my

role within the research as a recorder, facilitator, and observer evolved as the research

developed. Moreover, I continued to explore and experience how I "operate[d] out of

alternative paradigm assumptions for [my] education or activist practices" but accept[ed]

"positivist paradigm assumptions about social science research without exploring the

contradictions" (p. 16).

There were several lessons I take from Maguire's critical inquiry methodology.

First, I was dedicated co-researchers to inform the study. Yet, I had the expectation that

the co-researchers would deem it necessary to further educate U.S. institutional leaders

and fellow classmates about their academic motivations and social experiences. In

addition, I believed that my participants would look forward to the opportunity to work

alongside me as fellow researchers. Still, my association to what Maguire describes as an

activist practice—removing the informational barrier between researcher and participants

to conduct the study as co-researchers—was not interpreted the same way by everyone. Therefore, some co-researchers expressed how they were content with aspects of their educational experience in the U. S. Others expressed challenges they had faced in American higher education, and how they hoped to address those concerns in the study.

Second, I assumed the act of including the Chinese participants as co-researchers contributed to the validity of the study. My rationale for believing the validity of the study was strengthened by the Chinese students identifying with the roles of participant and researcher was informed by what I described as my two competing consciousness. As an academic, I strove to stay present but in the background of my study. It was of the utmost importance that I did not mute the voices of the co-researchers who were meant to inform the research.   I believe the narratives by the co-researchers exploring the academic motivations and social experiences that factor into their U.S. education gave a firsthand account of how host institutions can best serve their Chinese students. At the same time, I maintained an active role as a researcher and expressed my own reflections as a participant in the research.

I believe my political stance to promote additional support for international students in general and Chinese citizens studying in the United States in particular ran parallel with Maguire's (1987) statement of positivist paradigm assumptions about social science research. Participatory research (social science research) allowed me to an extent to define my intended findings through data collection. A quantitative study (positivist paradigm) would normally require that I remain objective in pursuing my research, and unable to project what I believe was important until it could be supported by the study's findings after data collection. Either methodology could have led me to the conclusion

that additional support was needed for Chinese citizens studying abroad in the United States. Yet, participatory research is more explicit in identifying the need for the support of Chinese students abroad from the beginning of the study. The assumption that social science research can neither lead to the same conclusions nor be as academically rigorous as positivist research was one of the contradictions Maguire mentions.

At the same time, a potential contradiction of participatory research I observed through critical inquiry lay within the characterization of the co-researchers and the application of their narratives. It was my intention to share the results of the research with U.S. universities hosting international students and Chinese students planning to study abroad. However, in order to maintain the authenticity of the narratives shared in the study, it was important for me to avoid making the co-researchers' experiences romantic or exotic. For example, there was a difference in depicting the narrative of the experiences a Chinese student had in studying abroad as to earn an American degree and support a family versus as to face the challenges of adapting to U.S. culture and taking financial as well as social risks to pursue a dream. Both narratives could reflect the experience of a Chinese student. The difference could be in how I, as the researcher, consciously or subconsciously altered how that experience was communicated.

I was conscious of how the Chinese participants in the study worked as co-researchers. Yet, it was equally important to articulate how equality and equity in the recording of the data looked in participatory research. Smaling (1998) speaks to how a meaningful and dialogical relationship between the roles of the researcher and participant is a goal of participatory research, but not necessarily one that is met:

[C]ould the striving for dialogical relationships nevertheless be the cause of misery and failure? Yes, if we want perfection. If we require perfection, we can only be disappointed; moreover, we do not learn how to manage imperfection satisfactorily. Imperfection is the rule rather than the exception. Awareness of reality protects us from light-hearted romanticism. At the same time, striving for dialogical relationships protects us from strangling cynicism (p. 11).

By the conclusion of the study, the participants were co-researchers who decided how to share their voice with a larger audience, void of my presence during the process.

<center>Previous Research Utilizing Participatory Methodology</center>

When I began a study in participatory research as a class assignment (Washington, 2008), there was a need for me as a researcher and for the Chinese students as co-researchers to consider our perceptions of globalization and higher education. It was our collective conclusion that contemporary education in the People's Republic of China and the United States of America has moved towards emphasizing distinctions and differences amongst students. It was our concern that to define the world solely as an entity each individual can comprehend on her or his own terms was seen as a part of a more advanced, progressive education (Ladsing-Billings, 2000; Varenne & McDermott, 1999).

The idea of supporting communities or collaborating with family had morphed into a prism based only on economic ties. What seemed to be in flux throughout the study is how we defined ourselves ethnically, nationally, and personally. However, collective experiences provided a point of connection for the group, and allowed everyone to reflect on how the same experiences we shared were internalized differently.

The goal is not to deter the strength that comes from individual cultures and move towards an indistinguishable societal mass (Sandoval, 2000), but to honor and regard the steps that can be taken to address common challenges.

Research Setting

This study was conducted on the campus of an American university in the San Francisco Bay Area. The university is in an urban setting, serving an estimated 9,000 students. The university has received regional recognition for attracting international students, and was recognized as being one of the most diverse institutions of higher education in the United States. International students make up nearly six percent of the total student population, with the majority of these students pursuing graduate degrees. The university has a history spanning several decades of attracting the majority of its international students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Thailand. According to university administrators, the population of students from the PRC in 2009 was twice the size it was in 2003.

The co-researchers were selected from the population of international students who are citizens of the People's Republic of China. Depending on where the co-researchers were most comfortable to allow for open dialogue, formal spaces (a reserved conference room) or informal spaces (the university cafeteria) for discussion were selected. The co-researchers in the study were all Chinese graduate students pursuing masters degrees in Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL). The TESL department is located in the School of Education at Bay Area University. Within the graduate TESL program, international students comprise nearly a third of the enrolled students, with countries of origin including China, Mexico, South Korea, and Thailand.

With respect to the co-researchers' schedules and daily responsibilities, selecting a familiar space that did not remove them far from where much of their work took place aided in scheduling and having everyone meet together. The university campus served as a desired space for the dialogues because it represented a place that is familiar to the entire participant population. The campus was also the location where most of their academic courses and social interactions took place.

Co-Researchers

There were 7 co-researchers from the People's Republic of China currently studying at an American university in the San Francisco Bay Area that met the requirements for participating in the research. These requirements included that they:

- Lived in Mainland China (for the purposes of this study excluding Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan)

- Were currently pursuing a graduate degree

- Were available and willing to participate in this study

Initially, all co-researchers involved in the study were to be selected from a joint outreach effort by the researcher and key colleagues (including PRC students who had worked alongside me) on campus. However, co-researchers that were a part of the study ultimately committed based on their personal assessments of the study, as well as the recommendation of their fellow classmates. In July of 2009, I spoke with a university graduate student from the People's Republic of China who had approached me regarding research strategies in higher education. Through this conversation, I shared the intent of my current research.

The conversation led to several throughout the month of July, where she felt the research, in theory, would address many of the questions she and fellow classmates had often contemplated but had yet to discuss in a collaborative environment. As I met with an estimated 30 graduate students from the PRC in August of 2009, questions regarding the purpose of the research, background of the researcher, time commitments, and expectations of co-researchers were exhausted before being asked whether they were willing to be a part of the study. Upon the beginning of the dialogues, seven co-researchers had committed to participating in study.

<div align="center">Questions that Guide Initial Dialogue</div>

The researcher planned to ask questions in the first or initial dialogue that gave co-researchers the opportunity to reflect upon their interests in pursuing a degree in the United States. These questions (See Appendix G) were open-ended, and therefore allowed a space for comment beyond the topics proposed. It was my intent that the questions would be the first step in supporting a space for the co-researchers to begin shaping the themes of the study. Their academic motivations for studying abroad, as well as their social experiences at their host institution were shared in this dialogue.

In asking each question, it was the strategy of the researcher to probe further based on information the co-researchers provided. As co-researchers shared narratives with me regarding factors in determining whether to study abroad, topics within that information were explored for further analysis to formulate questions for future dialogue. The initial dialogue represented the first stage of a participatory research study that progressively called for participants to work collaboratively with the researcher in order to take action towards informing their communities about the research. Cornwall and

Jewkes (1995) stated the following regarding the guiding of participatory research by participants in a study:

> At the outset, researchers may find themselves in a position where the people with who they intend to establish collegiate relations have little or no confidence in what they know and look to the researcher for direction. A primary step in the process of restoring confidence is creating spaces in which people can be 'empowered' to engage in a process through which they can identify and confront their [questions] (p. 1669).

Data Collection Procedure

Co-researchers took part in formal and informal conversations regarding their academic motivations and social experiences with American higher education at their university. Five formal dialogues were included in the study. Each dialogue took place with all co-researchers present. The first three dialogues served as an opportunity for the researcher and the co-researchers to gain personal perspectives on each other. The dialogues also provided a space to begin to identify academic motivations for exploring U.S. higher education, in addition to the Chinese participants' experiences in American society. The fourth dialogue involved identifying the common themes in previous discussions, and reviewing ways to analyze our findings. The final dialogue discussed the co-researchers' experiences with the research, as well as exchanging ideas on how to potentially present our study to university administrators and students. The first dialogue took place during the fall semester of 2009. Additional dialogues occurred throughout the 2009-2010 academic school year (see Table 1).

Given the nature of participatory research and the experiences of a previous study (Washington, 2008), it was anticipated that the five dialogues would not represent the summation of all conversations with the co-researchers over the course of the study. Conversations that included developing a final synthesis to share the results of the study took place beyond the dialogue scheduled for January 2010. Discussions with individual or several co-researchers in the study occurred in informal settings that contributed to the goals of the research. Finally, the participants identified questions beyond those stated in the study, and as co-researchers became leaders in finding the answers.

Table 1

Dates of Dialogue with Co-Researchers

Dialogue Theme	Date of Dialogue
1. Introductions of study, co-researchers, and researcher	September 2009
2. Review of first dialogue; beginning conversations regarding interests in studying in the U.S.	October 2009
3. Review of previous dialogues; beginning conversations regarding experiences studying in the U.S.	November 2009
4. Review and identify common themes in the dialogues	December 2009
5. Plan of action to share work with university community	January 2010

Fieldnotes

In addition to the five dialogues, a total of 31 electronic correspondences (e.g., email and chat) and 17 phone conversations contributed to the construction of the study. During the course of the research, co-researchers were encouraged to contact me via email, phone, or in person. At times, co-researchers discussed their positions in the study, challenged procedures in the research's development, or communicated further with the researcher in confidence. As some of the correspondences were about coordinating

schedules for dialogue sessions, others involved oral histories spanning topics of

race, community, and politics. Because active and sustained discussion was an important

aspect of participatory research, informal conversations beyond the dialogues were vital

to the study's success. In addition, I, as the researcher, logged a journal of my personal

reflections throughout the research. The log aided in keeping me involved in the research

as a participant as well as a researcher.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

The data that informed the research was analyzed by all involved in the study.

Transcripts of dialogues were recorded and transcribed. Recurring themes in the

dialogues were identified through coding and given further consideration in the

progression of the research. The co-researchers and the researcher worked

collaboratively to ensure the accuracy of data. Analyses were organized to align with the

proposed research questions.

<div align="center">Validity</div>

Each dialogue was guided by a series of thematic questions that the co-researchers

were free to respond to in the manner or to the extent they were comfortable. All

questions beyond the first dialogue were constructed by information shared by the co-

researchers. In addition, co-researchers were granted the opportunity at any time to ask

questions of me concerning the study. These questions took place within the formal

dialogues or at anytime via other forms of communication including email and phone

discussions.

As documented in Chapter I, a limitation of this study was my assumption that the

co-researchers would be able to present their perspectives through the medium of the

English language. Interestingly, conducting the dialogues in English worked as a deterrent as well as a filter throughout the research. In several instances, the co-researchers expressed their frustration verbally about being unable to find the English word that could capture their opinion or emotion in recalling events in their American university experiences. During these times, a shift to speaking in Mandarin Chinese to call for assistance in expressing a thought in English occurred. Yet, there were also occasions where the co-researchers used Mandarin Chinese to discuss whether to censure certain vital information regarding the names of professors or fellow classmates in sharing their stories before continuing a conversation in English. Because all of the co-researchers were TESL graduate majors, had lived in the United States for at least a year, and had used English as the primary language in their professional environments, I believe they were able to fully express their views in English.

In an attempt to account for this challenge, the co-researchers were asked during the dialogue sessions to review notes and recorded conversations to assure that the information shared was done so in a manner that accurately reflected their intent. It was important to have the reviews during the dialogues so that the burden of reviewing data that could be published was not placed upon the co-researchers in a way that demanded more time and commitment from them. The study concluded with suggestions on how United States institutions can further strengthen the services provided to students from the People's Republic of China.

<div align="center">Protection of Human Subjects</div>

The co-researchers or participants were given written consent forms. I explained that withdrawal from the study would be appropriate at any time. The purpose and the

activities of this study were explained before the co-researchers were asked to sign

the forms. Co-researchers preserved full anonymity. In addition, pseudonyms were used

to represent the co-researchers, and specific details of their lives that could lead to their

identification were removed. Approval from the Institutional Review Board for the

Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco was obtained

to ensure that the study was done ethically following the guidelines to protect the

participants.

<div align="center">Background of Researcher</div>

My personal and professional interests have brought me to a place to undertake

this research. I have had a life-long interest in diplomacy. The idea of communicating

with others that may not only hold different cultures and beliefs, but also ideas that I may

have never considered was appealing. I benefit from and utilize the knowledge of the

world without claiming it as my own. However, as a citizen of the United States

attending public education, international relations was rarely seen outside the lens of

history: this reality was problematic because most history covering domestic and

international events revolves around armed conflict and war.

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to combine my love of education and

diplomacy into one study. Upon completion of my bachelor's degree, it was my intent to

pursue employment with the United States government. Due to financial and

professional considerations, I opted to enlist in an Americorps program partnering with

secondary schools in California. It was through this experience that I worked on behalf

of new immigrant families, primarily from Latin America and China, to ensure first-

generation Americans would have the best education possible. After opting to continue

working in the field of education for seven years, I understood the connection between international relations and education. After making the decision to pursue a graduate degree, I sought out a course of study that valued the voices of the communities that were impacted by the theories and policies I reviewed in the classroom.

Although my critical inquiry includes Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) challenge to Western research, it also comes from a place of knowledge sharing in U.S. higher education. In embarking on the current research, I see my work through the lens of global education and international relations. When considering discussions with Chinese citizens and international academics, my work has been accepted through that lens. As I have delved further into the research, the validity of my work has been questioned in a way that I did not anticipate.

In each of three interviews I have had with potential employers, the question as to why I have not focused on the African American community in my studies has been asked. My response has been to explain my intellectual interests in the global community (including African Americans) and my personal commitment to international education. I believe it was important to document the question of why *this research* not because of its implication of what I should or should not pursue in the field of academia, but rather to use the question as an opportunity to personally reflect upon where I positioned myself in the research. As Maguire (1996) states, "When we each know whose side we are on, we still have to consider how to demonstrate those allegiances in our human inquiry processes as well as in our daily lives and work" (p. 106).

I have the opportunity to pursue my interests in international relations with the hope that my research contributes to helping bridge communication and discussions

among U.S. and Chinese citizens and institutions. Because I am an African American male and not of Chinese descent, I am very invested and sensitive to making sure my study neither sensationalizes nor makes exotic the lives, successes, and struggles of the participants presented in the research. The study's intent was to collaboratively explore shared experiences and to decide how those experiences could be transformative to the extent that it provided a guide for American institutions who welcome students from the PRC.

It is my hope that the study provides a platform to discuss the concerns and expectations of host nations and international students in the realm of study abroad. As someone who aspires to be a college professor, broadening my comprehension of multiple realities, international students, and English Language Learners has also served as an extension of my own education. Through participatory research, I and my co-researchers hoped to dismantle the invisible shield between researcher and participant.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Previous studies about Chinese students studying abroad in the United States have focused on elements of acculturation and acquisition of the English language. There is limited research investigating the academic motivation for Chinese students to study abroad as well as a lack of literature addressing the social experiences of these students in a university setting. The purpose of this study was to learn from the perspectives of Chinese graduate students. Moreover, the process of the research resulted in the co-researchers identifying common challenges and questions they encountered studying abroad in the United States. At the conclusion of the findings, the co-researchers deliberated and came to a consensus on how to share their stories with prospective Chinese students hoping to study abroad at an American university.

Dialogues

In order to understand the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese students pursuing graduate degrees in the United States, the co-researchers took part in five dialogues throughout the 2009-2010 academic school year. The following research questions were addressed:

1.	What is the academic motivation for Chinese graduate students to study at universities in the United States?

2.	How do Chinese graduate students prepare to apply to universities in the United States?

3.   How do Chinese graduate students reflect upon their social

experiences while studying in the United States? How do their social experiences

impact their lives in and beyond the classroom?

4.   How can universities in the United States strengthen their support for

Chinese graduate students?

I posed a set of guiding questions for each dialogue, with the understanding that the co-researchers were free to identify topics of interests and importance at each discussion. As a result, we successfully addressed each research question. Moreover, participation in the study remained active.

Co-Researchers

The Chinese participants in the study became colleagues and co-researchers as the dialogues progressed. The participatory research model allowed me to not only acknowledge the participants as co-researchers in the study, but also provided me with the ability to maintain the relevance and authenticity of the dialogues in addressing their needs. The co-researchers responded to each research question in the study through the guiding themes developed for each dialogue (See Appendix G). However, as co-researchers in the study, the participants facilitated aspects of each dialogue and encouraged debate amongst each other regarding their experiences in the United States.

As the dialogues progressed, my role transitioned from researcher to colleague. In answering why Chinese graduate students were academically motivated to pursue degrees in the United States, I began to comprehend topics of test preparation, career objectives, and university requirements beyond the information available in the literature review. In understanding the social experiences of the co-researchers, I was challenged to give

pause to assumptions about American culture I had neither fully acknowledged nor considered. As a result, the narratives the co-researchers shared could serve as a premise for fellow classmates and administrators to consider how Chinese students see themselves. The narratives also served as a tool for reflection and application for everyone in the study.

All seven co-researchers in this study are from one of the provinces along the east coast of the People's Republic of China. With one exception, none had met each other before pursuing their graduate degrees in the United States. Their ages range from 20-25, and each was the only child in their families. With regards to gender, all co-researchers were women. In addition, all were pursuing masters degrees in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Attending their university of choice in the San Francisco Bay Area marked the first time any of them had traveled to the United States. The following descriptions of the co-researchers are meant to be general introductions that will serve as guides to the interests and lives of the students. A more thorough narrative and complete picture of each person emerges as themes in the dialogues are described. To respect the confidentiality of the co-researchers, their actual names and vital information has been excluded. Each individual determined what they wanted to include in these short biographies.

Anne

Anne is in the final year of her degree program at Bay Area University. Her hometown is in a rural setting an hour outside of the largest city in her province. Anne's mother and father worked as professors for universities in the PRC, and she hoped to work as a teacher as well upon graduation. Throughout the research, Anne spoke about

how she prepared herself socially as well as academically to study in the United States. Media and popular culture as portrayed in American television played a role in how Anne saw the United States before traveling abroad. Her professional goals include pursuing culture exchange work with non-governmental organizations as a language teacher and translator. Anne is also the first participant in the research, and the individual who was responsible for bringing the other co-researchers into the study.

Mickey

At the beginning of this study, Mickey was already in the final semester of her TESL degree program. As a result, Mickey was balancing the completion of her degree requirements with reviewing the status of her immigration and pursuing employment opportunities. Although she had seen her time at Bay Area University as a positive experience, Mickey decided to join the study in part to discuss how the TESL degree offered could be improved. By February of 2010, Mickey had accepted an appointment teaching at a K-12 school in the United States.

Daphne

Daphne is from Shanghai, China's largest city. She graduated from Bay Area University with a TESL masters degree in December of 2009. She is the first in her family to receive a post-secondary degree. Daphne's short term goal is to pursue a full-time teaching position in San Francisco. Ultimately, Daphne sees herself returning to the People's Republic of China to teach English at the university level. Because a doctoral degree is essentially required to teach at Chinese universities, she will have to enroll in a doctoral program at home or abroad. Due to the level of competition and difficulty in the current job market, Daphne has only been offered short term or part time work.

Kim

Kim is in the second year of her degree program at Bay Area University. She shares the same hometown as Anne, and the two live together on campus. Kim is the only participant with prior teaching experience. She worked for New Oriental Education & Technology Group, the largest provider of private educational services in the PRC. For Kim, the TESL masters degree represents an opportunity to follow her dreams and have the flexibility to teach in many areas of the world.

Christine

Like Daphne, Christine completed her TESL degree at Bay Area University in December of 2009. In addition to her degree, Christine also has an interest in utilizing interactive media in the classroom. Although content with her education, she is concerned about what aspect(s) of her studies may stand out as an advantage in the job market. Although Christine is looking forward to returning to China, she is also considering employment in the United States.

Jessica

Jessica is from Beijing and in her second year at Bay Area University. Thus far, she has a mixed assessment of the TESL degree program. Although she has enjoyed the classes, the differences amongst the students in terms of age and culture were greater than she anticipated. Upon graduation, Jessica plans to teach English as a Foreign Language in China. Due to academic and professional demands, Jessica was unable to participate in all of the dialogues.

Stacy

Stacy is from Beijing, and is in the first year of the TESL program at Bay Area University. She is the only one of the co-researchers to have prior experience studying abroad. Because Stacy is fluent in several languages, she is interested in learning how the TESL degree can aid in her development as a teacher in regards to culture as well as linguistics. Stacy also has an interest in working in diverse and multicultural environments to get different perspectives on issues that matter to her.

Eighth Participant

As a participant, I represent the only American and doctoral student in the study. As a researcher using a participatory research model, I had initially assumed that my role was to engage discussion but not necessarily take an active role in the dialogues. Based on past literature regarding participatory studies, I believed that I could best serve the research and the co-researchers by removing myself from discussion. After the first dialogue, I realized that a participatory study did not require that I remove myself from the dialogues, but that I also take part as a co-researcher. The assumption that I would dominate discussion and quell participation by simply contributing to the dialogues was arguably an arrogant, hegemonic pre-conception.

First Dialogue – Deciding to Study in the United States

Location and National Ranking

The initial dialogue begins with a reintroduction of the purpose of the study. Next, I ask why everyone has decided to study in the United States. The answers are specific to Bay Area University, its location, and the degree programs it offers:

Mickey: The [Bay Area] is very famous and is known for a diversity of cultures; the population in California is big so more opportunities for jobs, internships, and other opportunities.

Christine: Location; I have relatives from Shanghai that say the Bay Area is the best area in the country. I had a friend who study at [Bay Area University]…they say you can work part time and study and it is a good thing.

Anne's response to the first question was similar to what had been said. Although Bay Area University was one of her top choices to pursue a graduate degree, its location and multicultural communities were instrumental in her decision:

I had a chance to go to another school [in the Midwestern United States], but I did not want just theory. I wanted to also interact with people; the Bay Area is very diverse and there are many English learners here, so I could speak with people and learn theory too.

Anne also explains that the university's proximity to Silicon Valley was of great personal interest to her. She feels that advancements in technology mark "the future of education in the classroom." Kim echoed Anne's sentiment regarding an understanding of the Bay Area as a "melting pot" where she would feel more comfortable and accepted in a U.S. university setting.

At this point, Jessica gives her perspective as to why she pursued a graduate degree at Bay Area University:

When I came from Beijing, I applied for two schools, [a New York University] and [Bay Area University]. My agency got me into [Bay Area University] and I was happy because it had more international students than my other choice, and the Chinese population you know; it was a large population, a lot of ABCs [American Born Chinese] that want to learn Chinese and that you can speak with; the ranking of course was important too.

Jessica's comment regarding the importance of university rankings marked a turning point in the discussion during the initial dialogue. As Daphne stresses the importance many Chinese students from the PRC place on institutional rankings, Christine recalls

looking at various sources, particularly *U.S. News and World Reports*, to determine

the best schools for her field of study. Although Stacy considered several other

universities in the United States, Bay Area University's national ranking was critical to

her decision: "Because other schools, I'm not saying not good because they are, I mean,

it's good, but it's maybe, um, for Chinese people they really care [laughter], about the

rankings."

Although each co-researcher stated they chose Bay Area University because of

the TESL graduate program it offers, the university's location also was important. The

multicultural environment of the Bay Area in general gave the co-researchers a sense of

comfort. They believed transitioning to a new environment could be easier at Bay Area

University than at universities (and its surrounding areas) in the United States that may

not be as culturally diverse. Moreover, as each co-researcher stated that she ultimately

enrolled at Bay Area University in part due to its national ranking, no one had a strong

grasp or understanding of how these rankings were comprised. Trust in the organizations

that develop these reports, and what appeared to them as universal participation by

American university leaders in the development of college rankings was enough to justify

the process.

Admissions

According to the co-researchers, the expediency of the admissions process at Bay

Area University helped in simplifying the decision of studying abroad. Although all of

the co-researchers had some image or concept about the San Francisco Bay Area, only

Christine knew that there was a Bay Area University before applying:

BW: Why did you decide to study at [Bay Area University]?

Daphne: Yeah for me, I had no idea bout [Bay Area University]. My agency set it up for me to go abroad; it is known that [Bay Area University] is a relative easy school to apply for.

BW: The program is easy?

Daphne: No, the requirements. I only have to take the English language test, and I like San Francisco; so [Bay Area University] is my first choice… Actually that was one of the important reasons I chose [Bay Area University]. I was searching for a program that did not require the GRE, and this was one.

The TESL program at Bay Area University requires that students whose first language is not English take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). This was an expected requirement by all of the co-researchers, and as future teachers of English, they all felt it was a logical prerequisite to their graduate degree program. However, the fact that Bay Area University did not require a Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score at the masters degree level was seen as one less barrier to being granted admission. Unlike the TOEFL, many of the co-researchers felt that the GRE was created specifically for native or American students and put international students whose first language was not English at a disadvantage.

In addition to examination requirements, the ability of Bay Area University's School of Education to provide admission decisions in a timely manner also influenced some of the co-researchers to enroll in the TESL graduate program. Stacy comments that a prompt admission decision from Bay Area University led to her deciding to pursue a graduate degree rather than pursue employment opportunities:

Stacy: I, I applied, and actually it's quite fast. Our, our university. I applied like, February? And in April, I got response.

BW: Hmm. That is fast.

Stacy: Yeah. So, it, that is another reason I came. Because there were, everybody say in office work very slow. But actually, they gave me a very fast response. Because when I applied, I didn't like, uh, um...expect that um..I can...come.

BW: Right.

Stacy: But, um..the fast, the fast answer they gave me also like brought me here.

BW: Oh, wow. [Laughter]. That is interes..Okay.

Stacy: So I, I'm thinking at that time like applying university and also looking for a job. But, they, they just give me response I can come.

Daphne and Kim explained that even with the assistance of an agency that works on behalf of Chinese students seeking graduate programs in U.S. universities, the admissions process is often viewed as daunting. It was the experience of the participants, including myself, that there is no universal admissions process that applies to all institutions of higher education in the United States. Because of the variance in admission requirements, agencies the co-researchers hired to support their search for admission in an American university either asked for more information than was required, or bypassed colleges altogether that demanded a very meticulous application process. As a result, some agencies may not have given the co-researchers an opportunity to be fully considered by all universities of interest to them.

Examination Preparation

Although the co-researchers spoke about examinations in context of admissions, there was a larger and more extensive conversation regarding preparation for collegiate examinations in China. All of the co-researchers stated they had been studying the English language since primary school in China (approximately age 12), with at least nine years of formal educational experience devoted in part to learning it. Yet, they felt

the need to enroll in courses geared towards preparation for the TOEFL examination.

The co-researchers explained how they saw the importance of testing in China:

>Christine: There are trainings and workshops for the TOEFL, as well as sample tests and strategies

>BW: Did your undergraduate colleges offer classes or were the classes private?

>Anne: No. It is actually big business. Chinese are so crazy about tests.

>Christine: The New Oriental School is the most known. It offers sample tests and strategies for the big test. You know this one school?

>BW: Never heard of it

>Anne: Really? It's like the Microsoft of these type of schools. There is one in most large cities in China. At least one. I think there is one even in Canada, but not the U.S., not yet

>Christine: And, and they design practice tests that are suppose to look just like the real tests

>Kim: The teachers set up vocabulary to have you ready to take the test also.

>BW: How many students would you say take the classes? I mean since the classes are private they must be expensive.

>All: Everyone [laughter]

>Jessica: You cannot believe how big the classes get. I think like someone said, so many Chinese are so invested in these tests. You can really take advantage.

>Mickey: Like they have the, what is it? The VIP classes like $200 a hour. And many people take those too. You know there is the CET and the TEM tests. The TEM test is what we took.

>BW: The CET is

>Kim: The College English Test. This is for those who did not major in English studies but want to study abroad. The TEM is the Test for English Majors which is quite different and expect you to know more too.

>The co-researchers also explained in great detail the classes designed to prepare

Chinese students pursuing graduate studies in the United States. Moreover, they could

recall the price structure of each course depending on the test, the enrollment (private

or semi-private tutoring), and the time of year a person would sign up for a class. Each

participant believed that the many courses and companies set up for preparation for the

TOEFL and GRE represent a profitable industry in an environment where all students are

looking for an edge over each other. However, in such an environment, it was difficult to

convince themselves that without tutoring they were equally prepared to take the TOEFL

examination as students who enrolled in test preparation courses.

Visa Requirements

Among the co-researchers, there was general consensus that acquiring a visa to

study in the United States was relatively simple. Many felt that getting a visa to study in

the United States depended on major of study and commitment to return to the People's

Republic of China upon graduation:

> BW: And did any of you have problems getting documents, visas to come to study?

> Jessica: I don't think any of us did. I mean, our majors are not too sensitive

> Anne: Yes. I had some friends that went 3 or 4 times in line at the embassy to get a visa and they just say no for no reason. Sometimes ask only 2 questions and just no. It was easy for us though. I had friends that like sciences and I don't think they like it in the interview.

> BW: So who does the interviews?

> Kim: Americans. U.S. embassy in China.

> Jessica: For me, they just ask 2 questions and you are in [Laughter]. Yeah, what school are you going to for study. And what is your plan after graduation.

> Mickey: The answer is always China for the second one. "What do you do after graduation?" China, go back to China. China, China, China [Laughter]

The cost involved in preparing to apply for a visa to study in the United States was a point emphasized in the discussion versus any apprehension as to whether they would actually be granted the necessary documents to travel abroad. Co-researchers believed officials at the U.S. embassy looked favorably upon the idea of spreading the English language to others. Although they admitted there was no real way to validate that claim, the co-researchers felt their field of study influenced decisions on their visas.

Stacy had a vivid memory of the steps necessary to gain her visa. Possibly due in part to being in her first semester when participating in this dialogue, she explained the process of preparing documents and awaiting an appointment for a visa:

> It's, it's quite complicated. Because everybody wan.... a lot of people wants to get in to the U.S. And...then, they have to know how to arrange it. It's very complicated [Laughter]. First, you have to set arrangements of, uh, interview. So, you can't just call the embassy, because if it's like that, the embassy probably just got like crazy. So, they have a idea that they sell, a kind of um, telephone card, in the bank? So you call, and, you say what kind of visa you want, want to, like uh F-1 or what. So you call and give, and uh, operator all of your information… So you take all of these forms, and that is not enough. You have to pay one fee, like $200 [USD]. For kind of like, service fee. Like all the scholars like students have to pay, like some, um, department of the, security territories. Something like this? And then the visa fee is like, I don't remember, like $100 [USD] something visa fee. So you pay all this, and you fill all these forms, and, the day of the interview, it just got in. And you...it's...you...stand in the hall, and like there's someone tell you what to do.

Although she found the process challenging mentally and physically, Stacy felt fortunate to be approved for her visa.

In addition, Stacy commented that the procedures and paperwork demanded for the visa was understandable. "Because they want real students hear in America. Because after 9-1-1, they don't want some people, like doing nothing, just walking around. Like we understand, but, um...it's complicated." Many of the co-researchers echoed that the Chinese populace was fully aware that September 11th resulted in an added layer of

security regarding who could and could not enter the United States. We discussed

that there was not necessarily parameters known by the American public what these

security measures were, Christine and Angela were confident that Chinese students

pursuing STEM (scientific, technology, engineering and mathematics) majors would

have a difficult time acquiring an American visa.

Social and Academic Perceptions

In the final part of the initial dialogue, we discussed how everyone perceived their

relationships with professors and fellow classmates. In comparison to the topic of

professors, little time was spent on experiences with fellow classmates. The co-

researchers were in agreement with Anne and Jessica who suggested cultural and age

differences in their programs set up boundaries to communication. Because their courses

took place during the weeknights or on weekends, everyone (including themselves) was

more anxious to leave class than hold conversations with each other. This was

disappointing to some degree, but understandable. The co-researchers felt the structure

of the program left little time for community engagement.

However, Christine did have a more specific reflection regarding how she felt

U.S. and other international students viewed Chinese students:

> Christine: There is that, but I also believe there is a political thing with Chinese students.

> Jessica: No.

> Daphne: I don't believe that.

> BW: But you are saying this is what you experienced?

> Christine: Oh yeah. You know culturally we are communists, you are not like us, we are [Christian], and you are not. I can just feel it. I know that is part of it.

Christine mentioned how these perceptions drove her to enroll in elective courses that dealt with issues regarding international relations and human rights. "People keep saying how China violates human rights violations, everything there is so wrong. So, okay, how do you do? I want to know how you want to do it? What about your record?" Christine agreed with her colleagues that program structure hindered community development amongst students. At the same time, she felt underlying assumptions about students based on their ethnicity or national identity divided classrooms with a multicultural population.

With regards to professors in the TESL graduate degree program at Bay Area University, the co-researchers felt the program structure impacted their teaching. The courses offered in the program and the professors' approach to teaching was different from their expectations. When I asked what they thought about their professors, the co-researchers expressed their opinions in the following exchange:

> Anne: They all have very good personalities, and they care about you; and I think that they can, you know with their good personalities, teach me and help me learn how to be a good teacher. But the program is too easy; there are no research classes. I am taking one that is hard but I like it because I am learning a lot. [The professor] cares about us too, but it is hard and I am learning more

> Kim: I want to agree. Like I took this writing and speaking course but I don't learn anything and I wonder why I come. The only thing I learned was APA format.

> Jessica: That's important.

> Kim: Yes, but not for a entire class. I mean the class was so simple, and we just get everything by notes. It was a lot like taking classes in China. You know you just come in and listen and no conversation with your classmates or the professors. I like the classes I take here because you speak with classmates and professors and it helps your confidence.

> Christine: And the teachers are overwhelmed, and it is the same classes with different names over and over. I think it's just a way to save money.

In addition, the co-researchers commented that many of the interactions they had with their professors seemed either scripted or forced in an effort to make them feel comfortable. Unfortunately, the efforts of the professors often had the opposite effect, and left the co-researchers frustrated:

> Daphne: That is true. I mean there is no diversity in professors, and they all teach the same. And then, then they worry if you are happy.
>
> BW: Happy?
>
> All: [Laughing]
>
> Mickey: Yeah, like they tell a joke, and you don't laugh. They come up and say "is everything okay", and I just fake laugh so they don't ask me.
>
> Anne: There really are not enough teachers, and not a lot of choices for classes to choose. There is a real lack of a close relationship with my advisor. He is just not accessible.
>
> Mickey: It's true. Like I don't see my advisor until next semester when I graduate. My final class, where I will have like 3 or 5 individual appointments, but before then
>
> BW: You mean like your final project?
>
> Mickey: Yes, but before then you find it impossible to meet your advisor.
>
> Anne: My advisor just changed [laughs]. Yeah, I did not really even know who it was, or I forgot. And then when I was going to try to talk with someone, I was told through email, oh, this person is not your advisor anymore. I was like okay?

The co-researchers reiterated that they enjoyed working with the professors in the TESL graduate program at Bay Area University. But, they also believed the program in itself needed to be changed in a way to allow for greater accessibility to the professors outside of the classroom.

Summary

The first dialogue underscored an assumption I unconsciously made at the onset of the study: the co-researchers were invested in the idea of pursuing a degree anywhere in the United States. The decision to study in the United States for international students could be based on the expectations of a specific area of the nation. In addressing the academic motivation to pursue graduate degrees in American institutions of higher education, the co-researchers referred to state, city and regional characteristics they associated with the San Francisco Bay Area.

The co-researchers' expectations of this part of the nation did not necessarily reflect an overarching view or opinion of the United States or American higher education. Issues regarding admissions and visas revolved around a national concept of the United States. However, a part of their academic motivation to study at Bay Area University came from the prospect of living in a multicultural and multilingual society as TESL graduate students. Nonetheless, the co-researchers identified how their program had yet to meet their expectations. The following dialogue begins to create a construct about how the co-researchers' personal vision of America becomes defined.

Second Dialogue – Expectations of U.S. Higher Education

Psychological Preparation

After the co-researchers acquired student visas to pursue their graduate degrees at Bay Area University, there was still an uncertainty regarding the next several years of their lives. Mental, physical, and monetary investment into the prospect of studying in the United States had taken up much of their lives over the course of several years before successfully achieving their goal. However, as the moment to travel abroad became

closer, the co-researchers alluded to general feelings of anxiety about leaving home

for the first time.

Christine's initial concern about living in the United States was not directly

related to studying at an American university:

> Cooking Chinese food. [Laughter] Yeah. Because the first thing my mother told
> me was, you couldn't live outside. Because you couldn't, you don't know how to
> feed yourself. So, yeah, I watch her a lot, about how my mother cook Chinese
> food. So I can know a little bit, how to feed myself with the right food. [Laughter]
> Yeah, so definitely, this, that's the first preparation for me….Because, yeah. As
> before, I saw American, um, the United States as a country where most people
> will eat the hamburger and sandwich only. So, I think, 'oh my goodness, how can
> I get rice'! [Laughs] So, yeah. Now, I'm, I'm fine. Yeah, I can pass by, and I
> always cook everyday.

Initially, I took Christine's concern about cooking to be linked to a coping strategy or

way to maintain memories and connections to home. However, the other co-researchers

explained how food, for anyone, is critical for maintaining one's health. This was the

perspective Christine was considering with regards to cooking.

Mickey believed Christine's example was a microcosm of the expectation that she

would have little if any support to take care of her basic needs in the United States.

Mickey described her mode of thinking in the following way:

> You, you should know that it's hard to live by yourself, without your parents And
> you have to mentally prepare that you are going to take care of yourself. Yeah,
> and, after this I, cooking is a basic skill, and there also many other skills that
> required. Like,...very, um, how to....um, let me see...how to, how to maintain
> your health. Um, how to interact with others, something like this.

The co-researchers expressed frustration encountering subtle angst and passive

aggressiveness amongst the surrounding community for asking general questions

regarding the location of markets or banks. It seemed difficult to ask anyone beyond

each other and staff in the office of international student services questions many

people would have when becoming acclimated to a new location.

Media depictions of life in the United States played a role in how Anne thought

about university campuses:

> Anne: ...But for me, before I came to the United States, I was thinking about...American culture. Thinking whether I could fit into American culture. So...I watch the American campus soap opera, "Veronica Mars", a lot.
>
> BW: Oh yeah. Uh huh.
>
> Anne: I, I don't know whether you had seen that before. So, it's all about what's like happening in American campus, university campus. So I think from that TV series I know a lot about campus violence [laughter], campus drug
>
> BW: Whoa.
>
> Anne: Campus...rape
>
> BW: Wow.
>
> Daphne: What happened, who is she? [Laughter]
>
> Anne: [Laughter]...Ver, Veronica Mars is a detective, a campus detective. She needs to, deal with those negative things. The darkside of the campus.
>
> Mickey: Oh...So you know what, why you were [Laughter] always so concerned about the safety [Laughter]
>
> Brad: So do you think, do you think this some, there has been, now that you've been here, there's some truth in the show?
>
> Anne: The drug. I heard that some of the, mo, not most, a lot of the American male students, undergrads, have marijuana, and they traded the drugs in Golden Gate park at night.

Although Anne stated that she thought aspects of Veronica Mars were dramatized for

purely viewing purposes, the depiction of campus life, communication styles, and

potential hazards were closely mirrored by what she saw at Bay Area University. As a

result, Anne felt fortunate for watching the show:

All of those things make me feel, feel comfortable. Feel, so that's, that's why I did not regret to spend a lot of time watching Veronica Mars when I was in China. Just a few days, a few months it's before I come here.

As Anne saw some benefit in the portrayal of American campus culture through media, Kim considered explanations by a friend in the United States about American society and diversity:

And then, one of my friends who lived in San Francisco for about like 20 years, yeah. She tell me that...she tell me that....so everybody in China, knows that, many people in China knows that America and Australia, diversity culture. Um, it is melting pot. They're many races here. It gives, it provides many possibility for other countries, or other peoples of other countries. But, there is m, important stuff here, is that, this possibility also, gives possibility to racial discrimination. ….Cause, cause it's really hard to balance all the races....So, at first, my parents, they were a little bit afraid about this. And, this, this was the first time I'm going abroad, so, they will be a little bit afraid about that. And the friend who live here for 20 years, she told me, and she also told my parents that, this kind of situation, I mean, this, uh, race, race discrimination here is not very, that big. Cause San Francisco, um [Extended pause] cause San Francisco is like, because of different people here. And, [Extended pause] um, it's not that, and it's better for them to, to live a life here, to live a good life here.

Kim explained that the opinions and lived experience of friends that lived in the United States helped relieve much of the tension she initially felt about studying abroad.

The co-researchers also discussed considerations after graduation. In the following exchange, Daphne and Christine project pending obligations when completing their degree:

Daphne: For me it's financial preparation. Before I come here, because San Francisco is very expensive city

BW: Um hum.

Daphne: And yeah, that makes...extremely expensive. So yeah. We need to prepare, for like about um, the whole amount of the tuition and the living expenses before we go t, before we go to um get our visa.

BW: Okay.

Daphne: But it's uh defintely a mess before, a must before we do. This is um, first step, I think. But I think

Christine: This is more involve my parents' participation. I mean, personally, there, there's not so much I can do to prepare for this like, fortune. [Laughs]

Daphne: Cause I'm, I think I need to pay back for them [Laughs]

Christine: Yeah yeah yeah. I also [Laughter]

Daphne: That's a very big concern of mine as always. So even now I'm thinking, it's a...very

Christine: Yeah my mother asked me to write something about her like this a mortgage. And I will pay back her with something

Daphne: Really? That's very American. [Laughter]

For Daphne and Christine, preparation for study in the United States included being mindful of the financial investment that would be required after graduation. The co-researchers discussed how Bay Area University required financial statements from international students to prove they could fully fund their education before enrolling. Because their parents had in many cases covered the entire costs of their education, a general need to in some form return the funding they were provided resonated with the co-researchers.

Parents Reaction to Study Abroad

During the second dialogue, the co-researchers explained how their parents influenced their decision to study in the United States. I anticipated the co-researchers' response to the question of parent participation being limited to themes of counseling and financial support. However, the conversation was almost exclusively focused on parent angst at the reality that their children were leaving home. Often one parent encouraged their child to pursue a graduate degree in the United States, while the other parent held

reservations about when they would see their daughter again. Kim explains the

dynamics between her parents regarding her decision to study abroad in the following:

> The attitude of my parents totally opposite from my mother to my father. They, they're totally opposite. My father is, he is like,...sensitive person. He know I am going to go. But..., um I can, I can tell that he was not that happy. Cause um, I'm the only child in my family. And, ...my father, he is a little bit like, 'oh, you're going to go, and maybe we gonna depart from each other, for a long time'. Um, he is sensitive. I, I, I don't know how to deal with this. But, I also, I always like, email to him, and chatting online, and so. I do something sweet to him. But, I don't know whether he can feel better or not. But, yeah. It makes me feel better that I can do something for him. Like, when his birthday, I sent uh, present for him. But, but at that time he was not ha, happy….He sometimes talk to my mom about, '[Kim], gonna go?' And that it's only two of us in the family, in the house. It's a little bit sad, I know. But my mother always, but my mom always like say something like, 'don't worry, he's okay. He's a big girl. Oh she's a big girl.' I mean, my mom is like a tough person. She is a firm. She, she, she, she knew that wha, wha, what is my dream. What I want to do. So, she is the person who always support me without any reason. But, I, I don't mean that my father, he didn't support me, but he is a little bit sensitive than my mother. So,...my mom always expect me that I should go outside. But, she, did a lot of, a lot of things, for me, to, for me to help me to make the decision.

Anne faced a similar dynamic as Kim with her parents. Although Anne's mother

and father ultimately accepted the absence of their only child, they also discussed ways

for Anne to stay in contact with them:

> So, I always, at first I was scared. I don't want to go abroad. But they said it's good for you. And okay, and I want to go. And they said okay….So but now, it, you know, first few months when I got here, my mother, kind of very, miss me. So he demanded me to call her, everyday. So if you don't call me, that's okay. But you have to leave a message on QQ [Instant messaging program in the PRC].

Anne explained that as she became more acclimated to her new environment and more

immersed in her course studies, the time and effort needed to communicate with her

mother on a daily basis was draining. Although Anne promised her father that she would

keep in touch with her mother, doing so on a daily basis was no longer feasible.

Christine understood that her parents did not agree on whether she should pursue her graduate degree in the United States. Yet, their perspectives changed once it was understood that Christine would be leaving China for at least two years.

> Because um, my parents have to have like, um, funny switch? Because at first my father was supporting me like, going to school. Because when I got the admission letter, he said, 'Wow, that's great. You have a chance to look at, like outside China.' And my mother was like, 'Uh oh. No. I want to keep my only daughter, like, 10 feet, with me.' So, just these, kind of have, you know like, strong argument. And of course, I got, I got here. So, my father won. And, uh, now, I, kind of like, um, have to, choose, whether I want to be here, or I will be back to China. And my father was like, 'um, it's okay if you want to be back. You might have like better chance if you want to back.' My mother was like, 'oh, you should like, continue your life here.' So they have like funny switch.

As the co-researchers described the continuing conversations they have with their parents while studying in the United States, they also shared how keeping in touch with their family made the transition abroad easier. However, what was seldom discussed with their parents was the prospect of staying in the United States beyond graduation. The co-researchers described this as the difficult conversation that neither they nor their parents wanted to have until their programs were completed.

Prospects for Employment

In the second dialogue, the co-researchers explained that their plan to complete the TESL graduate degree program at Bay Area University was seamless with the prospect of finding a job. Part of the co-researchers' academic motivation to pursue a graduate degree in the United States came from the belief that an American degree could be more marketable globally than a Chinese degree. The co-researchers expressed surprise and disappointment in what they saw as a difficult job market with a graduate degree that did not increase the likelihood of becoming employed. The co-researchers saw the continued stories of unemployment amongst Chinese friends and alumni from

Bay Area University as validation of their concerns. Moreover, the co-researchers

stated that job opportunities in the field of education included multi-layered obstacles that

relied on a series of credentialing requirements coupled with unstated preferences.

After mentioning a PRC student who graduated with an American graduate

degree and currently teaches Mandarin in Washington, D.C., Anne contended that finding

employment as a teacher in the United States was a rarity for TESL graduates:

> Anne: But I mean there are more people couldn't find a job.
>
> Christine: What do you mean by, 'more' people?
> Anne: Ask me all TESL. So they go back to China. And they couldn't find a job in America. Couldn't find a decent job, or full-time job in America. So they go back.
>
> Daphne: Cause, I think it's so unfair. Cause, after master's degree, you, if you want to teach in school, they need credentials. I think I'm ready to go after graduation. [Laughs] But, you, you need like, you need to study, 30 credits, units, to take the test and get a credential and take one more year. It's so unfair for us, to find a job.
>
> Christine: I don't think we are ineligible for credential. Because, I think there is a website which saids, we should like, be enrolled in a certain credential program
>
> Mickey: But we are not like, we are not eligible for this program because we couldn't pass, we didn't pass the, certain test, and the
>
> Anne: CBEST [California Basic Educational Skills Test]. Yeah. I also heard that we have to volunteer in some of the public school, and then you can have the credential. And then you, go back to work in that public school.
>
> Daphne: So that's not my plan. I don't want to get credential at all.
>
> Anne: No credential, but that
>
> Daphne: So, no decent job. I know, I know. So that's so unfair.

Moreover, Christine felt her experience searching for a teaching job reinforced the

importance of a teaching credential:

> And um, actually I went to a, teacher's orientation organized by our school, School of Education. But it's only to, it's only opened to undergraduates who are

> enrolled in credential programs. So I feel there, there is a obstacle between our, our non-credential graduates and credential graduates. And uh, um, the Dean, the Dean of, oh wait um, even, declared that there was like huge demand for creden, uh for, graduates from credential programs

As a researcher and participant, I asked the co-researchers follow up questions regarding credentialing. At Bay Area University, a teaching credential could be acquired by TESL graduate students by completing an additional two semesters of courses. These courses were separate from the required TESL program, which was a point of frustration for the co-researchers. To that end, I wanted to know when the co-researchers realized that finding a teaching job without a credential would be difficult, and when did they understand that their TESL graduate degree program did not offer a credentialing option.

Daphne and Mickey recalled that they heard "more and more" about the importance of credentialing in teaching as they moved closer towards graduation. Anne felt she had a sense of the need for a credentialing program to teach upon entrance into the TESL graduate program:

> I think we know it, at the beginning. We know there is a kind of credential. But, when we choose this major, we don't think we need this credential. But when I here, when we look for a job. We know, oh, we really need a credential.

Daphne had determined that she did not want to pursue a credential, primarily because it would require an additional year of study, and because credentials varied from state to state. She wanted to begin working and felt that another year at Bay Area University would have been financially damaging to her family that was supporting her education.

Other co-researchers believed the issue of credentialing was a way to ensure American students received teaching jobs in the U.S. The following exchange highlights the uncertainty co-researchers have of how their degree will aid in the pursuit of a teaching job:

Christine: I don, I don't know how to, how to describe it in English. But in China, we call it like local protectism? Most of the…Yeah, most of the undergraduates that are, who are enrolled in credential programs are locals.

Mickey: Most of them know the program. We didn't even know. I don't think they hire…they

Daphne: Oh, you mean not eligible.

Christine: Yeah. We could apply for the spring term, but got, gotten enrolled. So yeah. We don't have, a, uh, I mean, cause, there, uh, I uh, when I was like applying for schools. I, I uh, I used to watch those information language. I saw like oh, I, I wanted this program. But I couldn't get it.

Anne: So the situation is that even though they need a lot of teachers, but you're international students, is not the ones that [American secondary schools] need to consider.

As the conversation progressed, we came to a consensus that teaching in public secondary schools held a more extensive requirement for teacher credentials than private K-12 education. Anne, Daphne, and Mickey recalled their conversations with teachers at private schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. The teachers detailed requirements for teaching credentials and the likelihood of being hired without it.

The question of employment marked the first time in the study that the co-researchers expressed interests in staying in the United States beyond graduation. However, at this point in the dialogues, it was too early to determine whether pursuing employment in the United States was an academic motivation to pursue an American graduate degree. For Kim, the participant with the most teaching experience in the study, the academic motivation to enroll in a TESL graduate degree program at Bay Area University was in part to acquire the means to work in what she describes as a better environment. Throughout Kim's academic career at Bay Area University, her former

colleagues at New Orientals School in China continued to ask for guidance in order

to someday study abroad:

> Cause, it has a lot of possibility for us to, to do, to enjoying. To searching for a better future. So, maybe, I'm the example, or I am the something...you know motivated them to do more about themselves…It's, the, the certificate is just opener. You show something, but you cannot decide it's something. It, it, your, the most important is the experience, or the way you teach. If the students will like you, the students will really got progress from your class. So...so [credential], is, is just a [credential]. It's, it cannot decide anything.

It was Kim's belief that the credential was a document to work and travel throughout the

world. Therefore, she continues to consider opportunities that in scope go beyond China

and the United States.

Student Employment

Next, the co-researchers led the conversation towards the process of seeking

employment as an international student at Bay Area University. Conversations on this

topic revealed the dichotomy between policy and reality for international students in the

United States seeking employment off-campus. The co-researchers emphasized that if

they were to determine one element of the study that they could use to enact policy

reform, it would be to address international student employment.

First, it was clear that all the co-researchers understood that it was illegal to work

off-campus as an international student without meeting very specific requirements. The

co-researchers remembered that student employment was a topic of discussion at

orientation, in the administrative office of their department, and at the International

Student Services office:

BW: You have to work on campus.

Mickey: They, the school warn us. At the orientation day.

Daphne: But you can work outside, um, volunteering.

Anne: Yeah, volunteering. No, no pay.

Daphne: Internship, and no pay. You just can't get paid. Yeah, but after one year, you can apply for pre-OPT [Optical Practical Training][1], then you can work off-campus.

Anne: Yeah, but if you apply for it now, you cannot apply for it when you graduate. That means

Daphne: You can. But, the whole amount time won't change. You combine it, will be one year.

Two of the co-researchers suggested that they could recite student employment policy parameters because they had repeatedly heard and read about it. Many saw the student employment policies as a way to protect international students, and they believed its intent was good.

Yet, throughout this discussion, there were examples of international students working off-campus without submitting any paperwork to the university, as well as a list of employers that were known to offer jobs to international students. The co-researchers spoke about friends and classmates from the PRC who were students at Bay Area University but worked off-campus:

Daphne: I know lots of students they like work in the restaurant. But you can't, say anything.

BW: It's you know but you don't know.

All: [Laughter]

Daphne: You know but you don't know. Always.

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[1] The U.S. Department of Homeland Security website defines OPT as the following: Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Under the prior rules, an F-1 student could be authorized to receive up to a total of 12 months of practical training either before (pre-) and/or after (post-) completion of studies.

> Christine: Because as far as I know, met, most uh, [American] undergraduates in this school have like several part time, part time jobs. Not one to support themselves. And I, assume most of them can go, financial support from their parents. But still they need like two, several part time jobs to, like yeah, pay their bills, and support housing.

The co-researchers continued by explaining fellow Chinese graduate and undergraduate students sought work off-campus to cover basic costs of living.

That statement prompted me to ask about financial documents required by Bay Area University from all international students planning to enroll. Before admission, bank statements as well as notarized letters must demonstrate to university officials that all tuition and living-related costs for the duration of an international student's program would be covered. Anne expressed her belief that the costs I was referring to was the university's estimate, but a real monetary amount could not be applied to what would be needed to live as a student in the San Francisco Bay Area. In essence, the tuition and living costs were interpreted as a baseline amount needed to be admitted and not thought of as a required amount to live in the communities that surround Bay Area University.

Finally, Christine and Daphne guided the conversation back to student employment on-campus. The discussion established that international students in general and PRC students in particular were not divided into populations of off-campus and on-campus workers. Through the experiences they shared, the co-researchers wanted to explain why they believed most international students pursued work off-campus in addition to work at Bay Area University:

> Christine: [The university] have a like job check list where they would provide the dep, the name of department, the title of the job, the job responsibility so you can apply to the job online. And they have a process like interview or submission of the resume, and, yeah. I think, I think most of us got it, and uh, campus job, one, at least.

Daphne: And the, the period of time thing you can

Christine: But just, I mean $10 for one hour? [Laughter]

Daphne: How can they?

Christine: Yeah! How can I support myself with those payments? [Laughs]

Daphne: There [are], maximum amount of times, hours.

Mickey: Just for entertainment! [Laughs]

Restrictions on work hours per week, the rate of pay per hour, and limited employment on campus were factors that drove Chinese students to look for work beyond Bay Area University. All of the co-researchers insisted that this was not a critique of the university. Work environment, job placement, and professional experience were what the co-researchers articulated as positive aspects of student employment at the university. Still, given the financial costs of the area where they decided to live and study, co-researchers concluded that the current student employment policies were not practical.

Community Ties in the United States

As the first dialogue focused on whether the co-researchers knew friends and family living in the United States prior to studying abroad, the second dialogue outlined how the co-researchers formed communities before traveling to Bay Area University. The co-researchers used combinations of electronic sources, university organizations, and family ties in an attempt to grasp first-hand what they would need upon arrival to the United States. The main need for all co-researchers included successful communication in an American social environment. It was important for the co-researchers to know how to obtain all personal and academic needs void of reliance on a social network.

The approaches to acquiring what the co-researchers thought they needed to begin their careers at Bay Area University came in many forms. For Anne, following the request of her parents to contact a friend in the San Francisco Bay Area served as her initial resource for preparation to move abroad:

> Anne: ...Yeah. I remember my experience. I also tried to contact this some acquaintance in America before I come here. Because I know nothing about America. I've never been abroad before.
>
> BW: Right
>
> Anne: But, I can hardly find one. And then, I remember the, one month, two months it's before I come here, my aunt told my mother, that her colleague's uh, daughter's boyfriend..
>
> ALL: [Laughter]
>
> Christine: Complicated.
>
> Anne: Cause he, San Francisco. Maybe he's in a, same university, but she's not sure. And then I contacted her daughter to ask her about, you know how is life in America. Although she didn't know very much about America. But, I just asked her some experience study, study experience abroad because she studied in Singapore. And,...you know, but...what I really want to ask, is her boyfriend. To what, how San Francisco, is it safe, to live here.
>
> Mickey: [Laughter]. You always worry about safety. [Laughter]
>
> Anne: But, later, just, when I come here, my mother told me. Her daughter was very angry that her mother told my aunt. That, her boyfriend is here. So he, so angry. So she doesn't want her boyfriend to…know
>
> Christine: Contact you.
>
> Anne: Even just ask some basic things. And that feels so, so...you know, so uncomfortable.

Anne continued by presenting a second attempt she made to speak with a student to learn about Bay Area University. This time, she attempted to contact a PRC student through the Chinese student association on campus. As Anne explains her frustration

with a Chinese student she connected with, Daphne contends that her attempt to

connect with the Chinese student association was very different:

> Anne: And also, I remember that when I was in China, I also wanted to contact here some, some of the students who have already studied [at Bay Area University]. I tried all the ways, but no, I can't find anyone.
>
> BW: Really?
>
> Anne: And so, uh, yes we have the student association. Chinese students association. But there's no contact information there. Even the chairman, of our Chinese Association.
>
> Daphne: Oh, I found the chairman.
>
> Anne: I don't have the posted information, on, online.
>
> Daphne: I know, but...they have a, they have a line. Um, website.
>
> Anne: They have website, but they don't have contact information. You
>
> Daphne: They do.
>
> Anne: They do?
>
> Daphne: There's a, yeah, they have. Exercise, assign, for information for every major, students. So
>
> Anne: Even email address?
>
> Daphne: add all of them into my MSN.
>
> Anne: Even email address?
>
> Daphne: Yeah. But that, they don't reply, anyway. [Laughter]

Anne and Daphne felt the degree to which you could contact students or university

representatives online to prepare for life in the United States was limited.

However, upon arriving at Bay Area University, Daphne sensed that many people

were willing to help her to adjust to life in the United States:

Anne: Yeah, at that time I was very disappointed. I found, why all people here are so unfriendly.

Daphne: No, you're unlucky. I found lots of people, they're so, so friendly. Yeah, even say, 'Come. Then yeah, I can bring you to you, the bank.'

Anne: Really?

BW: So, they have very different experiences. Like, so, so [Daphne], did you try, so did, these people you're speaking of, did you contact them before you came?

Daphne: Yeah, I contact one cause he's the chairman of, um Chinese asso, student association. Like he give me a lot of comfort. Uh, I, in, information about um, ...lots of students.

Anne: Why I can't find this information! [Laughter]

Daphne: You should know me, then you will get fine. [Laughter] Then I, then I contact all of them and ask about the bank, and about the phone thing, about the house thing, and I get everything settled before I get here. So I feel so lucky.

Daphne continued by stating that before classes began, she had an apartment, a roommate, and all amenities in place to start her life at Bay Area University. Although she completed all of her preparations online while she was residing in China, Daphne believed timing and luck were the reasons she had a smoother transition than Anne in moving abroad. Yet, Anne and Daphne agreed that attempting to utilize university affiliated associations and communities online were not reliable sources to understand what was needed to live in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Instead of looking for community ties in the United States before leaving the People's Republic of China, Kim relied on the Internet and her intuition to prepare for study abroad. When I asked Kim whether she sought the help or advice of Chinese students or university representatives regarding what was needed to live in the San Francisco Bay Area, she stated that she had not even considered doing so:

No. Not even, no, no, no. I don't know. I know them, and....um,...at first, I think I, I am um, determined person. And, I decided to go, and then I'm not afraid of anything. So, I'm here. But, but even though, I, when I came here, I got a little bit lost. Because it's totally brand new for me….Kind of independent. I know.Cause um. I like, Internet is really, uh, a strong tool for me. [Laughs] It, it provides me, everything. Uh, I wanna, at first, I know, I ,I, I needed some time to get myself into the new, environment. So I don't wanna live, off-campus. I wanna be, I wanna l, I wanna meet, I wanted to time to, to, to, makes me to know everything else. Know everything, surrounds me. So I choose to, choose to live on-campus. It will be safe. And,[Pause] near, the main campus. So I choose to live on, and up, I have, I had already applied, applied the uh, dorm. Before I came here.

Kim differed from Daphne and Anne in that she had an immediate family member who lived in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, Kim made no mention of family in this part of the conversation. What Kim shared was her connection with Anne upon arriving in the United States, and the impact that relationship had on her transition to life abroad:

Kim: So, and then, I got a room. And bout the uh, eating, the transportation. I,...yeah. Maybe I ch, check it online. And later on, you know Anne?

BW: Yes.

Kim: Yep. He, uh she,...yes, she, she came, came from the same place, as me.

BW: Oh? So, the same hometown?

Kim: Yeah. And the, the, the same, city. So, she is the, she is the first person I knew here. So, yeah. And later on, she tell me that. How you can choose class, how you can kind of pick professor or something. Although this, this kind of stuff has already been, been told in the orientation. But, you know our clas, you know our university, you know that our orientation is not enough for us. So, just pr, the orientation just provide some basic information but not too much. So, Anne help me a lot during that time.

The co-researchers reflected upon the steps they and their families had taken to prepare for pursuing a graduate degree in the United States. At this point, most of their social experiences were with Chinese students currently attending universities in the United States. The co-researchers' reflections on orientations facilitated by Bay Area University

begin to highlight their first-hand interactions with what they categorized as American communication and U.S. higher education.

Orientation

How successful the orientation programs of Bay Area University were in meeting the co-researchers' expectations is the focus of this theme. Student orientation served as the first time the co-researchers were able to hear about Bay Area University. Before arriving in the United States, web pages, admission counselors, and mailing packets were all forms of exposure the co-researchers had with Bay Area University in China. However, the co-researchers felt that these forms of contact were mainly for the university to learn about them. As a result, the co-researchers' expectations of orientation included gaining a complete picture of the services, policies, and courses available to them at Bay Area University.

At the onset of this conversation, student opinion towards orientation appeared tied to whether presentations addressed issues of concern to them. As a result, orientation sessions attempting to address all aspects of Bay Area University were not necessarily desired. The following highlights the perception of orientation by the co-researchers:

> BW: Did prepare you? Like, you know, there's like, more important information that you would only know about [Bay Area University]. Did orientation help with that? Did they give you any specific names? Or, kind of places to go to? Or
>
> Anne: No.
>
> BW: Anything?
>
> Mickey: Oh, I found orientation, when I first came to the university, is helpful.
>
> BW: It was helpful. Okay.
>
> Christine: It's called international student's orientation. Not like specifically, for Chinese students. So I figure out there might be a si, difference between those

two. And, uh, yeah. I'm think there's might be some useful information, like, uh, local transportation. They introduce like how, uh, some information about immigration of our visa issues. So they kind of predict some difficulty we might have like in applying OPT, and uh, what's the difference between OPT and the CPT. And they also, uh, have some students who had been here, also international students, who had been here for a while. They talked about little about their personal experience. Yeah, I think that's helpful.

Commenting that it seemed confusing to have more than one orientation, Kim attended the orientation specific to international students, as well an orientation specifically for graduate students in the school of education. Kim described both orientations as simultaneously addressing and lacking themes important to her:

> Kim: Um [Extended pause] before the..uh international orientation, it's like some policy of the country. What contacts you're going to pay. Um, how you apply for your SSN. And, um, when you can move out, when can you um, leave the country. Cause maybe something related to the visa. Or, yeah. Something like that. And, what you're going to do. And most important part is, I have to remember, is the primary reason. You cannot copy all of this. You cannot tha, that is the important thing. And...I cannot remember much, but later on like, I, I, take part in the uh, orientation for the education. That was something more specific about our program.

> BW: Okay.

> Kim: Um, how may program we have here. And, um, who is my advisor. Who is our dean. But, okay, the dean, I'm forgetting this. And, later, about how to choose course. Yeah. And something motivating you to study, like this. So, it covers a, some part, but it's not that same. Um, I think both of them, they're, they're useful. But, orientation is so limited.

> BW: Oh yeah? Like… What were some things you think that now, looking back, may have, may should have been included, in orientation?

> Kim: [Extended pause]... I think, the resource. How you can get. Because, both of the orientation they just cover, some academic part. Not too much about living, your life here.

> BW: Okay, but

> Kim: And for, some, for us international student, I think this part, it should be covered. They can shorten the time for us to live in the environment. And, another thing is like, how to arrange your study schedule. Um, there was a, different,

different, uh, totally different, difference between the study style in Chinese
universities, and here. Here, it's intensive. Maybe for some native, they don't
think so. Because the English, in our reading, and information, is their, is their
first language. But for us, um, I still remember the first week. I gonna do, um, I
gonna do three parts, three parts. And I still have to write a paper, about, uh, about
the first chapter or something I cannot re, but it's really intense for me. You know
I study English for a long time, but sometimes, um, I, when I, when I open a
book, first, first language. And,...yeah. And this makes me feel that, tough. This is
called,...graduation. I mean, graduate program. When you want to do study
abroad. This will be different from what you, you're going to have in China. And
[Pause] Yeah. So, yeah. I think it's hard. Something related to your life, and the
time of arrangement. That is, I think this is what I need.

The quoted conversation regarding Kim's reflection on orientation is an abridged version

of the original response she gave to my initial question. Kim stated that she is most

passionate about how orientation can determine the success and failure of international

students. She desired academic preparation through a pamphlet, presentation, or course

regarding transition to graduate-level study in the United States for a Chinese citizen.

This type of resource would have aided Kim during her first semester at Bay Area

University.

The co-researchers believed social aspects of orientation lacked opportunities to

form relationships with other students, and too focused on tourism. The co-researchers

contended that they were equally interested in learning about American culture and

pursuing a TESL graduate degree. However, the orientation(s) they attended did little to

approach topics regarding school community. Christine determined that the absence of

community building exercises in orientation was more a reflection of American culture

than an oversight of planning by Bay Area University:

[The] attitude of teachers, and the, st, stuff here to, applied to me, personally. I
think they are quite professional. But, it kept their like, in you, at to, a certain
distance. They think, I can do this, and I can always reach this.If, yeah, I wish it
were like, knew more about some rules, before we can get further information. If
we couldn't get a, like how, they could help me, or in what field they could help

me. I couldn't get further information….And they, ususally[Pause] yeah, it's, I think this is just a part of American culture. They anticipate your self, um self-dependence. So, they want you, to figure it all out on your own.

At the same time, Mickey, Daphne, and Anne explained that orientation inter-mixed practical and social information. What the co-researchers found peculiar was an unintentional element of exclusiveness in student tours:

Mickey: So I remember, they also provided me, with a [campus] map. [Laughs]So

Anne: Oh yeah! That's important. Very useful, the map. I still hold the map now.

Daphne: Yeah, me too.

BW: Was th, was there, like a campus tour? Did you, did they have that for you?

Mickey: We had lots of tours. We had city tours.

Christine: City tours. Shopping tours.

Daphne: We were just FOBs[2] [Laughter]

Christine: But I think most of the student who went these tours are Asian students.

Mickey: Most of them are Chinese students.

Kim underscored the importance of having a campus map by recalling how she spent an hour attempting to find the School of Education building at Bay Area University, despite it being on the same street as her housing unit. The co-researchers also move into detail about their city tour experiences, and how the fact that nearly all students on the tour were Chinese made them uncomfortable.

At the conclusion of the second dialogue, the co-researchers came to an agreement that one of the key reasons for pursuing a degree in the United States was to learn more about American society. Diversity remained an important reason as to why

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[2] FOBs is a pejorative term meaning "Fresh Off the Boat". Its use is often as a discriminatory or racist stigma against people of a particular ethnicity, especially recently arrived immigrants to the United States.

the co-researchers chose a university in the San Francisco Bay Area. Yet, they

commented that the population of students from the PRC in surrounding colleges and

universities was counterintuitive to the multicultural education they expected in the

United States:

> Daphne: I, I asked a friend she, uh, he's American. I ask if he think [Bay Area University] is very typical. But he said yes. Cause, [Bay Area University] has the most, in San Francisco, [Bay Area University] has have the most, Caucasians? Cause others, all Asians.

> Mickey: Caucasians?

> Daphne: Yeah all Asians.

> Anne: Oh yeah like [University A]. A lot of Asians.

> Daphne: [University A] has 75 [percent] Asian students. Almost like, Asian school, so [Bay Area University] is, yeah.

> Christine: The same thing happened to University B.

> Daphne: Yeah, they have so many, like 700? I, yeah. I know. Some states and some [Bay Area University] students. Compare their English, states are lower, because they speak Chinese all the time. And they don't have quite, infrequent,

> BW: Contact?

> Daphne: Classes, because the, you know, the [other universities], they don't, they don't have enough fund for opening more classes. So, they will take there five years to complete the whole undergraduate. Oh, it's terrible.

> Christine: Yeah, that reminds me of my experience when I was living in the house over by my mother's friend. The first time she knew that I was enrolling this city, her response is like, 'Wow, why did you apply for this school? This is Caucasian school.' She, she, she, I think she tried to like, persuade me to transfer to state university. Because it's closer to their housing. And also she think it's good for me because most, majority of students are Asians.

As a researcher and U.S. citizen, I immediately wanted to ask questions regarding

how the co-researchers equated Caucasian students with American, but not necessarily

Asian students. From the onset of this subject, I also wanted to ask the co-researchers

why they perceived a large population of Asian students as a barrier to their learning and as lessening a multicultural environment. Both of my questions are based in my understanding of U.S. higher education through the lens of American race and society. If I were to interject after Daphne's initial comment, I only would have explored answers to questions shaped through my perceptions and assumptions. As a result, not only would I have been implanting my voice on the co-researchers' reflections, but also depriving the study's targeted audience of an example of how Chinese students construct diversity in U.S. higher education. As a fellow participant, I listened as my colleagues came to their own conclusions.

Summary

Although the second dialogue focused on student preparation to study at Bay Area University, participant expectations were equally important. Before leaving China, parental support and ongoing communication served as the foundation of the co-researchers' preparation to study abroad. Without an extended community in the United States, many of the co-researchers searched for other ways to grasp an understanding of the academic and social culture they would soon enter.

As the co-researchers became acclimated with living in the San Francisco Bay Area, they were constantly balancing expectation with reality. The co-researchers see their TESL graduate degree as a critical component of their academic career that can lead to other professional opportunities. Yet, they also come to understand that there are limitations to their degree, as well as under what circumstances it can lead to employment.

Though orientation programs led to a greater understanding of Bay Area

University and the San Francisco Bay Area, the co-researchers felt unprepared to assess

resources that would enhance their learning. The co-researchers detail the support they

received from people in the United States, in addition to the opportunities they believe

their degree may afford them. How the co-researchers reflect upon the process of

acquiring knowledge in their graduate degree programs was the overarching theme of the

third dialogue.

<div style="text-align:center">Third Dialogue – Experiences in the Classroom</div>

<div style="text-align:center">*Role of the Professor in the Classroom*</div>

The third dialogue began with an in-depth discussion about the professors at Bay

Area University. In the first dialogue, the co-researchers spoke about the welcoming

personalities and genuine kindness of the professors in the TESL graduate degree

program. However, neither the required courses (in their opinion not research oriented)

nor the program structure (the students believed a lack of choice in teachers overwhelmed

their professors) served their needs as graduate students. Anne begins the discussion by

addressing the importance of selecting the *best* professors available versus class content

to register for courses:

> I have, uh, you know when I register for class, I pay a lot of attention to choose
> different professor class. So that I can have more experience. But, because the
> choice of the courses is too, small, so now I experienced several professors. But
> the professor I like most is [Dr. X]. He's uh, he's my favorite teacher, professor.
> The reason is that, he is also student centered. Some other teachers, some other
> professors have tried it before, last year, I mean in other department, but he's like,
> he's like, you just talk, and after you talk, he just says something that is not
> important. [Laughs]

Anne shared her ideas regarding the effective teaching practices of a professor at Bay Area University. However, further discussion reveals that the co-researchers' knowledge acquisition from any one course is closely tied to their reflections of the professor's teaching ability. The following excerpt explored how the co-researchers evaluated teacher performance in their graduate degree program:

> Anne: Is, just sit there and smile, and did not say nothing. It's not important what he said. He just, you know, like you to do something to fill the class time. So the impor, you know, we concluded that, he is very nice, but you just, the only thing that could offend them is that you did not prepare for your presentation that day. He get so offended, because he didn't know how to fill the class time without your presentation.
>
> BW: …has that been, like, just in one class, or has that been most of the classes that you've taken?
>
> Mickey: Only, only this semester. Only this class is the most, like, most in, incredible [Laughs]
>
> Anne: Terrible [Laughs]
>
> Mickey: Yes, cause he just sit there and he...even he, he didn't come in...like [Anne's] professor. Even if it's not like important, he just say nothing, and he just nodding, like this. Yeah, yeah. I think this is partly because that he's, kind of inexperienced.

In explaining how teaching practice impacted her learning in the TESL graduate degree program, Kim, compared two experiences with professors at Bay Area University:

> I like [Dr. B.]. Definitely. But some other professors, um, makes me feel, like, they do not want to, want to, just give you too much. But, they, they do, just want to, past the time in the classroom, in the class. They, they say okay, we're going to take, although the class is like, two hours, or half two, or two hours and a half, but um, maybe just one hour and a half for the student presentation. I cannot get too much from the teacher. [Dr. B.], he is different. And, although I took, I, I'm taking his class this semester about like, English grammar. For an international student, I think the grammar part is relatively easy for us. But, what I can get from [Dr. B's] class is not simply the, of how to roll the sentences by using grammar, but also the teaching method. That's really, helpful. And, other thing is like, the qualification of, the quality of the professor, is like a very big gap between them. Yeah. Some of the professor, they're really qualified for this. But, some other, yeah.

Kim's comparison of teacher practices reflects the general synopsis of the co-

researchers: the quality of the professor promotes or hinders the learning of the student.

I asked the co-researchers whether they thought it was possible to grasp key

concepts and valuable information from a course despite the relative effectiveness of the

professor. The co-researchers were unified in thinking that little if any learning could

take place in any context without an effective teacher. Daphne responded to my question

by explaining how Dr. B.'s life experience and personality do more to inform the content

of his area of expertise than the textbooks and presentations he applies in the classroom.

Anne's perspective built upon the idea that student interaction with Dr. B. beyond the

curriculum was where learning took place:

> But, you know, like I said before this discussion, sometimes I don't feel I get a lot
> of things from what he taught us, taught me from, about, in terms of the books,
> textbooks. I don't think I learn a lot from that. But yet, I learn more from him. So
> that's why I like him.

Overall, the co-researchers believed the role of the professor in the classroom derives

from her or his ability to explain how concepts and strategies in a given course apply to

the practice and development of the students.

Course Evaluations

After the co-researchers spoke about their experiences with and opinions of

professors at Bay Area University, Daphne guided the discussion towards the subject of

course evaluations. It was also a topic I had hoped to speak to the co-researchers about,

especially regarding the range of favorable and unfavorable reflections they shared about

their professors. After Daphne suggested she took some courses based off of the

recommendation of fellow classmates, I asked if they saw course evaluations as an

important tool in sharing their opinions of their courses:

Daphne: No. Doesn't work.

Kim: Yeah, it's just like [Pause] a form. You fill it out, and hand it in. That's it. I just choose, choose

Daphne: A, A, A, A, A, that's it. [Laughter]

Kim: But, I don't know how it works. Yeah, cause, does it really influence those teachers, those professors? I don't think so.

The co-researchers did not regard course evaluations as an effective way to express their opinions about their classroom experience. After Kim asked my opinion, I suggested that the course evaluations were a systematic tool to hold the professors accountable to the students, the university, and themselves. Following my explanation, Anne questioned whether the idea of course evaluation was also a component of American culture:

> You know, I think the process like this, at first. I pay a lot of attention on this evaluation. So I, fill it very carefully, and I really evaluate on, it, each item. So I think it's a culture thing. Yeah, go back to the culture thing. So I think, Chinese people like me don't think it's our rights, but [American students] think no matter it counts or not, it's my rights to express myself on this evaluation form. So, even if it doesn't effect him, but I want to do my right, do my part right, so I evaluated it very carefully. So maybe that's American thinking.

Like Anne, Mickey initially felt that course evaluations were an important responsibility for graduate co-researchers. However, the co-researchers shared a progression towards being less invested in carefully evaluating their professors. The only exception, as identified by Mickey, was "for the teacher[s] I am not very satisfied with I will give them some low score." In these instances, Mickey recounted looking at specific questions in the course evaluation that addressed the areas where she believed her professor was lacking. Otherwise, the co-researchers stated they normally gave their professors all high marks on course evaluations.

Student Participation and Interaction in the Classroom

The co-researchers explained the duality of being a part of an American university community as Chinese citizens while still considering themselves outsiders in the classroom. Classroom constructs, as well as student interactions contributed to the feelings of uncertainty the co-researchers struggled with every semester. Expectations regarding student performance by their professors coupled with questions relating to how to speak with fellow classmates left many of the co-researchers exhausted by the middle of each semester.

Peer evaluations

After speaking about course evaluations, Daphne introduced the topic of peer evaluations:

> Daphne: Cause we did a lot of evaluations. Peer evaluations, for each presentation, each class differently. And how do you feel about yourself? And, even after like several presentations, how do you feel you, uh, what's a way you feel you improved? And how do you feel others presentations?

Although the co-researchers agreed the idea of self-evaluation contributed to strengthening their academic work, they considered peer evaluation more nuanced in its effectiveness:

> Anne: You know, I found that ESL class pay special attention to these plat, to these aspects, but it's the same all the time. Cause everytime I don't know how to, how to evaluate those things. Because, I don't know, I don't think it's, that, practical about those evaluation items

> Daphne: And they even give the suggestions. I will leave them blank, but, just a check.

> Anne: And don't think that I can try, you know, so sometimes I just write something.

> Daphne: Like, 'yeah, good job [Christine]! [Laughter]

Mickey: But I think mo, many native students, they will write a lot. I remember one time I just, collecting those paper, because I did a presentation. And I saw, who, I forgot her name, but she write like three to four lines. That's very polite.

Other than the individual delivering the presentation and the professor grading its

effectiveness, the co-researchers saw additional (e.g., peer evaluations) as a courtesy.

Since student evaluations had no impact on grade, Mickey admitted that she rarely looked

at the feedback she received from other students. In addition, Christine stated that

students who completed written components of the peer evaluations had rarely prepared

themselves for the presentation through reading assignments and were seldom attentive

during class. Believing this was an overt and obvious lack of preparation by all students

that professors were aware of, the co-researchers questioned why peer evaluations

continued to be used.

Seeking the opinion of an American, the co-researchers questioned what would be

my approach to peer evaluations:

Anne: What would you do? Would you write a lot?

BW: [Pause] Um, it's

Anne: How about a peer review in class about stu, presentation?

BW: You know, I, it's really...I go back and forth. Like I, for me, I feel like it's, like you say, like it's a respect thing. I see it as a sign of respect that you're paying attention. And, you know like I, I would try, to be careful, to make sure that I can even write something specifically about the presentation I just saw.

After hearing my response, the co-researchers conceded that peer evaluations could be a

helpful tool in students holding each other accountable for course assignments. However,

Christine thought even accountability was a weak argument for maintaining peer

evaluation, as professors often covered material meant to be shared during student presentations.

<p style="text-align:center">*English Language in the Classroom*</p>

The co-researchers discussed the challenge of adjusting to English being the language of instruction in their graduate degree program. Each Chinese student had studied English for over a decade, and felt confident about their command of the language. However, the challenge of reading, hearing, and speaking English consistently in formal and informal settings at Bay Area University was a different experience than what they were accustomed to in the PRC.

First, the co-researchers addressed speaking in English to fulfill class participation requirements in their courses:

> Anne: The most obvious one is like when professor asks a question, and always native speakers raise their hand and speak. But, it's not that, maybe in some part is Chinese people is not active to not participate in the class. But, the most important thing here, is that since we all know that American classroom mean participation, but we can't. We need time to think about answer, and we time to organize our language. And we also need time to, to give ourselves the encouragement to say that in front of the whole class. So three things to, to interact with each other at the same time. For you, because in most cases we don't feel that our voice is really important, is really outstanding to be heard.

> Daphne: It's like sometimes I have, I have some ideas in mine, but I'm afraid to speak out. Like I'm afraid like, am I going to say something stupid? Or, cause I can't express something really, in depth. In second language...so, although I have ideas, but, if I express that, it's, it's not going to like, that level, deep, deep, like I think. So that's really a hard one. That I can fully express myself.

> Stacy: I feel I need some specific help. Like tell me how to use a word. What are the usage that actually Americans use. Since I learned English from Chinese teacher, they are helpful, but not enough for living in the US. I feel it is really hard that I can't understand how the people speak. I understand a lot, but still not enough.

The co-researchers' responses were in relation to their personal assessments of using

English in the classroom. They insisted that their reflections regarding the use of the

English language could be applied to every class in their graduate degree career.

Next, the co-researchers expressed how English affected their relationships with

classmates. Despite their high level of competency, the co-researchers explained that

conversing in English always seemed below the expectations of native English speakers,

especially U.S. students:

> Anne: Don't think it's a very safe environment. Like, a psychological, safe
> environment for us to speak out, out our mind. Because, American classmate is
> so, expressive. They can say things long and detailed, way. So, when you say that,
> you just say two sentences, and everyone expect you to say more. That's it. That's
> the end. They say, 'okay.' You know? Something like that. So, it's like when you
> compare with someone that is much more expressive than you, and, some of
> them, just, didn't care what you say sometimes. I can see, you can see it from their
> facial expressions.

> Mickey: I think they don't think they can get something important, or they cannot
> get, get benefit from from us or our opinions. So, everytime when I talk with like,
> American students, and um [Pause] I don't know what to say. I think they don't
> have any, they don't have, they don't have a lot of things to share with me either.
> So just, talk about oh, how about, uh, how are you and how's your project going?
> How's your class? That's it.

In addition, the co-researchers presented scenarios where they felt assumptions by

American students about their English comprehension hindered the development of

potential friendships:

> Christine: We have different, we have many students. And usually, students sit in
> groups, and sometimes share snacks. And interestingly, Caucasian students sit
> with each other, and stay to themselves. And wow, so obvious!

For Christine, there was a stark difference in how white U.S. students exchanged general

greetings with her versus having a social conversation during class breaks. Yet, Christine

remained undecided as to whether this was due primarily to racial divides in her class, or

the assumption that she would be unable to participate in social discussions spoken in

English.

<center>Group Projects</center>

As a part of the TESL graduate program philosophy at Bay Area University, the

majority of the co-researchers' courses included a component of group collaboration. In

all cases, the co-researchers found themselves working alongside U.S. students. Each

participant felt group collaborations to complete class projects represented a valuable

strategy to understand American viewpoints on subject matter and to learn different ways

to approach their own interests. However, the co-researchers did not see the experience

of working with American students as a foundation for building positive relationships in

or beyond the classroom.

Although each participant recalled several experiences with group projects that

left them disappointed, Anne presented a scenario that resonated with everyone:

> Anne: Because [American students] have the language proficien..advantage. So
> that they will, pretend to ask you what do you think. And then when you say
> something, then they say, 'Oh, I see'. And they use another way, to manipulate
> you.
>
> Kim: Yeah, yeah! Exactly! Exactly! When we're moving to our presentation that
> day, [an American member of the group] just talk, talk a lot, and she just took
> everything. But, I and Daphne, we two just standing there. Just like
>
> Daphne: Listening, being an audience [Laughs]
>
> Kim: assistant or something. We, that experience made me feel like, sucks, like.
> But if you work with a, nice native. But some kind of native students, they don't
> they don't want to waste time.
>
> BW: They see it as a waste of time?
>
> Anne: To communicate.

Kim: You don't want us to communicate with international student cause they, they don't think that you can get point, you can grab something from the concept or the textbook exactly. And you cannot experience, express what the group want to say. So, they just, it just want to take everything.

BW: Do you think, do you think, the um, professors, understand that that's happening? Like

Kim, Mickey and Anne: No, they don't care. [Simultaneously]

Anne: They ask a lot if the project is finished, and that's it.

I asked the co-researchers if they could remember instances where they felt responsibility was shared amongst all group members to complete a project. Christine and Stacy provided examples, but in each case they felt the group assignments were more akin to individual research. In these instances, the co-researchers stated that little collaboration happened, and the extent of discussions amongst the groups were to identify specific tasks each person needed to complete before the day of the presentation.

Summary

The level of success the co-researchers believed they acquired in the classroom appeared to be tied to their sense of belonging. The co-researchers were constantly balancing the demands of graduate study with becoming acclimated to American culture. Often, the co-researchers found themselves contemplating questions about their experiences internally, but without having a community to address those inquiries.

In completing this dialogue, the co-researchers were persistent in stating that their concerns and challenges were neither complaints nor critiques of Bay Area University. Enrolling in a challenging graduate degree program where the co-researchers could study alongside U.S. students, and graduate from a university where the medium language is English reflect their academic motivations for pursuing study abroad. Many of the co-

researchers concerns lay in a lack of preparation in terms of navigating social interactions in the classroom.

<div align="center">Fourth Dialogue – Evaluation of Bay Area University</div>

As the research progressed, the co-researchers identified aspects of their TESL graduate degree program that could be strengthened. Areas of improvement for their degree at Bay Area University primarily focused on elements of the classroom. However, identifying ways American university administrators can better prepare PRC students to navigate socially in the San Francisco Bay Area was also included. By the time of the fourth dialogue, three of the seven co-researchers (Christine, Daphne, and Mickey) involved in the study had graduated. Therefore, the conversation shifted between reflective and forthcoming perspectives as the co-researchers conveyed their viewpoints about Bay Area University.

<div align="center">*Co-researchers' Expectations of Bay Area University*</div>

The discussion began by attempting to capture an overall evaluation of the co-researchers' experience at Bay Area University. In her final semester, Anne began the conversation by stating her opinion of her American education has changed:

> Anne: Now, I have an idea. I think, there is nothing wrong this university. Because there's maybe, there's something wrong with my expectation. So, I have to adjust my expectation, to reality. [Laughs]

> Brad: What do you mean?

> Christine: Why do you think like that?

> Anne: You know, I think about my past schooling experience. And I find out, I always have, when people ask me, 'oh, do you like this school?' I will to the strangers, or to the acquaintance, I will say, 'yeah, I like this school.' But to the very familiar friends, or family members, I will say the parts, that I do not like about the school. But in total, I found myself, not very satisfying with the schooling experience.

Anne continues by stating her disappointment with aspects of Bay Area University was inevitable. Citing her past experience with secondary schools in China, Anne commented that there was always something about each stage of her educational career that did not meet her expectations. In the end, Anne felt what she gained by learning about different cultures and people in the United States outweighed the value of her graduate education.

Though Stacy thought it was too early after one semester to provide an answer to this question, Christine shared that she had been thinking more about her career at Bay Area University since her graduation in December of 2009:

> I would score this school as maybe, 80 points out of 100? It basically matched my expectations, in most respects…I didn't expect too much in terms of academic achievement. Otherwise, I won't choose this school. I would choose [Ivy League university] which also admitted me in their program. Non-academically, I would score it not excellent, but definitely good.

I asked Christine how she felt her experience could have been better. She reiterated a conversation from the first dialogue, citing that the TESL graduate program was not research oriented enough. From Christine's perspective, "the School of Education teach some things about APA format," and the TESL department "send some emails about conferences, but that is not enough, at least for international students." She believed that the program was designed more for teachers who "had done some things and established a [professional] circle," and not for developing scholars.

Kim began her response by stating that she was satisfied with the curriculum of the TESL department. However, Kim felt the teaching approach in her graduate program did not meet her expectations:

> It's different or new to me, compared to my learning experience in China. Maybe we study at [Bay Area University], I don't know [Pause], self-motivated or self-

leading way? Like we discuss, or we do the homework, we do everything mainly by ourselves. But as a student I want more help from our professors, or our department.

Kim cited a tutoring job off-campus as the most enjoyable part of her career at Bay Area University thus far. Socially, Kim felt fortunate to have positive relationships with international and domestic students. Yet, the friendships she had formed were mostly confined to the campus and in the classroom.

Mickey saw professional development as the gap in her education at Bay Area University:

I also found that our school, maybe especially our School of Education, we lack some practical opportunities. Seldom provide some chance to, to go out and have an internship, in some schools…I sometimes receive these emails about teaching [English] in Korea, or elsewhere, but they all require that you must be native [English speaker].

Christine agreed with Mickey, and added that it was "strange that international students or domestic students had no direct connection with alumni." Both co-researchers saw a strong alumni base as key to learning about opportunities in their field, as well as a way to build a professional network to apply for teaching positions. "Otherwise," explained Mickey, "we only learn theories…[and] there's no use."

Daphne reminisced about the positive social experiences she had at Bay Area University. As a follower of the Christian faith, she was happy with faith-based social events and clubs on campus. "Of course," Daphne joked, "the free food at the events exceeded my expectations." It was her campus life that inspired her to continue working towards the TESL graduate degree.

Clubs and Organizations

Several of the co-researchers cited clubs and organizations at Bay Area University that helped them adjust to living in the United States. At the same time, social organizations at the university were often difficult to identify. When I suggested that there seemed to be an abundance of clubs on campus, Daphne explained that a lack of advertisement left many students unaware of the social opportunities that existed:

> I have an example to share. Because, we both, Mickey and I attend a small group called the conversational group. So, they made a lot of advertisements but only me showed up. Like sometimes 2, 3, 4, but my classmates come. But they still keep this program just for us.

According to Daphne, the International Student Services office created the conversational group to help its members with English conversational skills. Daphne thought that attendance for the club had been low because it had only been established a year ago. However, Christine and Anne believed the low attendance could also be a result of scheduling. Explaining she wished to attend the conversational group, Christine's classes occurred on the same night.

Kim cited another group she joined that had a connection to the International Student Services office:

> I don't know the full name of this association, but it is a group for gathering international students together. And we enjoy some movies, we go to the zoo to take care of some animals, and we have barbeque parties. It helps us to know each other, and know the culture here. And that was pretty much fun to meet all the students from around the world.

Kim had joined three social groups on campus. In each instance, she joined to meet new people. Yet, Kim explained that the activities in these groups proved to be the first step in forging new relationships.

A critique the co-researchers had of the social organizations on campus was that the content and title of the groups separated the students by ethnicity and nationality. However, Anne's experience with social groups at Bay Area University was the lone example amongst the co-researchers to identify American and international students in its membership:

> It's called storytelling. So every time, there are like 10 people, gathered together, and we share our stories. Share our identity, and normally people from that program are American, white American, black American…But there are three Chinese people in that program. I learned a lot in that program about American culture and history…We faced the same problems, and it was so ideal to talk about those things.

Each participant that identified social groups they joined at Bay Area University stated that she looked forward to every meeting. Moreover, they treasured the friendships they had in those communities. The critique the co-researchers had about the social groups at Bay Area University was that none targeted graduate students. Members of the social groups they joined rarely included graduate students. Moreover, information about the organizations was normally confined to either undergraduate communal spaces or undergraduate web pages. Though the co-researchers participated in social communities on campus, it was with a student population they would never see in their classrooms. At the same time, the majority of their classmates did not reside on campus, and lacked an institutional presence of a social community.

<div align="center">*Summary*</div>

The co-researchers remained measured in their evaluations of Bay Area University. They identified institutional gaps in the academic rigor of the TESL graduate degree program. Yet, they also considered how personal philosophies and decisions impacted their graduate study. Faced with the realization that few opportunities existed

to build friendships outside of the classroom with graduate students, the co-researchers joined undergraduate community groups that helped them acclimate to American culture. Bay Area University proved not to be the ideal American university for any of the co-researchers. Still, the university provided an opportunity for the co-researchers to reach their academic goals while learning more about American culture.

<div align="center">Fifth Dialogue – Sharing Findings with University Community</div>

The final dialogue amongst the co-researchers culminated in a work plan to share the study's findings with Bay Area University. As with the other dialogues, I attended the meeting as a fellow researcher with the co-researchers. However, there were neither questions nor themes presented as a framework for discussion. In preparation for the dialogue, I suggested that the co-researchers think about what they learned from the study, and what they would want to share with the university community.

The primary goal of the conversation centered on one theme: how and in what format would the co-researchers decide to share their findings? During the course of the meeting, the co-researchers exchanged ideas on themes they wanted to address, how they envisioned sharing the findings, and the time frame available to complete their plan. Regarding themes to address in the study, the co-researchers contemplated whether to speak to the process of the research or to identify personal instances in their academic career.

For example, Anne proposed building a plan that "illustrated [their] discussions with Brad." She believed it was as important to show the process of participatory research as it was to explain how support for Chinese graduate students could be strengthened. Anne thought that this approach could clarify to our audience the

thoughtful work and planning that led to the study's suggestions. Ultimately, Anne's proposal lacked the support of several co-researchers who believed it would not generate enough interest among the university community.

Christine felt "it would be too boring" to explain the process of the research. Instead, Christine proposed "show[ing] two scenarios, one in class and one in our social lives" to give quick and concrete examples of their experiences at Bay Area University. Daphne and Mickey suggested that Christine's idea could be presented in a skit format rather than writing a report. At this point, the co-researchers asked for my approval of this suggestion, fearing that it would not serve my needs in completing the study. I reassured them that the goal of the study was to address how they could advocate for further support in their experience abroad.

The co-researchers decided to present their findings through an online format. After deciding to create a skit that reflected their lives as Chinese graduate students at an American university, questions arose regarding who would *act* in the skit. Anne introduced the idea of using technology to aid in developing a presentation. Still, the co-researchers knew of no one (including themselves) that would be willing to act in a tape-recorded skit.

Finally, a consensus was reached to create an animated presentation to share their findings. In researching options online during the discussion, the co-researchers decided to use GoAnimate.com. The website allows for the creation of characters, scenes, and motion animation for its members to share their stories (See Appendix H). Because the utilities for GoAnimate.com were user-friendly and allowed for the download of created movies upon completion, it seemed ideal for the presentation. To also share the skits with

friends and PRC students deciding whether to study in the United States, everyone

agreed to also post the presentations on Youtube, and to use QQ to introduce their work.

It is anticipated that the skits would be completed by the co-researchers in the

Summer of 2010.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study addressed the gap in the literature regarding the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese students pursuing graduate degrees in the United States. By using a participatory methodology, the co-researchers' authentic voices remained central in answering the research questions. Instead of informing the research through a traditional interview format, the co-researchers worked with me to identify themes and critique studies regarding the lives of Chinese graduate students in U.S. colleges. As a result, the co-researchers challenged conclusions from established literature to express the type of support they needed to be successful in American higher education.

Academic Motivation

The rationale that fueled the co-researchers' interests to pursue graduate degrees in the United States proved contrary to the conclusions of established literature. For example, researchers completing studies on the Chinese system of higher education concluded that a central reason for Chinese students pursuing degrees in the United States is to acquire a quality education (Qiang & Wolff, 2007). Quality became defined as institutions free of corruption, offering challenging curricula and successfully preparing its graduates for employment (Shepherd, 2010). Therefore, their research led to the assumption that Chinese students pursued education abroad because they understood the inherent flaws in Chinese universities.

However, the co-researchers in the study explained that less strenuous admission criteria, language study, and cultural exchange reflected their decision to enroll in

American universities. At the beginning of the study, all the co-researchers identified themselves as graduate students in the department of Teaching English as a Second Language. Due to their program of study, the co-researchers believed they were looked upon favorably to acquire student visas into the United States. Not having what the co-researchers characterized as sensitive majors (e.g. fields of science and technology), they believed they faced less scrutiny when applying for student visas.

In addition, standardized tests like the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), required by many U.S. graduate programs, were not a part of the admission criteria for Bay Area University. Though the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was required for admission, the co-researchers expected to do well on this examination; the study of the English language reflected their academic and professional fields of research. While the co-researchers spoke about the emotional and physical strain they avoided by not registering for the GRE, the financial toll of preparing for the test was also significant. According to conversations from the first dialogue, there exists a culture of test preparation and peer pressure for many college students in the People's Republic of China. Therefore, the costs of courses designed to prepare students for standardized tests, coupled with the actual cost of the examination could have impacted their decision to study in the United States.

With regard to the quality of Chinese universities, the co-researchers did not state that a lack in either academic rigor or institutional quality caused them to explore study abroad. Instead, limited space for enrollment and strenuous testing for graduate students in Chinese universities led to the co-researchers considering degree programs in the United States. As the number of Chinese students eligible for graduate study continues to

rise, the population of applicants from the PRC to U.S. colleges and universities seems to also grow (Lewin, 2009). Despite the global economic crisis during the 2008 – 2009 school year, the Institute of International Education reported the PRC as increasing the number of students it sent abroad to study in the United States by 16,000 or 21% (Gardner & Witherell, 2009).

As TESL graduate students, the co-researchers saw the opportunity to study in a predominantly English-speaking society as a way to strengthen their language skills. As burgeoning English teachers, the co-researchers explained how they looked forward to learning from class discussions, teaching pedagogies, and group collaborations. In addition, the co-researchers acquired student employment in the San Francisco Bay Area. Working in the field of education helped the co-researchers apply key aspects of their studies within American secondary schools.

Moreover, the co-researchers saw cultural exchange as a part of their academic motivation to pursue a graduate degree in the United States. Anne and several other co-researchers commented that the opportunity to work alongside students from around the world inspired their hopes to study in the San Francisco Bay Area. The prospect of studying at Bay Area University coupled with learning from a diverse student body was intriguing to the co-researchers.

Based on these findings, Maslow's (1943) motivation theory of hierarchal needs was challenged in the study. Based on Maslow's theory, people follow a natural path to fulfill basic physiological (food) and safety (employment) needs before exploring aspects of belonging (friendship), esteem (achievement), and self-actualization (potential). Throughout the dialogues, the co-researchers shared that their basic needs were fulfilled

in the PRC.   Completing their graduate degrees in the United States was a goal

(esteem) that they felt would lead to greater opportunities in life (self-actualization).

However, the findings also reveal that by obtaining a graduate degree from Bay

Area University, the co-researchers hope to gain employment in their field of study.

Though the co-researchers had their physiological needs met, as well as a community of

friends and family around them, Maslow's second basic need of safety was not

necessarily fulfilled.   This illustrates Max-Neef's (1991) claim that human needs are

interrelated and not necessarily attainable in a linear approach. Although the co-

researchers held college degrees, they sensed that following their dream of higher

education in the United States could lead to a greater fulfillment of their basic needs, as

well as strengthening their potential as teachers.

In the second dialogue, Kim explained that although she held a teaching position

at a reputable school in China, the stress of her working conditions as well as the belief

that she could improve her professional career led to pursuing a graduate degree abroad.

Therefore, Kim left the security of employment and the belonging she had with friends

and family to pursue a goal that threatened her basic needs. Maslow (1943) accounts for

the discrepancy within his motivation theory by stating the following:

> If we remember that the cognitive capacities (perceptual, intellectual, learning)
>
> are a set of adjustive tools, which have,…that of satisfaction of our basic needs,
>
> then it is clear that any danger to them,…must also be indirectly threatening to the
>
> basic needs themselves…We must therefore introduce another hypothesis and
>
> speak of degrees of closeness to the basic needs, for we have already pointed out

that *any* conscious desires (partial goals) are more or less important as they

are more or less close to the basic needs. (p. 384)

Whether the motivation for the co-researchers to study in the United States stemmed

from a desire to seek an opportunity they had seen as beneficial to others in China or

borne out of a need to support their family and solidify employment is inconclusive.

Social Experiences

Throughout the study, the co-researchers strove to find a balance between

exploring American culture and addressing inquiries about Chinese tradition. The co-

researchers avoided characterizing their social experiences as separate from their

academic pursuits. In fact, many of the first social interactions identified in the dialogues

began with conversations within the classroom. Themes regarding class expectations,

group projects, and community clusters detailed the challenges co-researchers faced

regarding acculturation in U.S. higher education. As Kim saw the American system of

higher education as self-guided, she had difficulty in navigating how to obtain greater

academic support. Though Mickey strategized how to contribute to class discussions on

course material, she only felt the anticipation of her contribution when topics regarding

Chinese education arose.

The process of creating social circles and defining a racial identity for the co-

researchers at Bay Area University was ever-present. Yet, the effect these issues had on

the academic and social well-being of the co-researchers was never fully explored.

Christine reflected upon her experiences formulating class groups and social circles with

white American students. The examples she shared personified her confusion

encountering different behaviors from the same people. Christine could not understand

why U.S. students with whom she had established relationships one week may become distant the next week.

Daphne and Kim were frustrated with their academic experiences as it related to group assignments. The co-researchers often settled for individual assignments within a group though desiring collaboration to complete class projects. Even in reporting completed work, the co-researchers saw their voices as being silenced. These experiences were described as shocking by the co-researchers and made them wary of interacting with U.S. students in the classroom.

Nonetheless, the co-researchers believed socializing with American students had a level of importance equal to pursuing their graduate degrees at Bay Area University. The co-researchers faced disappointment in forging relationships with U.S. students. However, many drew the conclusion that finding people willing to collaborate with Chinese students was the source of their frustration. They did not conclude that they were shunned by all aspects of American culture or society. Finding what Mickey referred to as "nice natives" (e.g., American students) remained critical to her positive experiences at Bay Area University. Yet, acquisition of American as a second culture (Brown, 2007), and learning how to navigate it was difficult.

Investing time in social organizations on campus aided in giving the co-researchers a community. Whether in terms of refining academic skills or developing intimate friendships, everyone celebrated how they benefited from the communities they joined. At the same time, the absence of social and professional organizations for graduate students at Bay Area University led to the co-researchers joining societies comprised mostly of undergraduate students.

These findings give further credence to Tajfel's (1982) theory on social group identity. During their time at Bay Area University, the co-researchers see themselves as benefiting from engaging with U.S. and other international students. Learning about cultural traditions as well as working with native English speakers were positive aspects the co-researchers identified in their graduate degree program. Yet, the co-researchers were surprised when encountering a lack of interest or indifference expressed towards them in many social aspects of Bay Area University.

Although never identifying a specific phrase or individual, the co-researchers felt an overarching assumption about the academic and social abilities of *the Chinese* by their American classmates and professors. According to Tajfel, this is the result of a majority outgroup (U.S. students) making sweeping assertions about the intergroup (PRC students). The co-researchers felt they were depersonalized to such an extent that American classmates depicted them as slow to comprehend basic concepts, unable to hold discussions in English, and incapable of being assertive in group assignments. As a result of the study, the co-researchers had an opportunity to share their common experiences with each other and ultimately come to a consensus (but not unanimous) feeling of disappointment and distrust of American students.

Tajfel's (1982) definition of intergroup behavior aids in explaining how the co-researchers formed their opinions based on their interaction with the larger outrgoup of students at in the United States:

[This] leads to empirical questions concerning the special *characteristics* of intergroup behavior and its *antecedents.* Two of these characteristics seem particularly important: the first consists of the uniformities displayed by members

of the ingroup in their behavior and attitudes toward the outgroup. This

transition toward uniformity mirrors the transition from the interpersonal to the

intergroup ends of the continuum as the behavior is increasingly determined by

the reciprocal group membership of the constituent individuals. The second

major characteristic of intergroup behavior, which also becomes more salient…is

another kind of uniformity: the decrease in variability in the characteristics and

behavior of the members of the outgroup as they are perceived by members of the

ingroup. (p. 13)

Fortunately, the co-researchers did not come away from their experience at Bay

Area University with only feelings of rejection and frustration. Engaging in social

organizations that included international and U.S. students but were void of participation

by classmates in their graduate program led to the building of new friendships. Each

participant articulated a social community that was specific to their interests, and fulfilled

an expectation to interact with others beyond the classroom. Tajfel (1981) states that "an

intensified affiliation with a group is only possible when the group is capable of

supplying some satisfactory aspects of an individual's social identity" (p. 140). For the

co-researchers, the social clubs at Bay Area University provided outlets to explore

common interests with other students.

<div align="center">Student Identity: International versus Chinese</div>

Throughout the dialogues, the co-researchers refer to themselves and their

community as international versus Chinese. When explaining actions or behaviors in an

American classroom that could obstruct their learning process, co-researchers usually

began by stating *we international students*. Co-researchers felt American administrators

and students made the assumption that Chinese students either gravitated to or were only interested in associating themselves with other Chinese students. According to the co-researchers, their relationship with the office of International Student Services greatly shaped how they saw themselves at Bay Area University. Through orientation, social gatherings, and academic support, the office set a social framework for the co-researchers to build their own communities.

Yet, the co-researchers' presence in the United States also reflected a larger paradigm shift in the political influence of China in the 21st century. Throughout the dialogues, the co-researchers identified themselves as Chinese through language, culture, food, and tradition.   The co-researchers rarely if ever identified themselves through a nationalist prism in terms of politics or philosophy. This may be in part due to their desire to focus the research on strengthening academic and social experiences while studying abroad in the United States. In the dialogues, politics was limited to stereotypes the co-researchers experienced from professors and American students regarding their ability to converse in the English language (Liu, 2002) as well as the preference to learn solely on rote memory strategies (Dirksen, 1990).

As the People's Republic of China has taken a greater role in international politics and finance, the number of Chinese students studying abroad particularly in the United States of America has risen (Gardner & Witherell, 2008; 2009). Simultaneously, ongoing disputes regarding human rights, individual liberties, and technological espionage between the United States and China continue to play out through multimedia networks (Yardley, 2008; Wines, 2010). Such debates do not unfold in an isolated prism, and therefore are a part of dialogues on American university campuses. Moreover, in an

American context, it is conceivable that opinions on the before mentioned disputes fault the Chinese government for being more often if not exclusively on the wrong side of these debates.

As a result, Chinese citizens studying in the United States may find themselves on the defensive regarding the policies of the Chinese government within the realm of university campuses (Dewan, 2008), as distinctions between individual, culture, and government are blurred. In the study, the co-researchers did not equate the challenges they had with forming relationships in or out of the classroom with the relationship between the American and Chinese governments. What the co-researchers did articulate was that there were a set of perceptions about the values and interests of *the Chinese* that was an unspoken dialogue amongst the U.S. populace. Because the challenge for any international student to adjust to a new language and culture while studying abroad can be overwhelming, the thought of battling overarching perceptions about one's entire nation could stymie any interests in study abroad. Without the leadership and guidance of political and university officials in the United States and China to clearly express the goals of student exchange, the potential for conflict in the classroom is ever-present.

Impact of the One Child Policy

With few exceptions, the One Child Policy of the People's Republic of China remains strongly enforced. All co-researchers in this study were the only child in their family. The second dialogue explores the angst and longing the co-researchers' parents go through when facing the reality that their daughters will leave home for a two year period, and in many cases for the first time. Ultimately, both the co-researchers and their parents praise the opportunity to pursue higher education in the United States. However,

the unknown, primarily when the co-researchers would return home, amplified the

need to maintain communication with their parents.

<div align="center">Remaining in the United States</div>

A crucial but underlying theme throughout the research involved where the co-

researchers would pursue employment after graduation. From the beginning of the initial

dialogue, the co-researchers highlighted the importance of telling American officials that

they would to return to China after graduation. Otherwise, they may have never received

their visa to study in the United States. Yet, every participant considered the possibility

of working in the United States well beyond graduation.

Factors that led to the co-researchers searching for work in the United States

involved student debts and professional opportunities. It should be understood that the

ability to finance education does not necessarily dictate the ability to maintain a certain

standard of living. The Government of the United States requires that international

university students show evidence that they have the ability to pay full tuition for the

duration of their degree programs. All the co-researchers were aided in doing so with the

assistance of their parents. By graduation, many families had depleted their bank

accounts. The co-researchers shared how they were thinking of ways to thank and often

repay their parents for their support. Students from China may look to stay in the United

States for political reasons (Qian, 2002). But, the co-researchers hoped to stay in the

United States to find a job commensurate with a salary that could cover the cost of their

graduate degree in addition to providing a living wage.

Due to the status of the global economy in 2010, the co-researchers are

deciphering mixed signals on the state of employment in the U.S. and the PRC. In the

San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, there are advocates for the expansion of H1B work visas for international employees (Jordan, 2009). Yet, there is a socio-political push in the United States against any form of immigration (Johnson, 2007). As China's economy continues to grow, the Chinese Communist Party implements incentives to bring its citizenry abroad back home. At the same time, China's government has had difficulty offering enough jobs for potential qualified employees (Eimer, 2009). In addition to finding a job, the co-researchers were determined to pursue a position that supported their professional growth and personal well-being.

By the end of this study, all co-researchers who completed their degree at Bay Area University found employment in the United States. Considering the co-researchers in this study, as well as the social network they developed with other students from the PRC, it is likely that Chinese students who study in American universities will pursue employment opportunities in the United States. Given the factors of salary range, employment opportunity, and social mobility, Chinese graduates from American colleges would choose working in the U.S. over a similar position in the PRC.

As China continues to play an integral role in the landscapes of the global economy and international politics, its ties to the United States through higher education continues to expand. The equally important but underexplored ramifications of American – Chinese cooperation in higher education is the level of immigration resulting from study abroad. As China's most educated people opt to permanently relocate abroad, there remains the question as to whether the PRC will ultimately place more stringent policies on the conditions where its citizens can pursue higher education in another country.

Participatory Research Experience

The process of utilizing a participatory framework with the co-researchers removed the invisible wall between researcher and participant. I felt a participatory framework would be the most effective in grounding the research through the co-researchers' voices. Yet, yielding control of the study to the co-researchers was difficult and unnerving to me. During the first and second dialogues, there were numerous moments where I wished to insert my voice or perspective to draw specific answers to my research questions. However, as the co-researchers explored themes relative to the dialogue questions, I began to capture data that addressed the study in ways I had never anticipated. In addition, through email and personal conversations, the co-researchers pressed me to include my voice not as a researcher, but rather as a fellow participant. As a result, the need I felt to insert my voice lessened, and there was rarely any separation between the relevance of the research and the interest of the co-researchers.

Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) theory of alternative histories reinforces the findings by the co-researchers. Through the lenses of politics, academia, and history, there is an assertion that one society can learn about the *other* without ever holding a conversation. The co-researchers recognized that they held assumptions about U.S. society that were unfounded. However, the co-researchers became aware that they had been *defined* before taking their first class at Bay Area University. The co-researchers determined that communication through formal and informal spaces with classmates and their school community was the best way to address how their oral histories could provide an authentic picture of graduate students from China. Through this approach, each co-

researcher was able to speak to strong relationships they had formed with American classmates.

The approach of the co-researchers in addressing how their stories would inform their university community also aided in my own education. In participatory research, Smaling (1998) states that seeking perfection in dialogical relationships between researcher and participant can result in the abandonment of a study. What I did not realize upon embarking on this study was the perfection I sought had less to do with the process of participatory research and more to do with the completion of the study. As the dialogues progressed, I remained systematic in sharing recordings, reflections, and analysis with the co-researchers. As the co-researchers assumed greater roles in guiding the study, I became more aware that investing too much energy in the parameters of the study trivialized the participatory approach, and played a role in the attrition of several potential co-researchers.

Due in part to the constructivist approach of participatory research, the co-researchers immediately owned the direction of the study. Valach, Young, & Lynam (2002) state how participatory research allows participants to engage any study; this is especially true because the participants are not limited to any theory in exploring their place in the research. At the same time, Yager (2000) explains that constructivist learning is unique in that it draws upon the lives of people to inform knowledge. The idea that data can be cultivated as wholly objective and uninfluenced by personal experience is contrary to constructivist learning. As the study progressed, the co-researchers became more aggressive in challenging each other's perspectives on university life in the United States, as well as the rationale of questions I presented in the

research. This relationship with the study held everyone equally accountable for the development of the research. Moreover, it forced me to validate to the co-researchers, as I had to the academic community, the intent of the study.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

There are components to this study that can be expanded to other populations as well as aspects of the research that cannot be replicated. Addressing the lack of support for Chinese graduate students at an American university identifies a specific population. Future studies could investigate how international students in general internalize their experiences in U.S. higher education. In addition, as this study looks at a graduate student population, the reflections of undergraduate PRC students at U.S. colleges and universities may yield very different perspectives. The age of students, length of program, and majors of choice could all impact future research on this topic.

In addition, the geographical location of the university would yield different perspectives in the study. Although the research investigated why the co-researchers chose to study in the United States, the findings revealed that the reputation and locale of the San Francisco Bay Area influenced their decision to enroll at Bay Area University. Comparing and contrasting the experiences of international graduate students in American universities varying in setting (urban or rural) and diversity could highlight differences in how this population is supported.

However, due to the methodological approach of participatory research, this study cannot be replicated. Participatory research involves both researcher and co-researchers working collaboratively on phenomena that lead to a plan of action. Topics that are identified, as well as co-researchers that are involved in participatory research are

uniquely suited to one study. Because participatory research also promotes the
empowerment of participants as co-researchers, the prominent themes of this study under
ideal situations for replication would likely change. The methodology focuses on how
the co-researchers rather than the researcher can use a study's findings to promote
change.

At the same time, the themes detailed in the results of this participatory study
could inform future research utilizing different methodologies. By adapting the study's
findings in relation to social communities, international – domestic student interactions,
and employment abroad, a quantitative analysis could evolve. By assessing a survey
instrument that could accurately measure classroom motivation or social development,
researchers could observe how these topics apply to a larger population of international
students across multiple universities in the United States.

Finally, an important addition to this study would be to include the perspectives of
American university officials involved in recruiting Chinese students. Many U.S.
colleges are saddled with the dual pressure of internationalizing student-bodies while
expanding opportunities for underrepresented communities in the United States. How the
economic trends, political winds, and social discourse impact the reception of
international students on American campuses would provide valuable insight to this area
of research.

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APPENDIX A

From: irbphs irbphs@usfca.edu

To: B D Washington ████████████████████

CC: skoirala@usfca.edu

Date: Mon, Aug 3, 2009 at 9:18 AM

Subject: IRB Application # 09-050 - Application Approved

August 3, 2009

Dear Mr. Washington:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS)
at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human
subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #09-050).
Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that
time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file
a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation
(including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS.
Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must
be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research

APPENDIX B

ORGANIZATION CONSENT LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT COVER LETTER TO THE █████████████████████████████
███████ DEPARTMENT AT ███████████████████████ FOR
ACCESS TO STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

████████████████

Department Chair
████████████████████████████, School of Education
████████████████████
████████████████

Introduction and Purpose
My name is Brad Washington, and I am a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. I plan to conduct a dissertation study on students from the People's Republic of China pursing graduate degrees in the United States of America. Specifically, I am interested in learning about the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese graduate students and how they feel they can be supported while studying in the United States.

One part of the study requires me to understand the personal perspectives of Chinese graduate students and to do so I request that I be allowed access to communicate with this student population. I am asking permission to speak with the students once per month from August 2009 to November 2009, as well as January 2010.

This Consent Form is a request for your permission to allow me access to speak with the Chinese student population in the department ████████████████████████
███████. All data collected in this study will remain confidential. All individuals and all identities will remain confidential and will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study.

Procedure
If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. Students will participate in a series of 5 conversations with 9 other participants in the study.

2. The researcher will transcribe conversations and work with participants to verify for authenticity.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions and discussions may make participants uncomfortable, but they are free to decline to answer any questions they do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to students participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of support for Chinese citizens studying in the United States.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to participants as a result of taking part in this study.

Questions

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before or during the study. You may contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the:

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
School of Education, Room 023
Department of Counseling Psychology
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080

You may also contact Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad at the University of San Francisco at (415) 422-2073 or via email at skoirala@usfca.edu, or by writing her at the School of Education, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you agree to grant me access and permission to speak to graduate students from the People's Republic of China in your department, please sign and return the attached consent form.

APPENDIX C

ORGANIZATION CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT COVER FORM TO ███████████████████ ██████████████████████████ FOR ACCESS TO
STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

CONSENT

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I understand that my participation will always be voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Name of Person and title giving consent at the ███████████████████████ at
███████████████

_____ (name)
_____(title)

Signature of Person giving permission at ███████████████████████
███████████████

_____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent Brad D. Washington_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent _____

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH SUBJECTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, I have the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is trying to find out;

2. To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;

3. To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;

4. To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;

5. To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;

7. To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;

8. To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and

10. To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher or the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT FOR STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Purpose and Background
Mr. Brad Washington, a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is doing a study on students from the People's Republic of China pursing graduate degrees in the United States of America. He is interested in learning about the academic motivations and social experiences of Chinese graduate students and how they feel they can be supported while studying in the United States.

I am being asked to participate because I am from the People's Republic of China and I am pursuing a graduate degree in the United States.

Procedures
If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in a series of 5 conversations with 9 other participants in the study. Each conversation will have a duration of an hour.

2. The researcher will transcribe my conversations and have me verify for authenticity.

Risks and/or Discomforts
1. It is possible that some of the questions and discussions may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

Benefits
There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of support for Chinese citizens studying in the United States.

Costs/Financial Considerations
There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement
I will not be reimbursed for participation in this study.

Questions
I have talked to Mr. Washington about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call him at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad at (415) 422-2073.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the:

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
School of Education, Room 023
Department of Counseling Psychology
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080

Consent
I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights," and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student or employee at USF.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

_____

Subject's Signature   Date of Signature

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date of Signature

APPENDIX F

RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY/PSEUDONYM ASSIGNMENT

As a participant for this study, please indicate your feelings regarding confidentiality.

CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

_____ Please use my legal name in all documentation required to complete the above-mentioned research study.

OR

_____ Please conceal my identity by using a pseudonym in referring to me in the documentation required to complete the above-mentioned research study.

CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

_____ Please use the pseudonym_____ when referring to me in the documentation required to complete the above-mentioned research study.

OR

_____ Please choose a pseudonym for me.

PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND DATE:

      I understand that I have the right to speak candidly yet confidentially for this research study. By checking the above sections, I am either granting permission to use my legal name or asking to be referred to by a pseudonym.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

APPENDIX G

GUIDE FOR DIALOGUE WITH CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS

Dialogue 1

Question #1:   What are the academic motivations for Chinese students to study at universities in the United States?

A.   How did you decide to attend this university?

B.   What is your field of study?

Question #2:   How do Chinese students prepare to apply to American universities?

A.   Where did you receive your undergraduate degree?

B.   Were you required to take any examinations before studying in the United States?

C.   How did you apply for a U. S. student visa?

Question #3:   What social experiences do Chinese students have while studying at American universities?

A.   What do you think of your professors?

B.   Have you developed friendships with fellow classmates?

C.   How do you spend your time outside of the classroom?

Dialogue 2

Question # 1: What considerations did you have before matriculating into the graduate degree program?

Question #2:   What did your family think about you studying abroad?

Question #3:   Had you known of other students studying at the university of your choice?

Question #4:   Were there opportunities to speak with representatives from prospective U. S. universities before applying to graduate school?

Dialogue 3

Question #1:   What has been your classroom experience while studying in the United States?

Question #2:   To what extent has language played a role in your experience while studying in the United States?

Question #3:   Have you had the opportunity to work with other students on group projects? How did you find the experience(s)?

Question #4:   How challenging have you found class assignments for your courses/program?

Dialogue 4

Question #1:   Has the experience of studying at this university met your expectations?

Question #2:   Have you joined any clubs or organizations at your university?

Question #3:   If you have questions regarding university procedures or resources, who do you speak to?

APPENDIX H

IMAGE FROM FINAL PROJECT CREATED BY CO-RESEARCHERS