

Influences of Chinese Students' Undergraduate Experiences in China on Their US Graduate Studies

Weiyan Xiong, PhD

School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR

Xi Wang, MEd

School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, USA

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OUTLINE

- Research background
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BACKGROUND

- A workshop
- Stereotype of Chinese students
- Images of Chinese secondary students



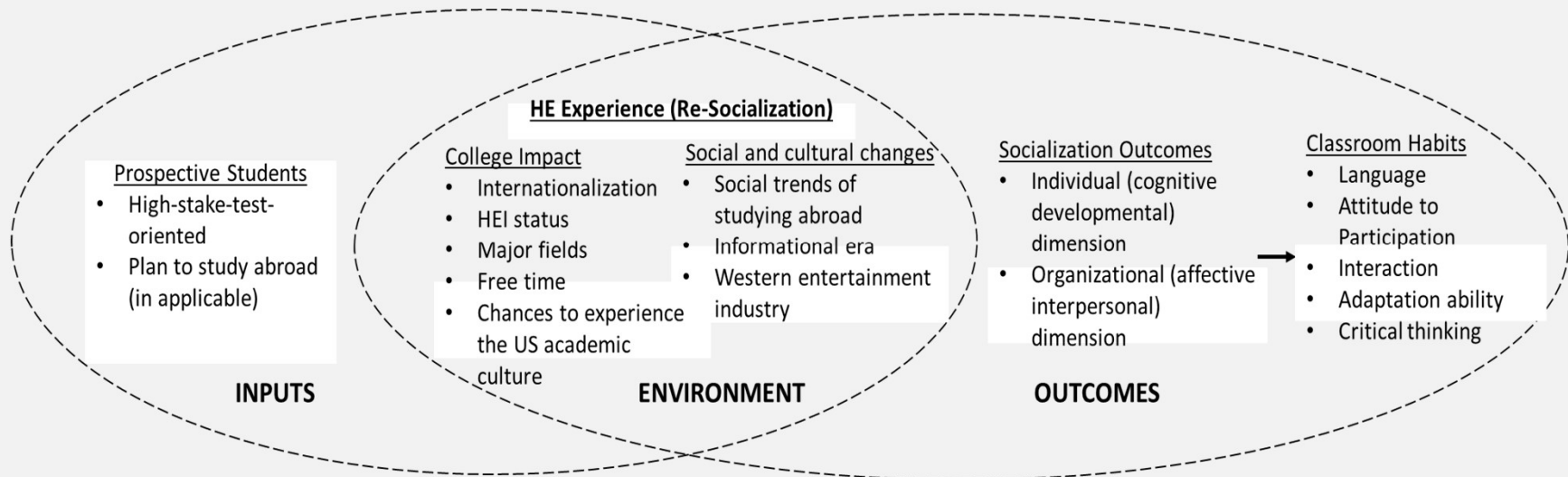
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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do Chinese graduate students describe their undergraduate experience in China and how does it differ from their time in secondary school?
- How does Chinese graduate students' re-socialization at their Chinese alma mater influence their classroom habits at US HEIs?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Brim (1966); Weidman (1989; 2006)
- “Re-socialization”



RESEARCH DESIGN

	Hard Hard-pure (Physics, Math)	Hard-applied (Mechanical Engineering, Clinical Medicine)	
Pure			Applied
	Soft-pure (History, Anthropology, Philosophy, Linguistics)	Soft-applied (Business Studies, Applied Linguistics, Education, Law)	
	Soft		

Source: Becher & Trowler (2001, p. 36)

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Four Schools and Departments
 - Education, History, Engineering, and Anthropology
- Mixed Methods
 - Quantitative: survey
 - 125/457; 68 valid responses
 - Qualitative: semi-structural in-depth interview
 - 19 interview participants

RESEARCH DESIGN: SURVEY

	Sampling Pool	Valid Responses	Academic Level		Gender		
			Doctoral	Master's	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
Total	457	68*	44*	24	39*	26	3
Education	84	20	7	13	2	18	0
Swanson	312	29	18	11	21	6	2
Physics and Astronomy	52	13	13	0	11	1	1
Anthropology	9	5	5	0	4	1	0

*One valid male doctoral respondent didn't indicate his/her school or department.

RESEARCH DESIGN: INTERVIEWEES

	Gender	Degree Level	Department/School at Pitt
RSC01	F	Master&Doctoral	School of Education
RSC02	M	Ed.D.	School of Education
RSC03	F	Master's	School of Education
RSC04	F	Master's	School of Education
RSC05	F	Master's	Swanson School of Engineering
RSC06	F	Master's	School of Education
RSC07	F	Master's	School of Education
RSC08	M	Doctoral	Department of Physics and Astronomy
RSC09	M	Doctoral	Swanson School of Engineering
RSC10	F	Master&Doctoral	School of Education
RSC11	M	Doctoral	Department of Physics and Astronomy
RSC12	M	Doctoral	Department of Physics and Astronomy
RSC13	M	Doctoral	Swanson School of Engineering
RSC14	M	Doctoral	Department of Physics and Astronomy
RSC15	M	Doctoral	Department of Anthropology
RSC16	F	Doctoral	School of Education
RSC17	M	Master&Doctoral	School of Education
RSC18	M	Doctoral	Department of Anthropology
RSC19	F	Doctoral	School of Education

SURVEY RESULTS

Statement	Average	Swanson	SOE	Physics	Anthropology
I have more free time than high school.	4.29	4.50	3.9	4.23	4.8
There is a trend of internationalization at the university.	3.99	4.14	3.95	3.77	3.6
I have many opportunities to experience international class environment.	3.13	3.43	2.95	3.15	2.4
Because of deciding to study abroad, I prepare accordingly to adapt to the foreign class environment.	3.51	3.54	3.6	3.38	3.4
During the leisure time, I liked watching English movie, TV series, and talk shows.	3.81	3.68	4.05	3.62	3.8
I am good at Internet to get international information.	4.03	4.11	4.1	3.92	3.6
I know how to access to websites banned in China, such as Facebook and Twitter.	3.43	3.75	2.9	3.69	3.8
The faculty members applied the DIFFERENT teaching styles as that in high school.	3.49	3.29	3.55	4.15	2
I applied different learning strategies from those I used in high school.	3.88	4.04	3.75	3.77	3.6
I have more freedom to express my perspectives in the classroom than high school.	3.71	3.54	4.1	3.54	3.8
I felt it is more important to actively participate in the class discussion than in high school.	3.35	3.14	3.9	3.15	2.4
I am willing and eager to express my perspectives in the classroom.	3.32	2.96	4.05	3.31	2.6
University is greatly different from high school regarding studying and life.	4.51	4.54	4.7	4.15	4.4

SURVEY RESULTS

Statement	Average	Swanson	SOE	Physics	Anthropology
I felt difficult to understand and participate in the first class in the US.	3.03	3.15	3.35	2.00	4.2
I took long time to adapt to the US class environment.	2.74	3.11	2.85	1.77	3.2
English is not the biggest barrier for me to adapt to the US classroom.	2.92	3.19	3	2.15	3.6
It was easier than I expected to adapt to the US classroom.	3.59	3.44	3.3	4.38	3.2
I feel confident and comfortable to participate in the class discussion.	3.68	3.48	3.8	3.69	4
I like to discussing with the instructor and my US classmates.	3.61	3.63	3.5	3.54	4.2
I always have different perspectives and I am willing and able to express them.	3.33	3.19	3.65	3.08	3.6

FINDING: *DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION*

I. Freedom

- More free time after entering the university
- More free personal space

- “At college, I had more free time to distribute, as well as spaces, because I was far away from home and parents” (RSCI9).

FINDING: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2. Learning Experience

- Passive Learning vs. Active Learning
- Academic Pressure
- The Way of Instruction

- “[At university,] I did not have much pressure from the examinations. Even though there were examinations as well, they could not compare with the *Gaokao* at all” (RSC01).

- “The courses were less intensive at university” (RSC16), and different from high school, the college instructors did not “push you to study” (RSC03).

FINDING: *DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION*

3. Responses to Differences

- Treated differences as a release
- Did not do well at first

-“I like a joke that if I need to graduate from college and enter high school, I may need efforts to cope with the differences because it is more challenging in high school. I feel it was a release after entering the college” (RSC02).

-“I did not adjust very well, but I knew it would be worse if I did not do anything” (RSC13).

**FINDING: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

**4. Attitudes toward Class Participation and Discussion at
Chinese Universities**



To a large extent, influenced by students' disciplines

As one engineering student stated, "the School of Engineering focuses on cultivating your problem-solving ability instead of verbal expression ability. Because solving a problem [needs hands-on practices] instead of too much speaking. Moreover, the class is usually in the lecture format, by which the instructor speaks, and we learn" (RSC05).

A student from the School of Education who majored in English in her bachelor's program described a different situation regarding the class participation. "In my bachelor's program in English, in addition to the lectures, the instructors provided us with many opportunities to express our ideas" (RSC10).

FINDING: *DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION*

5. Experiencing the **Western Culture and Learning Environment.**

- The Internationalization trend in higher Education
- The rapid development of Internet
- The levels and quality of their universities

“In the class with an English instructor, it was my first time to be able to distinguish ‘presentation’ and ‘public speaking.’ With this understanding, the presentation was not a new thing to me when I was in the US classroom” (RSC01).

“These experiences at least let me know what I would encounter in the US classroom” (RSC17).

FINDING: *ADAPTATION TO THE US CLASSROOM*

Barriers

- English as the biggest barrier
- The styles of instruction and class participation

Responses to Barriers

- Prepare before classes
- Force themselves to participate
- Ask help from peers

DISCUSSIONS

- Chinese graduate students' images are moving away from the stereotypes around them.
- But still greatly influenced by Chinese culture and social traditions.
- Disciplines and majors play important roles in influencing students' learning habits, class participation, and even expectations of their study in the US.

THANKS!

- Weiyang Xiong, PhD
 - weiyangxiong@ln.edu.hk
 - <https://scholars.ln.edu.hk/en/persons/weiyang-xiong/publications/>
- Xi Wang, MEd
 - xiw84@pitt.edu