

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF MAINLAND CHINESE UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS AT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

by

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B.A., Beijing University, 1997

M.P.S.A., Texas A&M University, 2000

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

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Abstract

Previous studies of the experiences of mainland Chinese students in the U.S. have focused on graduate students, the most prolific Chinese demographic change before 2008. However, a significant increase in mainland Chinese undergraduate students has occurred in American universities since 2008, and these students have different features from Chinese graduate students. Meanwhile, research on the mainland Chinese undergraduate student experience was very limited. For example, what are the sources of stress of these Chinese undergraduate students? What were their coping strategies? What changes did they have in the process? How do they evaluate their experience in the U.S.?

This study is an attempt to answer these questions. This study employed a qualitative research method and a case study research design to examine the experience of six mainland Chinese undergraduate students in a midwestern American public university. Convenience, snowball and criterion sampling were used to identify the participants, who were conducted a semi-structured interview with in-depth follow-up probing sessions to yield data. Berry's (1997) acculturation framework was the theoretical framework for the study.

Patterns that emerged from the data include: (1) six stressors are discovered in participants' acculturation process: language barrier, cultural difference, life skills-related stressors, relationships with others, academic studies, and concern for the future (including job opportunity and pressure for marriages). The stressors vary based on individual factors and their length of time in the U.S; (2) participants used three coping strategies to cope with stressful situation: problem focused, emotions focused and avoidance-orientation strategies; participants mainly rely on friends or roommates to cope with problems and are not aware of university's resources for help; (3) participants experienced many changes in this process, including

improved English skill, independence, stress management, changed perceptions about U.S. and China; (4) participants' overall evaluation of the experience is positive but they don't think studying in the U.S. is for everyone; they hope university to provide more help overcome the difficulties; (5) participants also talked about dissatisfaction about Chinese education, cheating problems at the American university, using agents when applying for universities, desire to return to China eventually and their family financial support.

Themes emerged crossing all patterns included: (1) participants did not what to expect before they went abroad but managed to overcome difficulties in the U.S.; (2) participants are willing to make changes and improve themselves by overcoming all barriers with the resources they know; (3) participants desire more help from the university to overcome the barriers to a better education; (4) participants seek better job opportunities whether in China or in the U.S. soon after graduation, but they eventually will go back China; (5) participants' family fully support participants' endeavor to study in the U.S.

As a conclusion, the study makes recommendations to American university administrators, professors and Chinese students who plan to come to the U.S. American universities should develop a holistic approach to help Chinese international students. Language and cultural training and engagement is important. Partnership programs between American students and Chinese students may be established to help them with language and cultural training. At the same time, life-skills, relationship skills, academic study skills and training are needed for students who came during high school or after high school. The university should also use standardized test for admission to ensure quality of students. Professional career help is a very critical need for these students in China and in America. Finally, the study recommends further research to better understand this unique population.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Robert J. Shoop

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Dedication

To my parents, who give me love and strength.

To all Chinese students studying abroad in the U.S., who have inspired me to learn and grow.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background of the Problem

International student demographics in American universities are rapidly changing, and Allan E. Goodman, President of the Institute of International Education, calls the shifts “a game changer” (McMurtrie, 2012). For many years, more international graduate students than undergraduate students were studying in American universities. However, in 2012, the all-time high enrollment of international students in America brought another first: for the first time in 11 years, more international undergraduate students than graduate students were studying in the U.S. (McMurtrie, 2012). Because of the significant differences between the needs of undergraduate students and those of graduate students, this change in demographics commands the attention of universities and their student services (McMurtrie, 2012).

This broader demographics shift from more international graduate students to more international undergraduates is driven in part by the trend among mainland Chinese studying at American universities. According to the annual report of the Institute of International Education (IIE), mainland Chinese students have comprised the largest group of international students three years in a row since 2009, and Chinese undergraduate students have been steadily increasing in number since 2008 (IIE, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012). In 2011-12, among the total 764,495 international students, 25.4% (194,039) were from mainland China, up 23% from the previous year; among them, 38.4% (74,516) were undergraduate students (IIE, 2012). This is a 31% increase in undergraduate students, whereas mainland Chinese graduate students have increased by only 15% (IIE, 2012). Since 2008, the number of Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in American universities has tripled (Bartlett & Fisher, 2011). In some universities, the number has increased even more significantly. The University of Delaware, for

example, had only eight Chinese undergraduate students in 2007, but by 2008, this number grew to 517 (Bartlett & Fisher, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the constant growth of the international student population, “little interest in international student adjustment and success has been generated in higher education literature” (Andrade, 2005, p.103). Even though some studies have examined Chinese students’ adaptation to the American educational system, culture, and lifestyle, almost all of the research has focused on Chinese graduate students (Lin, 2002; Wang, 2004; Yan & Berliner, 2012; Zhao, 2005; Zhang, 2005). However, despite being a fast growing demographic (Shu, 2008), Chinese undergraduate students’ experiences are largely unaccounted for, and several stakeholders would benefit from a better understanding of their experiences, including American university administrators, faculty, student service personnel, other Chinese students who may be interested in coming to American universities, and even American citizens whose communities Chinese students live in. This study attempts to fill this gap in knowledge by looking at the acculturation experience of Chinese undergraduate students in American universities for 1) what American universities and educators can do to more effectively help with the process; and 2) how future Chinese students can better prepare themselves before they come to American universities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the acculturation experience of mainland Chinese undergraduate students, as opposed to graduate students, in an American university. Due to lack of information and the complex nature of such student experiences, this study employed a qualitative research method and a case study research design (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Semi-structured interviews with in-depth follow up probing sessions were conducted to collect data

from six Chinese undergraduate students at an American university. Interview protocol was developed through literature review, a pilot study, and interviews with students' academic advisors, faculty, the faculty advisor of Chinese Students and Scholars Association, and the director of the International Students Center.

Criterion sampling was the method used in this study. Six students were interviewed for the study. These students attended a large, public research university in the Midwest, with a Chinese student enrollment of approximately 1,000, representing almost 50% of the total international enrollment.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

This study uses Berry's (1997) acculturation framework to generate research questions about the acculturation experience of mainland Chinese undergraduate students. Berry's framework is based on five acculturation phenomena: life events (acculturation experience), stressors (appraisal of experience), coping (strategies used), immediate effects (stress), and long-term outcomes (adaptations). Two levels of factors, group-level and individual-level, affect the acculturation process. Earlier studies on acculturation have focused on group-level differences affecting acculturation, such as Chinese international students vs. Indian international students. Berry's model provides a framework for individual-level analysis of acculturation (Lee, 2008, p.14). According to Berry's framework, the individual level factors influencing acculturation include factors prior to acculturation (e.g., age, gender, migration motivation, cultural distance, and personality) and factors during acculturation (e.g., length of time, acculturation strategies, coping, social support, and societal attitudes).

Research Questions

The overarching question is: what is the acculturation experience of mainland Chinese undergraduate students in American universities? The sub-research questions guiding the study are:

1. What stressors did Chinese undergraduate students have at the American university?
2. What coping strategies did they use in dealing with the stressors?
3. What changes did they see in themselves since coming to America?
4. How did they evaluate their experience?

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for a number of reasons. First, the research will help American universities better understand mainland Chinese undergraduate students' experience studying in America and thus improve their services and programs to best serve this growing student population. Though American universities may have learned how to accommodate Chinese graduate students, they are not equipped with proper cross-cultural knowledge and understanding of the needs of Chinese undergraduate students. As the director of the international office at the University of California Berkeley said, "It is a culture shock not just for the students, but for the campus" (Fisher, 2011).

Secondly, this study will help Chinese families better prepare students before they go to the United States and provide support for their adjustment. More and more Chinese families are interested in sending their children to American universities to study. However, these families and students do not know what they will encounter and how they should prepare for the journey.

Thirdly, this study will help Chinese students understand more about their own acculturation process. They can seek some preparation before they go to the United States.

After they come to the United States, they will know how to seek additional help. Furthermore, they will develop strategies to help them adapt to the new environment. They can also share their knowledge with their peers as they make the cultural transition.

Finally, this study will bridge a gap in the research on Chinese undergraduate students in American universities. Since the Chinese undergraduate student group is a recent one on American campuses, not enough research exists. This research will enrich the broad literature on international students' adjustment experiences at American universities.

Limitations of the Study

First of all, participants of this study were limited to a small group of students at a midwestern American university. This college town has a population of only 50,000 people. The findings may be not appropriate to generalize to Chinese undergraduate students in a city with larger population or metropolitan areas. In-depth interview, rich and sick description will help reader to figure out the transferability of the findings.

Second, this university does not require a Standard English test, such as Test on English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a relatively low English requirement, for international students. This raises the question that if their language challenges have anything to do with the language requirement. This study did not investigate the relationship between their language difficulties and the English requirement, nor looked into the ability of participants' English.

Thirdly, only six students were included in this study, which is a small sample. Moreover, students are not differentiated by where they are from in China, raising the question of whether the students' experiences were affected by their geographic locations in China. This study will not be able to answer this question.

Fourth, no comparison has been conducted among students from other American universities or other Chinese-speaking groups, such as students from Taiwan and Hongkong. Therefore this study has limitations in applying to a larger population.

In summary, the present research illuminates only the participants' acculturation experiences. It could be presented as a step toward gaining a greater understanding of the themes that are revealed, thus opening opportunities for further research. Further research about this special population will need to be conducted.

Definition of Terms

1. Mainland Chinese undergraduate students: those students from mainland China who speak Mandarin, have a valid student visa, and are seeking degrees in American universities.
2. Acculturation: a series of changes undergone by individuals from different cultures experiencing continuous first-hand contact with a new culture (Berry, 1997).
3. Stress: cognitive and psychological reaction to a series of challenges from not only academic study and language proficiency but also diverse social conditions (Yan, 2008).
4. Stressors: sources of stress. In this study's context, stressors include language barriers and any aspects of academic, social, cultural, or financial life that cause stress (Berry, 1997).
5. Adaptation: the process of getting used to a new environment and responding appropriately.
6. Coping: coping behaviors that participants used in dealing with their stressors. Problem-focused coping refers to direct approach to solve the problematic situation; emotion-focused coping refers to attempts to manage emotional response associated with the

problems; avoidance-oriented coping refers to disengagement mentally or physically from the situation.

7. Changes: students defined the changes they have seen them, behavior and perceptions.
8. Evaluation: students' assessment of their experience at the American university and recommendation for future students and the university.

Summary

The Chinese undergraduate student group is a fast growing population in American universities. To best serve this group, American universities need to understand these students' acculturation process in order to best serve them. Few studies have focused on Chinese undergraduate students. Therefore, this study is to explore Chinese undergraduate students' acculturation experience by using Berry's (1997) acculturation framework.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature related to Chinese undergraduate students' experiences at American universities. First, literature about Chinese undergraduate students is reviewed. Because Chinese undergraduate students as a group are a recent phenomenon, few studies have discussed their unique challenges and dilemmas. Second, research on Chinese graduate students' adjustment in the U.S. is reviewed to set a starting point for this study. Third, the chapter provides an overview of the conceptual framework used for this study.

Chinese Undergraduate Students

China's Highly Stressful Educational Environment

China does not have enough universities to meet the educational needs of its large population, and admittance to good universities is extremely competitive. According to the *New York Times*, in 2012, about 9 million high school students competed for fewer than 7 million university slots; the gap was even wider in 2006, when only 5.9 million slots were available for 9.5 million students (Wong, 2012).

Students' desire to get into Tier-1 universities and China's university admission quota system further compounds the competition. In today's China, only those who get into Tier-1 universities will be able to get good jobs after graduation. Tier-2 or Tier-3 university graduates will have a rather difficult time finding jobs in China. Therefore, in reality, all students are competing to get into Tier-1 universities. To make sure that students from each province are given an equal opportunity to be admitted into Tier-1 universities, quota of admitting students into Tier-1 universities is assigned to each province. Therefore, competition to get into Tier-1 universities is extremely competitive. According to a *New York Times* report, one in 7,828

students in Anhui province will have a chance to get into Beijing University, the Tier-1 university in China in 2012 (in comparison, Harvard University's admission rate was 5.9% in 2012) (Wong, 2012).

How did Chinese students get selected to get into universities? One exam only—the National College Entrance Exam, or Gaokao—determines which college a student is eligible to get in. Students in high school are divided into liberal arts track and science track. Gaokao tests all students on English, Chinese, Math, and Politics. If a student is in the liberal arts track in high school, he or she is also tested on History and Geography; a science track student is tested on Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. To get into a university, let alone a Tier-1 university, a student needs high scores on all subjects. The score of Gaokao solely will decide the future of a young student's life.

Students choose three universities for each tier along with a specific major based on the projected final Gaokao scores before taking it. Universities will determine an admission line based on the Gaokao scores in that year. If a student's score is not high enough for the Tier-1 university's admission line, the student is demoted to the lower Tier. Sometimes a student's score reaches the Tier-1 university admission line but do not reach the admission line of his or her chosen major, this student will be demoted to the lower Tier as well. A lot of students' scores are too low for any university.

Students begin preparation for Gaokao in elementary school, sometimes even kindergarten. Students after middle school are expected to spend 12 hours studying every day, including weekends. Students need to study hard consistently for 12 years to prepare for Gaokao. If a student got into a desirable university, his or her effort in the past 12 years would be worthwhile. If this student failed in getting into a university, his or her effort in the past 12

years was wasted and he or she would not have a good future for life. Pressure on students to get into a good university is huge in China. Every year after Gaokao, suicide rates of high school students increase. The shame of not getting into a university and desperation of no good future is too much for some to bear in Chinese culture.

Gaokao's Influence on China's Educational Culture

Because of Gaokao's significance, teachers teach to the test. Classrooms are teacher-centered. Students focus on taking notes. Students do not need to speak and there is no time for them to ask or answer questions because teachers must cover the material that the test will cover.

Gaokao focuses on testing textbook knowledge, students only need to memorize the answers from the textbook. Original thinking is not important; in contrast memorization is.

Chinese University Environment Influenced by Gaokao

Like high school classes, Chinese university classes are teacher-centered. Memorize-copy-repeat is the model for learning. Students are not required to speak nor given time to ask questions. Chinese universities do not foster self-exploration and shifts in career directions; students do not choose their own courses but are assigned to take classes based on their majors, and it is nearly impossible for students to change their majors. The perception is that classes teach out-of-date knowledge or non-applicable knowledge. For the most part, students have little investment in the classroom experience. Because Chinese universities are highly selective in admitting students, almost all students are guaranteed graduation as long as they pass end-of-semester tests in each course. However, Chinese universities do not require attendance; to pass a course, students need only pass the mid-term and final exam. Many students cope with what Chinese refer to as post-Gaokao "study sickness" by not attending classes during the first one or two years of college. Sometimes students send representatives to class to take notes and then

students will copy the notes before mid-term and final exams, and cheating during exams is very prevalent. The overall environment is one in which teachers teach what they need to teach, while students do what they want by skipping classes. Most students do not interact with teachers very much.

Promises of an American Education

Chinese students studying in America for graduate degrees have been common since the 1980s. From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, Chinese students, the majority of whom were graduate students, were the largest international student group in America (IIE, 2012). Upon returning to China, these students were offered good jobs and better benefits, and advancement was often just a few years away. The general public began to believe that studying in America was a faster way to success, or, if nothing else, improved English.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese students mainly relied on scholarships from American universities or Chinese government to finance their studies. It is even more competitive to compete for these scholarships. Only top students from Tier-1 universities will have the chance to be considered. For other students who are in less prestigious universities, it will be like a trip to the moon.

Chinese and American Economic Situation

Economic situation proved significant to Chinese undergraduate students coming to America as well. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the exchange rate of US dollars to Chinese Yuan between 1:6 and 1:8, it was often too expensive for Chinese families to pay the full tuition to study in America whether for a graduate degree or an undergraduate degree. During this time, Chinese students, mainly graduate students, primarily relied on scholarships from American universities or the Chinese government to finance their studies. There were almost no

scholarships for Chinese undergraduate students except very a few student exchange opportunities for which tuition was waived.

Over the past 30 years, China's major economic upturn has led to more prosperous families. As required by the Chinese government, Chinese families have only one child, and parents are willing to invest their life savings in their child's university education.

After 9/11, America reduced the number of international student visas granted, and getting an American education became difficult. However, with the 2008 recession, the American government and universities began to open doors to international students, especially Chinese undergraduate students, whose families would pay expensive out-of-state tuitions.

Chinese Parents' Assumptions toward American Education

Chinese families highly value education and will do everything possible for their children to have a good university education. In many cases, this means sending their children overseas. Some parents might send their children to America during high school to spare them Gaokao; some parents might send their children abroad if they did not get into their desired majors or desired universities; some parents might send their children abroad after their children reported that they had little learning in universities. For the most part, however, Chinese parents know little about American education and instead rely on assumptions.

Third-party Education Agents

As more and more Chinese students want to go abroad for education and their parents know little about American universities, they seek help from third-party education agents. One of the few studies focusing on Chinese undergraduate students is about third-party education agents. Zhang and Hagedorn (2011) surveyed 900 Chinese undergraduates in four institutions

about using third-party education agents. 57% of the 257 students who completed surveys confirmed that they used agents to help them apply to colleges in the U.S.

Chinese undergraduate students reported two primary reasons for using agents: (1) they needed help navigating the complicated American university application procedures and (2) the agents would provide help with preparing application materials (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011). The application forms are particularly challenging because they need to be completed in English. Sometimes recommendation letters are required. Most Chinese undergraduate students and their parents do not know English well enough to fill in the application forms in English. Moreover, in the Chinese educational system, teachers are never required to write recommendation letters and majority teachers don't know how to write recommendation letters in English. Educational agents can help translate transcripts, procure recommendation letters, and help write personal essays.

However, sometimes these third-party educational agents' help are perceived problematic. According to an article in Chronicle of Higher Education, Zinch's survey of 250 Chinese high-school students and some of their parents and third-party educational agents, estimated that 90% of Chinese applicants submit false recommendations; 70% of the students' essays were written by others; 50% of high school transcripts were made up; and 10% list academic awards and other achievements they did not receive (Bartlett & Fisher, 2011).

Unique Features of Chinese Undergraduate Students

Chinese undergraduate students are very different from Chinese graduate students. Chinese graduate students are older and more mature in development than undergraduate students. Most Chinese graduate students are at least 22 when they come to the U.S. and have graduated from Chinese universities. They are self-motivated to pursue a higher degree and have

clear academic goals. They have lived independently for four years in universities or more years if they have worked in China before coming to the U.S. Some are married and come with their spouses. Overall, they are more developed intellectually and emotionally. Also, while in graduate school, they have major professors as mentors to help them navigate any difficulties that might arise.

Chinese undergraduate students are typically about 17 or 18 years old when coming to the U.S. to study abroad. They are 15 or 16 if they come to the U.S. as high school students, and transfer students are about 20 years old. They come to the U.S. mostly because their parents wanted them to. Intellectually and emotionally they are still adolescents who do not yet know what they want to study. In their first two years they do not have primary advisors to go to for help.

Research shows that age plays an important role in cultural adjustment (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Some scholars have found that older youth often experience substantial problems because cultural transitions are compounded by life transitions between childhood and adulthood (Aronowitz, 1992). Going abroad is the first time they lived away from home, and they have no experience in self-regulation. Geraldine N. de Berly, associate dean of credit programs and director of the English Language Institute at Syracuse University, points out to the reporter of Chronicle of Higher Education that “one consequence of that newfound freedom in her classrooms: exhausted students who have stayed up all night, chatting on Skype or instant messaging with friends half a world away” (Fisher, 2011).

The source of their information about school and their decision processes about school were different. Chinese graduate students usually sought information about American universities directly, either through emailing a professor or reading professors’ articles, and they

made their own decisions in studying in America. As it was mentioned earlier, Chinese undergraduate students usually didn't seek out information directly about the school to which they applied, but used third-party agencies to supply them with the information. A majority of students made a decision about their school choices based on an agent's recommendation and possible admission the agent could get (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011).

The graduates' and undergraduates' motivation for studying in America also differs. Chinese graduate students proactively seek an advanced, specialized education and have a specific academic goal. The top two reasons Chinese undergraduate students named for wanting to study abroad are to enrich their experience and "escape" the ineffective education system in China (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011).

Differences in academic ability and English language ability are also important to note. Chinese graduate students, selected through the tough Gaokao in China and then subject to world-wide competition for scholarships to study in the U.S., are usually top students. They often study science or engineering (National Science Board, 2006). Chinese undergraduate students often do not get through the tough selection process by choice (escape) or involuntarily (did not get into a desired university), and academics in China prove too challenging for them. Chinese graduate students are required to take and achieve high scores on standardized tests such as the TOEFL and GRE. Chinese undergraduates are less prepared in English (Fisher, 2011). To admit more Chinese undergraduate students and thus generate more tuition, some universities do not require standardized English tests such as TOEFL.

As well, Chinese undergraduate students' economic situations are often different from those of Chinese graduate students. Most Chinese graduate students come to the U.S. with either a teaching or research assistantship, and finances are important in deciding if they can come to

the U.S. While in the U.S., finances continue to worry graduate students, as their education often depends on the availability of scholarship funding (Jiang, 2010). By contrast, Chinese undergraduate students are financed by their families and that income is on average somewhere between RMB300, 000(\$50,000) and RMB500, 000 (\$80,000) a high income for Chinese families and equivalent to an America middle-class income (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011).

Finally, the support needed for Chinese graduate students versus Chinese undergraduate students is different. Chinese graduate students are more mature and can live independently. However, Chinese undergraduate students in America need a lot of support, help, and even “hand-holding” from American universities (Fisher, 2011).

The number of Chinese undergraduate students studying in American universities has increased swiftly. Many factors separate the needs of Chinese undergraduate students from those of Chinese graduate students, who have here-to-fore been the majority of Chinese study-abroad students. Facing the growing population of Chinese undergraduate students, American universities are without a framework for understanding and supporting their needs. “Universities are re-thinking about orientation...international-office administrators on many campuses say they are meeting informally with individual faculty members or departments...” to tackle the new challenges due to the increase of Chinese undergraduate students (Fisher, 2011).

These new challenges are worthy of meeting. These students “feel hopeless staying here, no credit, no family, no citizenship, no benefit, maybe no job in the future” (Jiang, 2010, p.50). In China, many believe studying in America is just a way the wealthy and powerful are “buying Western degrees for their lazy and spoiled children;” however, the Chinese students heading to the United States include some of the country’s top test-takers and brightest students, especially those who passed Gaokao (Jiang, 2010, p.34). Failure to address this population’s needs might

result in decreasing enrollments. Some Americans think Chinese students do not trust Americans, while Chinese students may feel that American students snub their efforts to work together or become friends (Fisher, 2011). American professors may think Chinese students weaken the class environment by not participating in discussion; Chinese students may think their fellow students talk too much; some American professors ignore their questions and listen only to American students (Fisher, 2011). Some professors think Chinese undergraduate students plagiarize, while in China, researcher I-Chia Chou thinks memorizing the words of famous philosophers is more valuable than coming up with new ideas and that copying reflects more of a survival tactic than an intentional violation (Fisher, 2011).

Chinese International Students in the U.S.

International Students

Substantial literature focused on international students' adjustment and acculturation difficulties (Lohiswanont, 2001; Kaur, 2007; Kung 2007; Ritz, 2006; Tanaka, 2002). Gibson (1991) concluded cultural background greatly affected international students' experience and the coping strategies they used; the bigger the cultural differences between the host country and the original country, the harder the acculturation process.

Shu (2008) found that students from Asian culture tend to have more difficulties in western countries due to the significant differences between the eastern and western cultures. Other researchers concur that Asian students face more challenges in western English speaking countries than in other countries due to their non-English original language and collective cultural background (Lohsiwanont, 2001; Amat, 2006). Huntley (1993) identified language barriers, cultural difficulties, and academic stress as the biggest challenges for Asian students. Pack (2005) pointed to listening proficiency as a hindrance for Asian students. Kaur (2007)

reported difficulties Asian students face include academic integrity, critical thinking, course selection, and integration with faculty due to the educational cultural difference. Shu (2008) concluded that the most significant challenges Asian students face were language difficulties, educational system differences, and financial difficulties.

Research by Lu (2001) and Womujuni (2007) showed that services for international students were lacking on some campuses due to lack of manpower, motivation, adequate infrastructure, and well-designed programs. Joo (2002) and Klieger (2005) indicated in their studies that international students often did not know about existing services and relied on friends and acquaintances to help them transition to university life.

Chinese Graduate Students

Though the differences between Chinese undergraduate and graduate students prevent the research on Chinese graduate students in the U.S. from offering a model to understanding Chinese undergraduate students' experience, it still provides a useful starting point.

Reasons to Study in the U.S.

In the 1990s, before the Chinese economic development, scholars investigating reasons Chinese graduate students study abroad found that students sought to improve their professional studies and material life (Li, 1993; Lu 1998; Brzezinski, 1994). Pang (2001) summarized the reasons that Chinese graduate students went abroad as "low incomes, poor living standards, lack of professional opportunities" (p. 11). Cao (1997) discovered that friends and peers played a role in graduate students' decisions to go abroad.

Language and Cultural Challenges

Language difficulties were consistently found as a challenge for Chinese graduate students in acculturation process (Cao, 1997; Li, 1993; Lu, 1998). The structural dissimilarities

between Chinese and English make English a difficult language for Chinese students to learn. Adding to this, efforts in China to teach English focus on grammar and reading but not speaking. The result is “Chinglish,” characterized by erroneous pronunciation, lacking articles, lacking inflections, and similar characteristics (Wang, 2003). Wang (2003) also pointed out the reason that Chinese graduate students have difficulties in English are lack of training and practice opportunities.

In addition to language-learning challenges, Chinese students studying in the U.S. also face marked cultural differences. Chinese culture is based on Confucius’ emphasis of collectivism and cooperation; American culture is based on Protestantism’s emphasis of individualism and independence (Hofstede, 2001). Chinese education is teacher-centered because Chinese believe that teachers are sage and students should unquestioningly obtain knowledge from them, mostly through memorization of existing information; American education is student-centered and values critical thinking and original thinking (Wang, 2003).

In addition, Zhang & Rentz (1994) point to the primary difficulties faced by Chinese graduate students as the following: (1) financial problems; (2) a lack of understanding of American society; (3) the influence or difference of the Chinese educational system; (4) growing up in an environment with negative propaganda of the U.S.; and (5) decision making styles emphasizing the family rather than the individual. Huang and Klinger (2006) reveal additional challenges: (1) using English for academic purposes; (2) frustration in becoming a permanent resident; (3) difficulty in adapting to the classroom learning environment; (4) lack of critical thinking skills; and (5) loneliness and academic anxiety.

Yan’s (2008) extensive literature review on the adjustment problems Chinese graduate students face presents a useful framework of understanding. Yan (2008) points to two general

themes regarding Chinese students' adjustment in the U.S.: academic adjustment problems and social-cultural adjustment problems.

Berry's Acculturation Framework

Berry's (1997) acculturation framework guides this study. According to the model, the acculturation process involves five phenomena: acculturation experience (life events), appraisal of experience (stressors), coping (strategies used), immediate effects (stress), and long term outcome (adaptation). Two levels of variables, group level and individual level, will affect the acculturation process. The conceptual framework is presented as Figure 1.

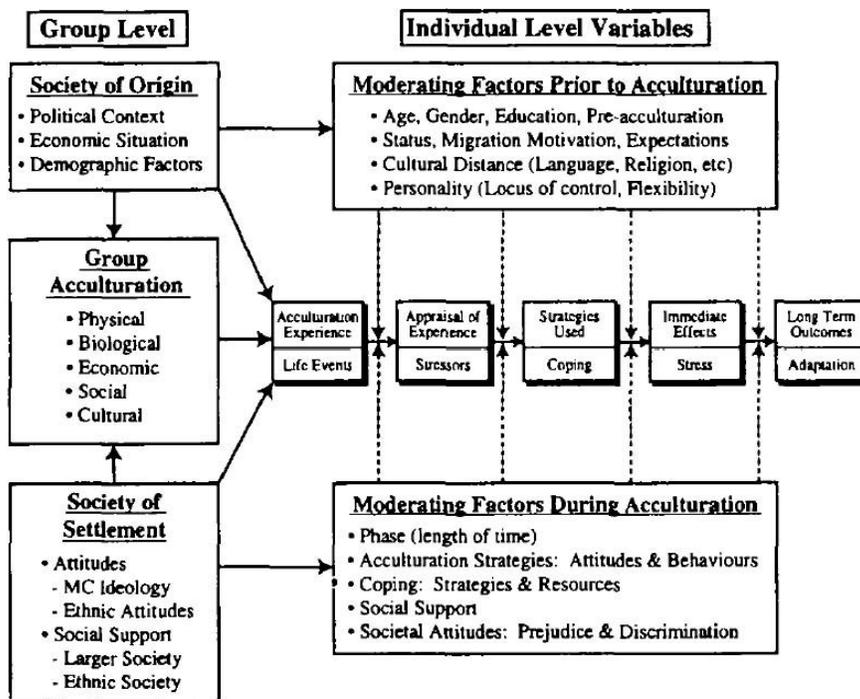


Figure 1 A Framework for Acculturation Work

Acculturation Process

Acculturation starts with someone who grows up in one culture and cross to another culture. When life event happened to the individual, this individual will appraise this life event:

Depending on the level of challenges of particular events, changes in the individual are likely to happen to fit in the new culture (adjustment of behavior). If appraisal of the life event turns out that it will not pose problems in changing oneself, adjustment of behaviors will happen easily. If appraisal of the life event poses a great deal of challenges or even conflict, changes will not happen so easily. These areas of life events will become the source of stress (stressors). Under these circumstances, the individual will engage some strategies to cope with these life events.

There are three types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and avoidance-oriented coping (Endler & Parker, 1990). Problem-focused coping refers to direct approach to solve the problematic situation; emotion-focused coping refers to attempts to manage emotional response associated with the problems; avoidance-oriented coping refers to disengagement mentally or physically from the situation.

Adaptation refers to the relatively stable changes responding to the new demands. It may not indicate the level of “fitting” in the environment or not. In another words, it does not necessarily imply the individual changes to become more like the new cultural environment (i.e., adjustment). It may mean that the individual resist to change and try to change the environment or move away from the environment. Adaptation includes well adaptation or ill adaptation.

Factors Prior to Acculturation

Age, Gender, Education, Pre-acculturation

Age has a known relationship to the acculturation process. Acculturation tends to be smooth when it starts at an early age, especially before primary school (Beiser et al., 1988). The reasons for this are not clear (Berry, 1997). Older youth tend to experience substantial acculturation problems, especially during adolescence (Sam & Berry, 1995). This is perhaps

because the cultural transition confounds the already-difficult transition between childhood and adulthood. One's sense of identity is complicated by one's ethnic identity as well.

Gender can also influence the acculturation process. Some issues are more problematic to females than males, and vice versa (Carballo, 1994). Gender's role in acculturation depends on the individual's situation or his or her cultural demands.

Education is a consistent factor associated with positive adaptation. Higher education is usually associated with lower stress (Beiser et al., 1988). Education is a personal resource. The higher the education one has achieved, the more problem solving skills one may have.

Education also may also bring access to a network of connections or resources for help.

One's pre-acculturation experience or preparation affects the acculturation process as well. Preparation is related to education. Preparation and education related to language, history, values, and customs of the host culture help individuals' acculturation.

Migration Motivation, Expectations

Migration motivation can be understood as motives of push and pull. Push motives include involuntary or forced migration, negative experience of the existing environment, or negative expectation of one's self or the environment. Pull motives include voluntary migration or positive expectation of one's self or the culture. Exceedingly high expectations are associated with more stressors. Low expectations are associated with fewer stressors.

Cultural Distance

How similar two cultures are in language, lifestyle, social interaction, and religion will affect the acculturation process. If two cultures are similar, individuals will appraise few life events as stressors. Greater cultural distance leads individuals to appraise more life events as stressors.

Factors during Acculturation

Phase (length of time)

Phase refers to the length of time an individual experiences a new culture. The general observation is that a few problems will appear in the early acculturation stage and more serious problems will appear later; finally, long-term adaptation will occur. No fixed length of time can be assigned to the variations of acculturation, but stages of acculturation can be used to understand the effect of on acculturation.

Acculturation Strategies

Acculturation strategies can be divided into four categories: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. From the point of the non-dominant group, assimilation occurs when an individual seeks active interaction with a new culture, even at the expense of his or her cultural norms or expectation. Separation occurs when an individual avoids interaction with others from the new culture for the sake of preserving his or her own cultural identity. Integration occurs when an individual maintains some level of cultural identity and at the same time seeks to interact with others from the new culture; marginalization occurs when an individual does not wish to maintain his or her cultural identity nor to interact with people from the new culture. Integration is possible only when the dominant culture is open and inclusive in its cultural orientation. When individuals from the original culture experience prejudice and discrimination in the new culture, they are more likely to withdraw and retreat to their original culture. Prejudice and discrimination can be found in people's interest and attitudes.

Societal Support

Support from both the original and new culture groups help an individual's acculturation. For some individuals, links to co-nationals (people from the same culture) can be helpful in acculturation; for others, links to people from the new culture will be helpful.

Prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice and discrimination negatively affect an individual's acculturation process.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides lenses through which to view Chinese undergraduate students' experience in the U.S. Factors related to Chinese undergraduate students' studying in the U.S. were reviewed. Even though Chinese undergraduate students are different from Chinese graduate students, research on Chinese graduate students is still valuable in understanding Chinese undergraduate students' experience. Past research shows a number of sources of struggle for Chinese graduate students in American universities: cultural differences, academic problems, language barriers, difference in teacher-student relationship and student-student relationship, social interaction, financial limitations, and "to stay or return" after graduation.

The chapter also reviewed Berry's (1997) acculturation framework as the model guiding this study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to study the experiences of Mainland Chinese undergraduate students in a midwestern American public university. This chapter discusses the study's research methodology: the rationale, process, site and participant selection, data collection, data analysis, quality and rigor of the study, and the role of the researcher.

Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Research Design

Qualitative research is most appropriate when literature about the study's focus is limited and when the goal is a holistic understanding of a social situation (Creswell, 2007). Some research has focused on Chinese graduate students as a group, but little has looked at Chinese undergraduate students' study abroad experiences (Shu, 2008); therefore, qualitative research is most conducive to this study.

Case study offers "real, rich and deep" data and a detailed and contextualized view of the cases under study (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 23). Merriam (1998) points out that the purpose of case study is to "gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p.19). Yin (2003) asserts that "case study research allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 2). This study is process- and experience-focused; accordingly, case study is the appropriate approach.

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection

The site was selected based on the ease of access. This university is a state-funded land-grant institution in the Midwest. It has 23,000 students and is located in a small college town. The majority of students are from within the state. In 2007, the university started a China Initiative and began to recruit students from China. In five years, the number of mainland Chinese undergraduate students has increased from four to 1000 (International Students Office, 2012).

Participant Selection

Selecting participants is an important part of the study. An interview approach requires participant trust and acceptance. Criterion-sampling method was used in selecting participants for this study.

To be eligible to participate, students must (1) speak mandarin Chinese (2) come from Mainland China (3) have studied in the university for more than 2 years and (4) no longer be in the English Language program. The selection also gave attention to students' gender and time of arrival in the U.S. to ensure a representative group of mainland Chinese students on campus. Based on the time of arrival in the U.S., three groups of students are (1) those who came to the U.S. after finishing high school in China; (2) those who came to the U.S. during high school and completed high school in the U.S.; (3) those who came to the U.S. during their college years as a transfer student. Each group will include a female and male student. No consideration was given to the participants' area of study, age, GPA, and the cities where they are from in China.

Having taught mainland Chinese undergraduate students and helped them with their needs in the past, the researcher first developed a list of twenty students who met the general

requirements. The researcher has known these participants from previous interaction either from teaching or helped in the past. Then the researcher sought recommendations of students from the Chinese Students and Scholars Union advisor and the students' academic advisors. Eight students on the list fit within the study parameters; after consulting with student leaders of the Chinese Students and Scholars Union six students were chosen. The other two students declined to participate in the study because one was planning to graduate and the other was preparing to transfer to another school.

Data Collection

Interview Protocol Design

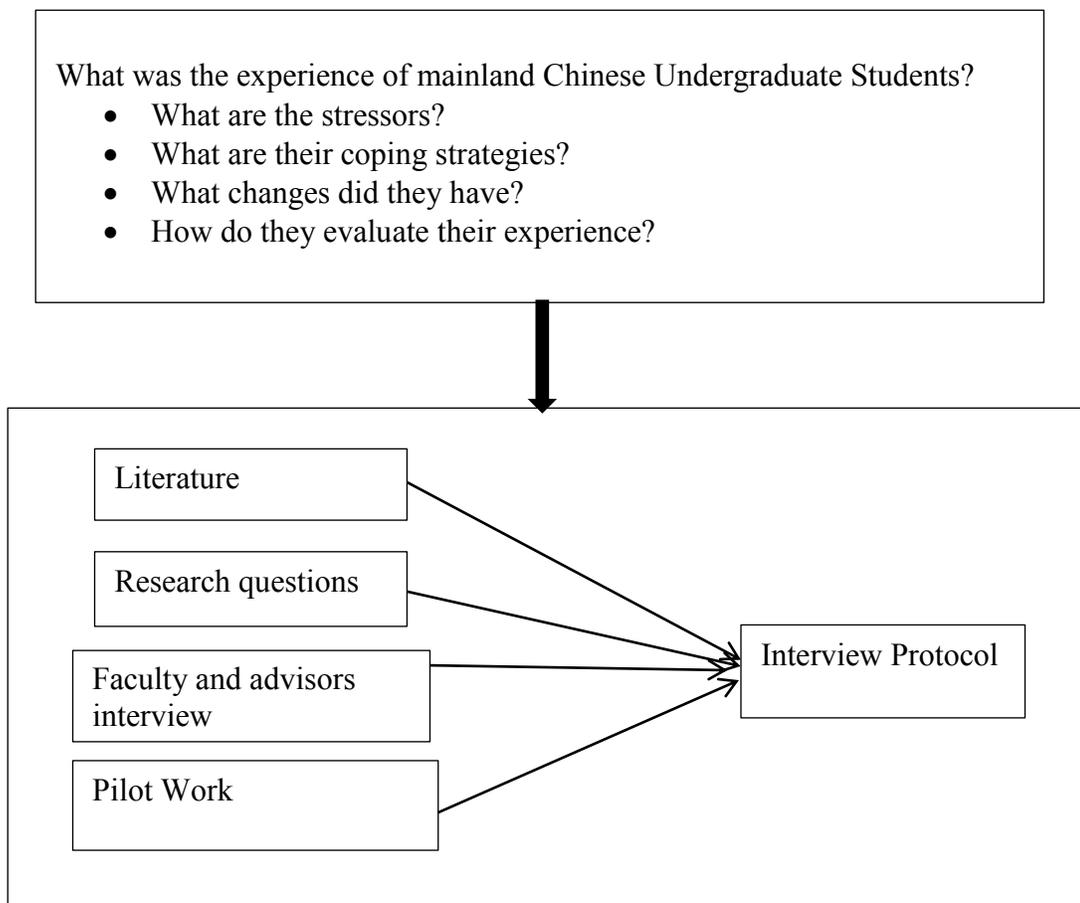


Figure 2 Interview protocol development

In order to understand the experiences of Chinese undergraduate students in a midwestern American public university, multiple sources of information informed the interview protocol. Based on the literature, research questions, and theoretical framework, the researcher designed an interview protocol for the study participants and questions for academic advisors and faculty who worked with Chinese undergraduates to learn about their observations and perspectives of Chinese undergraduate students' experience in the university. The researcher asked advisors to review the interview protocol and provide suggestions for change. In addition to suggesting questions on life activities and relationships, the advisors and faculty also suggested the researcher talk some community organization leaders who worked with Chinese undergraduate students. After talking to community organization leaders, questions about religion were added to the interview protocol. The final version of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix A.

Pilot Work

The researcher piloted the interview protocol with three Chinese students, two undergraduate students and one graduate student. The pilot interview was recorded and feedback from the pilot participants was solicited. Because the interview protocol was designed in English, the research asked the pilot to speak in English during the interview. Pilot participants were able to answer questions in English but after half way through they asked to switch to speaking in Chinese. They felt that they were able to express their ideas and feelings more naturally, comfortably and deeply when speaking in Chinese; however, they used English in the absence of a Chinese equivalent, a point that the researcher noted for future reference. Through the pilot work, the researcher also discovered students' feelings that the interview seemed restrictive and almost exam-like. Semi-structured interviews would be better. The pilot work

also helped the research know how to talk to participants better. No changes of the questions were made in the interview protocol.

Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was chosen as the method for collecting data. The research used the interview protocol as a guide, but was also allow participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms and pace. Although time consuming and labor intensive, an interview is an effective way to collect information especially when researchers are interested in “understanding perceptions of participants, or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events” (Berg, 1989, p.19). Seidman (2006) believed “the root of the interview is an interest in understating the lived experience of other people and meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2006, p.9). The one-on-one, face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interview protocol provided rich information about the Chinese students’ personal perceptions, emotions, and experience in the U.S.

Before the interviews, the researcher spent time with each participant explaining the purpose of the study and the consent form (See Appendix B), and acquiring written consent. Understanding participants’ fear of being judged, the researcher emphasized there were no right or wrong answers and their experience would not be used against them but rather to help more people understand what they have experienced. The research started with open-ended questions. For some questions, prompts and follow-up questions were used to elicit more information. The researcher also took notes when conducting the interview.

Data Analysis

The researcher did two rounds of interview: one initial interview and one lengthy probing session. The initial interview lasted about 2 hours and the probing session lasted about 3 hours.

The initial interviews were conducted by following the interview protocol. The interviews were all recorded with a digital voice recorder. The interviews were conducted almost all in Chinese. When Chinese could not be used, English was used. All initial interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder. Each voice recording file was downloaded to a disk, double checked for clarity, and transcribed in Chinese. Participants were asked to check their transcripts for accuracy before coding. The coding was reviewed by a peer reviewer. The transcripts and participants' quotes were translated into English. The translation was reviewed by a professional translator and certified with accuracy. The certification was provided in Appendix C.

For further clarification and extended information, a probing session with each participant followed. When the researcher met with the students for the second time, the researcher further explained the study's intention of the study—to glean from the participants' experiences information that could help university administrators and related services personnel to better meet undergraduate Chinese students' needs. The researcher also shared her own stories of being an international student and experiencing challenges similar to the participants'. The second interview lasted an average of three hours with each participant.

At the probing session, the researcher asked participants to tell significant stressful events by each of their colleges and give specific examples. The probing session questions list was provided in Appendix D. The probing session was not recorded but the researcher took detailed

notes. The partial note sample was provided in Appendix E. It did not bother the participants that the researcher took notes during the probing sessions. On the important points, the researcher wrote exactly what the participants said. In the Chinese culture, it is respectful and shows “seriousness” to take notes of one’s original words. The probing session notes were also checked by the participants for accuracy before coding. The notes were reviewed and analyzed as data.

Both initial interview and probing session notes were analyzed as data. Data analysis was done according to the qualitative data analysis steps described by Creswell (2011). The research questions developed from the conceptual framework for the study were central to analyze the data. First, the transcript and notes were read thoroughly. Then the researcher highlighted the data, sentences and phrases, and looked for links between codes and merged them into categories under the main codes from conceptual framework, i.e., the four research questions. In addition to theoretical categories, the researcher is open to emerging themes. After the patterns and themes were developed from the data analysis, the researcher went back to the participants to check for accuracy and clarification.

It is important to make notes of details and write down the key concepts that emerged in the data analysis process (Creswell, 2011). The data analysis process consists of reading, describing, categorizing and interpreting. The researcher was faithful to the words of the participants as much as possible.

Validation of the Study

Creswell (2011) views validation in qualitative research as a process that uses “accepted strategies” to document the “accuracy” of the studies. Creswell identifies eight validation

strategies as the most commonly accepted in the literature and recommends that researchers use at least two of them in a given study (Creswell, 2011).

Four basic strategies were used to validate the study: multiple perspectives, peer review, member checking, and rich description. The interview protocol was developed based on multiple perspectives, literature review, research questions, perspectives of faculty and advisors, and pilot participants. The analysis of the data is from multiple perspectives, including Berry's acculturation theory, literature review, and interviews. Peer review is an external check for credibility of the study. A recent doctoral graduate in education, familiar with qualitative research, participated in "peer debriefing sessions" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) to ask questions about the research method and its interpretation. The doctoral graduate reviewed the researcher's coding and preliminary findings and assessed, in light of her experiences, the interpretations' validity. To get consensus in data analysis, 10% of the data was peer coded to check for the agreement. The peer researcher is fluent in both Chinese and English; also held a recent doctor degree in education and thus is familiar with the coding procedure. The consensus of data categorization was 95%. Because categories were not mutually exclusive, 5% data categorization was discrepancy. Language stressors are closely related to cultural contexts. Therefore, it would be difficult to reach 100% agreement in categorization.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as an important technique for establishing credibility. The researcher provided each interviewee with his or her own interview transcripts and asked them to check the accuracy of the transcript prior to data analysis.

Researcher's Background and Role

The researcher is a member of the population studied, considered an insider. The researcher came from China to the U.S. 14 years ago as a Chinese international student. She is

now again a Chinese international student in the educational leadership department of the study site. The researcher is fluent in Chinese and English. The researcher also has expertise in Chinese culture and American culture. The researcher taught a course on differences between Chinese culture and American culture to Chinese undergraduate students and personally mentored a few Chinese undergraduate students during the time she was teaching. It was during the teaching that the researcher learned of Chinese undergraduate students' struggles and developed interest in studying them. The researcher has interacted with the study participants for three years and has good relationships with these students. The researcher is also active in the Chinese student community and is reputed as caring about student affairs. Because of her background, the researcher had intimate access to the research population and brought her own experience and perspective to the study.

The researcher also brought bias to the study. Given her learning experience in the U.S., the researcher had first-hand experience with acculturation challenges and stress. However, the researcher did not contribute data for analysis but rather let the findings emerge from participants' interviews. Throughout the study, the researcher endeavored to sequester her bias.

Summary

This chapter described the research methodology of this study, including site and participants selection, data collection, data analysis, validation of the study and background and the role of the researcher. One-on-one interviews of six Chinese undergraduate students at a midwestern American university were conducted. The case study method provided a means for a rich understanding of their experiences. The individual profile and findings are presented in Chapter four.

Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are based on interviews that were designed to answer the four research questions.

1. What stressors did Chinese undergraduate students in the U.S. have?
2. What coping strategies did they use in dealing with the stressors?
3. What major changes have they seen in themselves during the acculturation process?
4. How did they evaluate their experience in the U.S.?

Two sections were presented in this chapter. The first section is to summarize the data categories. The second section is to present the findings. In the end, the emerging themes across the four research questions were also presented.

Data Analysis Summary

Data Analysis and Coding Categories

Both the initial interview transcripts and the probing session notes were analyzed as data. The original transcripts and field notes were in Chinese. After data were analyzed, they were translated into English. The translation was reviewed by a professional translator.

The researcher used the four research questions as main codes and then divided the data into more sub-codes and sub-sub codes. A summary of the codes is presented in the following two tables (Table 4-1 and table 4-2).

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Table 4-1

Main code	Sub code	Sub-sub-code
Stressors	Language barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Frequency of English being used • Listening Comprehension • Self-expression • Negative feelings associated with language barrier
	Cultural difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference experienced in daily life • Difference experienced in interacting with Americans • Extreme difference-value challenges • Negative emotions associated with cultural difference
	Life-stills related stressors	
	Relationship with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-family relationships • Family relationships
	Academic studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barrier • Non-language related barriers • Relationship related barriers
	Concern for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job opportunities • Relationship and marriage • Age of graduation
Coping Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Focused Coping (direct approach) • Emotions Focused Coping • Avoidance-orientation coping (escape from the problem) • Not aware of university resources for help 	
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English ability is improved • Independence • Ability to manage stress • Participation in social activities • Perception changes 	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage • Recommendation for future students • Recommendation for university 	

Table 4-2

Main code	Sub code			
Stressors	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Language barrier ABCDEF Cultural Difference ABCDEF Life-skills related stressors ABCD Relationship with others ABCD Academic Study Concern for the future	Language barrier ABCDEF Cultural Difference ABCDEF Life-skills related stressors Relationship with others ABC EF Academic Study ABCDEF Concern for the future	Language barrier ABCDEF Cultural Difference AB Life-skills related stressors Relationship with others A C Academic Study A CD Concern for the future	Language barrier Cultural Difference Life-skills related stressors Relationship with others AB EF Academic Study ABC Concern for the future ABCDEF

Data Presentation

The data from this study were presented in tables and narratives. The tables include each sub-code from the main codes, patterns for each sub-code. Translated quotes from the interview transcripts and field notes were presented to provide more details of the pattern. The number indicated the participants expressing a related concept.

Profiles of the Participants

All six participants in this study were born and raised in mainland China and none of them had lived abroad before coming to the U.S. to study. All six participants learned English in China and as teenagers wanted to go abroad to study. Three of them study in the College of Business, two in the College of Engineering, and one in the College of Education. All of them are graduating within a semester or a year of the time of this writing. Table 4.1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 4-3

Participants	Age	Years in the U.S.	Gender	Major	GPA	Time coming to U.S.
Participant A	22	4	M	Marketing	3.4	After high school
Participant B	23	4	F	Finance	2.8	After high school
Participant C	23	6	M	Computer Engineering	3.2	During high school
Participant D	21	6	F	Business Management	3.2	During high school
Participant E	25	4	M	Chemical Engineering	3.8	During college
Participant F	23	4	F	Education	3.0	During college

Three participants are male and three are female. Their ages range from 21 to 25 years old and each is an only child. The length of their time in the U.S. ranged from three years to six years at the time of interview. All participants came from Chinese metropolitan cities with millions of people. The parents of these students pay their tuition and expenses. None of the students have taken the TOEFL exam because it was not required for admission.

As for academic backgrounds, two participants came to the U.S. during high school and completed their high school in the U.S., two participants came to the U.S. after graduating from Chinese high schools, and two participants transferred to the U.S. during their college years. Each of these pairings includes one male and one female. Additional information includes: the

two participants who came to the U.S. during high school stayed with American families; the two college transfer participants took Chinese college entrance exams and were admitted to universities in China; and among the two students who came after high school, one took the college entrance exam and the other did not.

Three participants had lived with American roommates in the past but at the time of the study they all had Chinese roommates. Three of the participants were involved in student organizations and held leadership roles.

Individual Profiles

Participants Who Came to the U.S. after High School

Participant A—“Adjustment was tough, but I persevered.”

Participant A is from Dalian, a metropolitan city with a population of 6 million in Northeast China. He is the only child in his family. His parents did not have a college education. Therefore, they were determined for him to have one.

He is a student leader. He said he is very outgoing during the student organization’s meetings, but he has a private side. Although he shared openly with me, he was ambiguous about his feelings about the study abroad experience.

He had multiple talents in music and sports when he was in middle school but he was an average student academically. Admission to a higher level education in China only considers one entrance exam, not considering other talents. He got into a common high school instead of a key high school because he did not do well in the High School Entrance Exam. In high school, like many high school students in China, he rose early in the morning to go to school and came home late at night, on average from 6 am to 10 pm daily. He studied very hard. He ranked in the middle of his high school class. In China, an average student in an average high school

usually doesn't have much chance of getting into the Tier-1 universities. He did not think he could get into his preferred Tier-1 university with such fierce competition. At the beginning of his third year of high school, his parents decided to send him to America to study. They sought the help of education agents to help him apply for schools. From then on, he no longer had to bear the burden of preparing for the College Entrance Exam and instead focused on learning English.

He tried his best in learning English, memorizing vocabulary, famous speeches, and good articles.

I felt a big relief from the heavy burden of Gaokao. After all English was the only subject I needed to study. I liked English. I studied it all day long.

The agent charged \$4,000, which his parents accepted as long as the agent could get him into an American university. The agent recommended three schools and helped him with the application. He got two admissions. He chose to come to the current school because its ranking and tuition were reasonable.

Coming to the U.S. was his first time leaving home. He arrived two days before registration day. At the airport, he learned that it was 130 miles from the airport to the university and at 10 pm already had no transportation options. He stayed in the airport for the night and the next day found an expensive (RMB400, \$65) shuttle that ran every two hours. He said,

This is such an expensive bus. But I had no choice. The taxi was even more expensive, like RMB1200 (\$200).

During the orientation, he was overwhelmed with information in English and did not understand very much. But he was glad that he met numerous Chinese students during the orientation. He thought as long as he followed other Chinese students, he should be okay.

After the orientation, he was given an English exam. Even though he had spent more than six months in the intensive English training program, the result of the exam showed that he

must take more English classes in the university's English language program, which is not counted for college-credits. For the most part, his challenge was to learn how to manage life on his own and learn how to deal with roommates who had different habits.

Participant B — "Get my degree and go home."

Participant B is from Ningbo, a coastal city in East China with a population of 7 million. She is an only child. Her parents are business people and wanted for her a good higher education. She has an outgoing personality. She was very active in high school and had a lot of friends. She told the researcher that she missed home and her friends a lot. She went home every break.

She ranked in the high-middle in her school. Like all other high school students, she studied hard in high school. She took the College Entrance Exam. Her score reached the university admission line but did not meet the admission line of the major she wanted. She wanted to study finance but she was allocated to biology.

The disappointing Gaokao result drove her parents to seek an agent's help with getting an American education. The agent recommended she apply to the current university and helped with the application process. She was admitted and she came.

She did not have high expectations for academic studies. She said that she did not plan to go to graduate school. For her major, a 2.0 GPA is good enough. Passing each course was her goal. Due to the language barrier and her lack of study skills, she had to retake several classes.

She wanted to go back to China after she got her degree. Therefore, she did not prioritize mingling with Americans.

It was not natural to be around Americans. There was so much difference. I do not want to stay in the U.S. after graduation. I could get all my needs met with my Chinese friends. Unless I had to work with American students on school projects, I would.

Participants Who Came to the U.S. during High School

Participant C—“Adjustment was ok, but it is difficult to find a job.”

Participant C is from Shanghai, the largest city in China, with a population of 23 million. He is an only child. His parents wanted him to get a good education since he was young. Living in the largest city with a lot of western influence, his parents decided to send him to America during high school.

Through an agent’s help, he was sent to a Catholic high school in the Midwest. There were not many international students in his high school. American students did not seem to have any interest in foreign countries, so he allied with a student from Argentina.

In the Catholic school, he felt that he was always pressured to believe in Christ. He saw his classmates who claimed themselves as Christians drinking and engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors with his roommate and he felt the students were hypocrites. He felt leaving for college was an escape from the loneliness of high school.

In college, he feels that he has immersed in American culture very well. He does not feel much American cultural as threatening as before.

As for his major, he chose computer engineering because he felt that a technical background will give him a competitive advantage in the job market; in addition, he would face fewer language challenges than if he had sought a liberal arts major.

Regarding his future, he said,
My parents spent most of their life-time savings on me. I would definitely need to take care of them when they become older. I would like to work in the U.S. for a couple of years before I finally return to China. But it is difficult for Chinese students to find a job in the U.S. because employers discriminate against international students.

Participant D —“Too difficult to get a job in the U.S., so I go to graduate school.”

She is from Changchun, a large capital city in Northeast China, with a population of 7 million. She is an only child. Her parents wanted to do everything to give her the best college

education they could. Her father had visited the U.S. during one of his business trips and thought it a good place for her to get an advanced education.

Through an agent's help, she was sent to a high school in the Midwest during her second year in high school. It was a small school out of a warehouse. She was the only Chinese student in her school and she felt really out of place.

She lived with a host family. She could not speak English well when she first came, and as a result, she had communication problems with her first host family. She also had many challenges in socializing with her classmates at school:

I could not mingle with my classmates. I wanted to study. They wanted to go to the mall or movies. They had sleep-over parties. I did not have a car so I could not go. I did not want to trouble my host family. They are not my family.

She spent half a year with her first host family. She ended up having to look for a second host family on her own. However, the parents of the second host family ended up in divorce. She then transferred to a new school on her own. At the new school, she met two Chinese girls and they became instant friends. They helped her a lot and she felt that she had support.

When it was time to apply for college, she did not have much help. Again, her parents went to education agents in China to help her with the application. She got into the current university. She was so happy to see so many Chinese students on this campus. She wanted to help other students because of the challenges she experienced. She became the Chinese student organization's leader.

She wanted to stay in the U.S. but it was difficult to find a job. She decided to postpone her job hunting by applying for graduate school.

Participants Who Transferred from Chinese Universities

Participant E--“I am used to American college but I have the pressure of being older.”

He is from Suzhou, a coastal city in China, with a population of 10 million. He is an only child. He ranked high in his high school. He wanted to go to a good university in China.

He took the Chinese college entrance exam and got in a provincial level key university (Tier-2) in Southwest China. His family also talked to him about studying abroad sometime during his college years. After a year of study, he was bored with college life in China.

Students did not go to classes. Teachers did not really teach any useful knowledge. It is a waste of my time.

His parents supported his idea of going abroad. He searched for reasonably priced education agents. He found one in his hometown. They helped him with the application and he was admitted by the current university.

During his first year, he was required to take a semester of English, which does not count as college credits. He did not think the class was particularly helpful. He thought it was rather easy. After a semester, he took college classes. In his other classes, he had a lot of difficulty in taking notes and understanding. Fortunately, for some courses he could rely on what he had learned in the Chinese university. For example, mathematics is very easy for him. He had high expectations for himself in academic studies, so he studied very hard.

Because of the English classes and lost credits when he transferred to the American university, he felt that he was behind his peers in China. He said,

I still need two semesters before I graduate. My friends in China have already graduated and some of them are married. I am still in school. I have a lot of pressure.

Participant F--“Adjusted quickly, adjusted well.”

She is from a large city in central China with a population of 8 million. She was a very good student during middle school and high school. She took the National College Entrance Exam but did not get into the major she wanted even though she got into the university she

wanted. She spent a year in the university. She felt that no one really liked to study there. Her friends missed classes all time and she would take notes for them. She talked to her parents and it turned out that her parents were looking for opportunities for her to go abroad. They went to study abroad fairs and found an agent. The agent helped her apply to the current university.

She has an outgoing personality and has tried to mingle with both Chinese students and American students. She does very well in her academic studies. She is very proud that many students, American and Chinese alike, sought her help with their schoolwork.

Findings

The four research questions this study is to answer are as following and this section is organized based on the research questions.

1. What stressors did Chinese undergraduate students in the U.S. have?
2. What coping strategies did they use in dealing with the stressors?
3. What major changes have they seen in themselves during the acculturation process?
4. How did they evaluate their experience in the U.S.?

Research Question One

What stressors did Chinese undergraduate students have at the American university?(Stressors)

Table 4-4
First year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school
C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school
E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code /Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural difference	x	x	x	x	x	x
Life-skills related stressors	x	x	x	x		

Relationship with others	x	x	x	x		
Academic Study						
Concern for the future						

Table 4-5

Second year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural difference	x	x	x	x	x	x
Life-skills relates stressors						
Relationship with others	x	x	x		x	x
Academic Study	x	x	x	x	x	x
Concern for the future						

Table 4-6

Third year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	x					
Cultural difference	x					
Life-skills related stressors						
Relationship with others	x		x			
Academic study	x		x	x		
Concern for the future						

Table 4-7

Fourth year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier						
Cultural difference						
Life-skill related stressors						
Relationship with others	x	x			x	x
Academic Studies	x	x	x			
Concern for the Future	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table 4-8

Language barrier (first and second year included)

Sub-sub-code (total# of participants)	Types (total # of participants)
High frequency of English being used (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use everywhere (2)
Listening comprehension (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accent (1) • Fast speaking speed (6) • Unknown vocabularies (6) • Slangs and idioms (6)
Self-expression (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate Pronunciation (6) • Lack of fluency (6) • Not enough vocabulary to express feelings (6) • No vocabularies equivalent in English translation (2)
Negative feelings associated with language barrier (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervous (6) • Incompetent (6) • Fear (2) • Embarrassed (5) • Defeated (5)

In the interviews, all six students indicated language as a major source of stress. When they first arrived in the U.S., language was a problem they encountered immediately. Language is a barrier in both academic and non-academic life. Academic related language issues will be discussed later. The language barrier reported on in this section is in non-academic environments.

High Frequency of English Being Used

Two participants talked about the high frequency that English was used in daily life as a source of stress during their first year in the university. As participant A described,

I have never spoken or heard so much English outside classroom when I was in China. Now suddenly everything in life is spoken in English. Buying a meal, buying a book, watching TV, in class...literally, everything is in English, It is overwhelming.

Listening Comprehension

All participants reported problems with listening comprehension, either with accent, speaking speed, new vocabulary, and slang or idioms. These issues hindered participants' understanding of Americans and thus created stress in listening comprehension.

As participant A said,

I could not understand English the way that I can understand Chinese. I needed some time to translate English into Chinese so that I could understand. The native speakers (Americans) spoke too fast for me. When I was still translating the first half of the sentence in my head, they (Americans) finished the second half of the sentence, which I missed. Then I got lost. Sometimes, they (Americans) used news words that I did not know what they mean. If there were one or two new words in a sentence, I could guess. If there were 3 or 4 new words, I would not be able to understand.

Talking about his experience with language difficulties, Participant E said,

I had difficulty with the accent. When I learned English, I learned British accent. I could not understand the American accent. Americans used slang a lot. When I first heard, "what is up?" I did not know what they were asking.

Self-expression

All participants stated that expressing themselves in English is a source of stress. They reported that they had problems with pronunciation of English words, fluency of speaking, choosing the right words to express themselves, difficulty with expressing how they felt and lack of the right translation.

Participant E said

I am from Southern China. My Chinese pronunciation is even different from other Chinese from Northern China. The way I pronounce English words with "th" sound is so

different. When I said, “the” “these” “they” or words starting with “th,” Americans don’t understand what I was speaking. There are so many words with “th” sound. I could not effectively communicate with them.

Participant A said,

When I was speaking, I had to take some time to think of words that I could use. I spoke slowly. I spoke with broken sentences or broken words because I did not know what word I should use in English. I could not fully translate what I wanted to say.

Participant C said,

When I first got here, I did not know how to say what I feel...my vocabularies on feelings were very limited. I know “angry, glad, sad, sorry...” I don’t have as many vocabularies as I have in Chinese to fully express myself in various situations.

Participant B said,

Sometimes I don’t think there is a word for it in English. I like Chinese ice-cream-红豆冰淇淋. When I finally looked up in the dictionary and translated it into English, red bean paste ice-cream, it did not even sound good. I don’t know how I can tell what I like.

Negative emotions associated with language barrier

Because of participants’ limitations in understanding American students and fully expressing themselves, the participants have experienced negative feelings related to language barrier. The language barrier has undermined their comfortable level of speaking and self-confidence.

Participant A said,

I felt so nervous when I had to speak in front of Americans. I could not come up with the words, or the right words. It was frustrating to me. Americans were all waiting for me to speak, which made me even more nervous.

Participant B said,

I felt so incompetent when I spoke English. I felt that I was just like a 6 or 7-year old kid. It was horrible. I could not tell jokes. I could not be myself the way I was when I was speaking Chinese.

Table 4-9

Cultural Difference (Second year)

Sub-sub-code (total # of participants)	Types (total # of participants)
Difference experienced in daily life (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not many people on the street (6) • Miss Chinese food (6) • No public transportation (6) • Not many stores to shop (2) • Seeing doctors (1) • Eating and drinking habits (4) • Driving and get driver's license (4)
Difference experienced in interacting with Americans (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown context in communication (6) • Not the same laughing points (2) • the meaning of name (1) • Different social habits (6)
Extreme difference-value challenges (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life activities (3) • Social engagement (4) • Political party affiliation (2) • Christian religion (6)
Negative emotions associated with cultural difference (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not pleasant (1) • Not natural (5)

Closely related to the language barrier, cultural difference was reported by all the six participants as a source of stress in their experience. Each individual incident itself may seem small, but added up and confounded by the language barrier, they became major sources of stress. All participants reported that they have experienced a lot of differences between Chinese culture and American culture. The cultural differences can be divided into five categories: difference experienced in daily life, difference experienced in communicating with Americans (non-language issue), extreme cultural difference-value challenges, and negative emotions associated with cultural difference.

Difference experienced in daily life

Participants experienced significant difference in their daily lives. Fewer people walking on the streets, no public transportation, and inconveniences in getting drivers' licenses are a few.

Participant B said,

When I first got here, I could not see many people walking on the street. I felt so strange because there were so many people in China everywhere. I felt lonely walking on the street. When it was winter break, it was like a ghost town... There is no bus. I can't even get taxis on streets. I had to call first. Sometimes they would not come because they were busy. I was told that there were only four taxis here. I had to walk everywhere.

Because there was no public transportation, students had to learn to drive,

Participant F said,

There are so many hurdles to jump to be able to drive a car. First, I needed to get a driver's license. They asked for so many documents. I lost one of my documents. It took me so long to get the replacement. Finally I gathered my documents. Then I had to look for someone who has a car to give me a ride to take a written test. I can't comprehend the written test at all. I failed the first time. I waited for a while to take a second time. I just memorized the study questions one by one and guessed the answers by looking at graphs. It took me three times to pass the written test. Once I passed the written test, I had to practice driving. I had to buy a car first before I could practice driving. Because I did not have a car to drive, I had to "trouble" someone who has a car to take me around to look for a car. Finally, I got a car but I had no place to park because I had no permit. I would have to ask around again... then I had to ask my friends to help me practice driving. When I finally got ready to take a driving test, I could not understand what the test officers said. I was nervous to begin with. Then I became more nervous when she marked something on the evaluation paper. I had to take the test again.

Other students discussed the differences in eating, drinking and shopping.

Participant A said,

I have a "Chinese" stomach. I can't get used to eating salad or hamburgers. I felt like I was eating nothing if I ate American food. I miss Chinese food a lot. Even the Chinese food here was not like the Chinese food at home. I could not get used to eat the raw vegetables, especially broccoli and mushrooms. I still can't eat them.

Participant E said,

When I was in a restaurant, I felt strange because all of them were different from me. I did not know what to order. The restaurant was so quiet, comparing with China.

Participant D said,

They all drink cold water here and even ask for ice. In China, we, especially girls, grow up all drink hot water. Whenever I go to a restaurant and ask for hot water, they look me like a strange person.

Participant F said,

I went around all the stores in the city. There were not many stores here. There were not many people in the store. It felt like being deserted, comparing with China.

Difference experienced in interacting with Americans

Even when participants could comprehend what Americans were saying, cultural differences got in the way of true understanding.

Participant E said,

They (Americans) would tell something that is related to Star Trek, football game or some famous people in America, which requires a lot of background knowledge. It may be well known in American culture but I did not know what they were saying. I did not know how to respond.

Participant B said,

One time when I went to Burger King to order some food, the clerk asked me ‘for here or to go’. I know what each individual word means, but I did not know what they asked. I could not give an answer. Then the waiter became very impatient, said next. I was so embarrassed.

Participant A said,

There is also Chinese way of expression. Like in the restaurant, when I said “I want to eat vinegar,” people all laughed because it was funny in Chinese because it meant I got jealous. It is so hard to explain that to my American friends. When I explained, it lost the fun.

Participants also described cultural differences such as name differences and socializing preferences as barriers to making friends with Americans.

Participant C said,

Chinese name is different from English names. We put family name first. Before I came America, I did not know that. Then, I learned this. I had to say my name backward. It was really awkward. All Chinese names have meanings. In Chinese, when I introduce myself, I usually tell friends about the meaning of my name and it is easy to remember. When I was trying to explain the meaning of my name, it was so hard to explain because

it was based on Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang and five components of the world. According to that, gold is missing in my life when I was born. My parents gave me a Chinese name with three gold characters. When I did introduction like this, they still did not understand what I meant. It sounds like my name is made of gold. But it is not. So I will not explain my name again in self-introduction.

Participant B said,

Americans like parties all the time. At the party, all they did was drinking and talking some unrelated (impersonal) matters. I don't like to drink. And I had to think hard about what I could talk about the whole time. It was not interesting to me. When we have parties, maybe we will cook together. We will sing Karaoke. They don't do that stuff.

Extreme difference-value challenges

Cultural differences as value challenges especially impacted the students.

Participant E stated,

Chinese and Americans values are so different in life. So much different in life that my whole life was upside down—it was like brain earth quake, shattered everything I thought was absolutely right in my life. How can I tell you, so many things. For example, in China, I grew up believing eating chicken skin is good for your health. We all ate chicken skin like treasure. After I got here, I discovered Americans did not eat chicken skin because they did not think it is good to eat. Growing up I was told using weed was bad, but when I got here, the Americans I know used them and made me feel that those did not use it was not good. Growing up I did not think smoking is bad, but here people said it was bad for you...growing up, Chinese don't believe using contraception, after coming to America, American girls take contraceptive pills every day...I don't know which way life is supposed to be. So many things are different, opposite. I constantly felt challenged. What was certain before now become questionable. My whole life is up in the air...

Participant C said,

I was taught not to take free things. It is shame to get free food. But since I came here, all students were looking for free stuff. If there is free food or something, 50 or 60 people will line up to get it. It is so different.

Participant B said,

Most Americans have brothers or sisters, even the little kids. And some people kept saying something like abortion is killing. We are all from one-child family. I did not dare to tell them that I did not have brothers or sisters. They would think that I am strange.

Participant A said,

They (Americans) say communists are bad. But my parents and my friends' parents are all communists and the whole country is communist. Are we supposed to feel bad about it?

Participant F said,

They (Americans) said that people don't believe in Christ will go to hell. I don't believe in their God. A lot of my friends don't believe in that, either. I would rather believe in Buddhism. They (Americans) said people believe in Buddhism don't go to heaven, either. What will happen to those Chinese people and Buddhists don't believe in their God?

Negative emotions associated with cultural difference

Participants reported negative emotions associated with the cultural differences and value challenges.

Participant F said,

I don't like what they said about Buddhists and people don't believe in their God. I don't want to be around them.

Participant E said,

It is so awkward to be around Americans when we don't have much in common. I felt embarrassed when they said something I did not know what they referred to. I felt dumb when they did not understand what I said.

Participant A said,

Being around Americans is not as natural as being around Chinese students. I felt conflicted from time to time. Once in a while, I will hang out with them. If I have a choice, I would rather stay with Chinese because I would not have to "work hard" at the interaction.

Table 4-10

Life skills-related stressors (First year)

Sub code (total # of participants)	Types (total # of participants)
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Life skills related stressors (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get up and go to bed on time (2) • Cooking (4) • Moving (4) • Wash and fold clothes (3) • Renting an apartment (3) • Keeping apartment clean and organized (4) • Leisure activities (4)
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Except two college transfer participants, four participants who came during high school or soon after high school reported the stress related to life-skills, such as getting up and going to bed on time, cooking, keeping the apartment clean, and washing and folding clothes. The college transfer participants did not report stress in these areas.

Participant A said,

I don't know how to cook. My parents never needed me to cook at home. I could boil some hot water.

Participant E said,

Our apartment was so dirty. Especially after party, the leftover food smelt so bad in the refrigerator. We were too lazy to clean our apartment.

Participant C said,

I needed to move. I didn't know where I could find apartment. When I found the apartment, then I did not have a car to move my stuff. After I finally moved, I had to figure out how to connect electrical appliances. Sometimes even if I paid my rent one day late, the landlord would fine me \$20. It is so much trouble, one thing after another.

The lack of preferred leisure activities compounded their frustrations with daily live.

Participant D said,

It was really miserable. Nothing fun here. You don't know many people. For example, in China, we could go out to eat, watching movies, karaoke. Here, we can't go out to eat. No good Chinese restaurant. No Karaoke. We don't have cars. Even if we have cars, where can we go? Movie theaters? We do not understand. It does not have subtitles. There is only one shopping mall and not many stuff there, not many people. Americans just like to go to bars. But that is too noisy for me. Not much fun. I felt like in a big jail.

I just stay at home playing video games or talk to friends in China. Wait to have breaks and go home as soon as possible.

Table 4-11

Relationships with others (Second year)

Sub-sub code (total # of participants)	Types (total # of participants)
Non-family relationship (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With roommates (6) • With Chinese Friends in America (5) • With Americans (3)
Family relationships (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreements with Parents (4)

All students reported relationships as a source of stress. This area of stressors can be divided into two areas: Non-family relationships and family relationships

Non-family relationship stress

Participants reported relationships issues with roommates, Chinese friends in America, and with Americans.

Three participants had both American roommates and Chinese roommates in the past. With Chinese roommates, participants reported having issues or conflicts related to personal habits rather than cultural differences.

Participant C said,

With Chinese roommates, I have no cultural problem. But our habits are so different. He was so dirty. He did not clean after he had party. The food was left there and smelled bad. Eventually worms and flies grew out of it. I could not bear it any more. I had to clean up. Also, some roommates they would use my stuff, take my eggs, milk, and other food. It was not big deal at the beginning. But one day this, one day that. They never said anything. I could not say anything either. It became annoying.

With American roommates, in addition to personal habits, language and cultural differences played a part in the relationship stress.

Participant E said,

I have an American roommate. We did not have much in common. I like to study in the dorm. He liked to play video games in the room. He would bring a few friends over. They partied a lot. He played music loudly. What I think was good and funny, he did not have any reaction. What he was laughing at, I had no interest. We had nothing much to say to each other after a while. Eventually, it became that if I stay in the room, he would leave. When I was gone, he would come back. We were kind of avoiding each other. It was very awkward situation.

Due to language and cultural barriers, participants tended to make friends with Chinese students but with these relationships, other issues got in the way.

Participant A said,

Some Chinese students did not study and they wanted to copy your answers for exams. They requested to sit next to you. I would get into trouble if I got caught helping him. There are a lot of them. Now I do not want to know new Chinese students because I would not know what they would ask me for favor later.

Participant E said,

Some Chinese became Christians when they came here. They keep asking me to go to church with them. Sometimes I don't want to go to church or their religious events, I felt that they would be distant from me. I don't want to be forced into some belief, but I also need friends.

Participant C said,

Chinese is a small circle. If I had conflicts with someone, it would be so difficult because you would always see them everywhere. So I had to endure a lot of problems so that I would not damage the relationship.

All the participants indicated that they would like to make friends with Americans but could not do so very easily due to the language and cultural barriers. They can't smoothly establish friendship.

Participant E said,

When I first got here, American students did ask me to go have lunch together. I went. But during lunch they would say about a book they read, a movie they watched, or tell some jokes. Then everyone would laugh or have conversation. I had no idea what they were saying. I did not know I should laugh or not. I did not even know why they were laughing. If I asked, they would say, never mind. Because it was too difficult to explain,

I guess. So I did not go out for lunch with them anymore. I went to lunch with Chinese more after that.

In addition to the language barrier, differences in understanding of friendship and lifestyles created problems in forming friendships with American students.

Participant C said,

In China our friendship was strong and deep. When I have some problems, I can rely on my Chinese friends to help me because we are like brothers. Like I need money, they will lend to me. We would do anything for each other. But Americans keep distance from their friends or family because of privacy. They are nice and friendly. But I feel distant from them no matter how hard I try. I can't have deep friendship with Americans. They may have a lot of friends and being friends with them means that you would go to ball games or drink together. But I don't think they have any "true" friends in Chinese concept.

Participant E said,

I don't like to drink. I don't like being noisy. So I never like to go to their (American) parties. It is no fun. They think me as a high GPA student, maybe a nerd. I spent time studying while they were partying. Of course I have a high GPA. They probably see me as boring. People find similar people (人以群分). I will not be able to hang out with them (Americans).

Participant B said,

I had American friends. They just liked party all the time. I went to parties with them. I want to learn from them. But they were crazy. They drank too much. They used drugs. That I did not like. But they would tease or pressure everyone or dare people to try. In Chinese culture, I was told if you tried that, you would be done. So I had to find out ways to avoid being in that situation.

Participant F said,

Some Americans were nice to me. But they always talk to me about bible stuff. I do not want to believe in it.

Family relationships

As participants' time in America increased, family relationships also became stressful. Most people think that Chinese students would communicate with parents when they had problems. But on the contrary, they would not communicate their problems with their parents.

Participant C said,

I don't tell my parents about my problems because they will worry about me. I have to solve the problems on my own. My parents have never come to the U.S. before, they can't help me.

As participants adjusted to their life in the U.S., they had disagreements with their parents.

Participant C said,

I told my parents that I needed a car. My parents thought that I was trying to play instead of studying. They blamed me that I became bad in America. Because in China only bad students wanted to have a car and drive around, not going to school. It is not true in America. In this town, I could not go anywhere without a car. No matter what I told them, they would not agree with me.

Participant D said,

Like all Chinese parents, my parents always told me "good, good study" because in China, that is all students have to do. But it is not the same in America. You have to study, but you have to make friends, participate in activities. They don't know this. They think I am wasting time.

In Chinese culture, romantic relationships would need family approval. Participants reported stress and issues with family in terms of boyfriends and girlfriends.

Participant F said,

My mom would not agree that I have a Chinese boyfriend if I want to stay in the U.S. because they think I should find an American if I want to stay in the U.S. We argued all the time about this.

Participant B said,

I had an American boyfriend. My parents really don't like it. They want me to go back to China after my graduation.

Table 4-12

Academic Study (Second and third year year)

Sub-sub code (total # of participants)	Examples (total# of participants)
Language Barrier(6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening in class (6)• Taking notes in class (6)• Speaking in class (6)• Reading assignments (6)• Writing assignments (6)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take exams (6)
Non-language related barrier (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American context based examples (6) • Abstract concept (5) • Study skills related barrier (3)
Relationship related barrier (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with professor (4) • Relationship with classmates, lab-mates(4)

All six students reported stress related to academics. The stress in this area can be divided into three categories: language related; non-language related, and relationship related.

Language related stress

Even though the participant had at least six years English language study prior to arriving in the U.S. and took at least one semester’s English classes, they reported language as a barrier to their academic success. Students had difficulty with listening comprehension, taking notes, and understanding new vocabulary.

Participant C said,

At the beginning, I was totally lost in class. I had no idea what the professor said in class. I could not take notes because I could not follow. I could not recognize handwriting of the professor on the board. I wrote it down by guessing it. Then I could not find the words in the dictionary afterwards so it was not helpful.

Participant F said,

I did not want to answer questions or ask questions in class. Because I felt self-conscious about my English. It was so slow for me to think and at the same time find words to speak. They were just waiting for me to find words and there was too much waiting time. I felt it was embarrassing...In terms of reading, my reading speed was slow because of the vocabularies.

Participant B said,

American students said that architecture appreciation class was so good because they could just enjoy the beautiful architectures. I had to try to write down some vocabularies on the slides and try to figure out what they meant. They were all in Latin. I had no idea of what those words meant. In comparison, I felt even more burdened.

Besides listening and taking notes in class, participants also reported that they have problems in speaking in class, reading and writing assignments.

Participant B said,

I wanted to speak in class but I was so afraid that I would not express myself clearly or draw attention to myself. I was speaking to myself over and over again. Before I could raise my hands, other American students already said the answer.

Participant A said,

American students read so fast. My English class would assign some reading, like 100 pages. I can't read that fast. I can't even look up all the vocabularies. It was too many. I read too slowly. I can't be fast because I don't know the words.

Participant C said,

My professor assigned an essay, 10 pages single space. I had no idea how I can come up with that many words. In Chinese, I may not be even able to write that much.

New vocabulary and their slow reading speed also affected students' performance in exams.

Participant E said,

I could not understand the questions being asked. I spent a long time to understand the question and took a long time to write the answer. I could not finish the exam on time.

Non-language related stress

Non-language related issues also created difficulties for students in their academic studies. In Chinese schools, students were taught to study for exams by memorizing. In American universities, professors require students to understand concepts and solve problems, which rote memorization does not lend to. Certain study skills are required to learn in American universities. It is the learning before learning. Chinese undergraduate students felt that they did not have the necessary study skills for learning in American universities.

Participant A indicated,

We all have skills to memorize when we were in China. We don't have any additional skills to use. I still just memorize them.

Participant B said,

American professors asked us to cite other people's work. I don't know how to do that.

Besides learning skills, sometimes examples professors used in class were not familiar to the students, thus created difficulties for students to understand the content.

Participant E said,

Professor often referred examples in students' high school. I did not go to high school here. I could not relate. Of course, I did not get the points he was trying to make.

Sometimes, it could be an abstract concept.

Participant C said,

I know the words that the professor said, but when they were together, I did not know what the professor meant. I went to ask the professor, but I still did not understand. When I do homework, I just had to memorize the formula through doing homework. But I am afraid one day that I went to an interview, if they would ask me what the graph meant, I would not be able to explain.

Relationship related stress in academic study

Participants reported that stress related to relationships with professors and American students was yet another barrier to academic success. Students experienced trouble establishing good connections with American professors the way they perceived American students doing.

Participant B said,

I don't know why American students seem to be able to have better relationships with professors. They talked about interesting stuff and laughed together. I could only just ask a question and then be gone. I did not have relationship with professors. When it came to request a recommendation, I don't know who I can ask. They did not even know me. I was wonder if I did not know how to better connected with the professor or if the professor just does not like me because I am not American.

Participant C said,

They (American students) seemed not like to be in the same group with me when we do lab work. They think that I would be the one to cause them to reduce points. They thought American could get the right answers and Chinese may not have the right answers even if my answers were right.

Table 4-13

Concern for the Future (Fourth year)

Sub-sub-Categories	Types (Patterns)
Job opportunities (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In China (3) • In the U.S.(5) • Visa issues (5) • Foreign identity (3)
Relationship and Marriage (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility(2 males) • Age(3 females) • Relationship with each other (4)
Age of graduation (2)	

All participants reported concern for the future as a major stressor. Concern for the future can be divided into three categories: job opportunities, marriage, and graduate school and age of graduation.

Job Opportunities

All six participants indicated plans to return to China eventually. One wanted to go back to work soon after graduation. The other five hoped to work in the U.S. for two years before they returned. Regardless, all participants reported stress about job opportunities. The participants planning to return right away to China were concerned about how to get a good job and salary.

Participant B said,

In China, there are so many college graduates jobless. Without connection, it is really difficult to get a good job in China. Also, I will not get any better salary than those students who graduated from Chinese colleges. But I spent so much money to study in the U.S. It is really stressful.

Participants who want to work in the U.S. for a couple of years have stress about their job hunting situation in the U.S. Because of economic downturn, American government requires companies to hire American citizens first or increases working-visas application fees for companies to hire international people.

Participant A said,

I went to every table at the job fair. When they heard me saying that I am an international student, these companies did not even take my resume. They told me that they only hire American students. It is depressing.

Participant E said,

I needed a working visa to work in the U.S. I need an employer to sponsor me for the working visa. When no employer is hiring international students, I can't get the working visa.

Relationship and Marriage

All participants reported their consideration of marriage. The male participants tended to express feelings of stress related to family responsibilities, given the difficulties in finding jobs in China or in the U.S.

Participant C said,

In Chinese culture, as a man, I need to give my wife a good life, which means I will buy a house, buy a car and we can buy all things we want, at least we don't have to hesitate to buy stuff. But I will not be able to be rich in a short time like in my 20s, I can't marry any time soon.

Female students expressed feelings of stress related to age and marriageability.

Participant B (female) said,

In China, girls need to be married in 20s. In my area, getting married at 23 year-old is already late. My parents would always ask me if I have found a boyfriend yet. It is not as easy as they thought. Now I am graduating. I still don't have a boyfriend yet. I am so anxious and frustrated. My parents told me that there are so many girls in China and it would be even more difficult for me to find a boyfriend there. My parents thought I wasted my time here.

The uncertainty regarding jobs also negatively affected participants' romantic relationships.

Participant C said,

I have a Chinese girlfriend. But I am not certain that we will have a future together. Since we are graduating, there are job problems of staying in the U.S. or going back to China. Also, nowadays, Chinese girls are very practical. They want house, cars and everything ready for them when they get married. When I graduate, I don't have all those things. But Chinese girls or their families can't wait because of their age (Chinese women are expected to get married in 20s).

Participant A said,

I had to break up with my girlfriend because I came to America. There was no definite time that I could return. I face the separation again with this current girlfriend because no one could guarantee us to have job in the same city. If we separate, we will have to break up.

Pressure as older undergraduate students

The two college transfer students expressed feelings of stress related to their older age. Because some of their Chinese college credits did not transfer, they fell behind their peers by a year or more.

Participant E said,

My friends in China already have graduated and are married. I am falling behind.

Participant F (female) said,

I am older than the Chinese undergraduate students around me. I am still in school while my friends graduated in China. For boys it may be ok. For girls, I really have pressure.

Research Question Two

What are their coping strategies in dealing with the stress in the U.S?(coping strategies)

Table 4-14

Sub code (total # of participants)	Examples (total # of participants)
Problem focused Coping(6) • Direct Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch televisions in English (6)• Speaking more (5)• Read books (4)• Ask for help(6)
Emotions focused Coping (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endurance (2)• Doing activities reduce stress (6)
Avoidance-orientation Coping (2) • Escape from the problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play video games (1)• Sleep (1)
Resources or help (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friends (6)• Roommates (6)• Not aware of university help(4)

Problem focused Coping

The participants identified several approaches to coping with their stress. Students applied both direct problem solving strategies and in-direct approaches to facing the stress. Direct problem solving strategies included improving their language ability, increasing their cultural competence, and developing life skills.

As participant A said,

Knowing that I need to improve my language, I watched English movies and made friends with American students to improve my listening and speaking ability.

Participant B said,

I read some books on the difference between Chinese cultural and American culture. I also asked friends to buy some recipe books from China.

Participants also requested help from both Chinese and American friends.

Participant D said,

When I did not have a car and I needed to go somewhere, I would ask for friends' help, Americans or Chinese.

Participant B said,

When I needed to move, I did not have a car. I had to call some American friends. I can't ask Chinese friends because most of them did not have a car at the time.

Participant C said,

When I needed money, I would borrow from my Chinese friends.

Emotion focused Coping

In some situation, participants endured the situation or avoided stressful situations.

Participant A said,

When I could not understand class, I just sat there. I could not do much about it. I tried the best as I could. Time will help.

Participant E said,

When Chinese friends invited me to go to church, I just said that I had other conflicts. I did not want them to be unhappy.

Sometimes, academic stress and stress involving the future were too big for students to solve; to reduce their stress related to these issues, they used in-direct strategies, such as playing games (male participants), shopping (female participants), or talking with friends in China.

Participant C said,

I don't know what to do about my future in terms of job and relationship with my girlfriend. I was depressed a lot as my graduation is approaching. I sometimes just play some games or do something else to not to think about it.

Participant F said,

When I was so depressed, I would go shopping with some friends. The good thing is that you can return them if you don't want them later.

Avoidance orientation coping

Participant A said,

Sometimes I just played video games all day because I really did not want to go to class. I did not understand.

Participant B said,

I would sleep all day. I did not want to wake up to face my problem.

Not Aware of University Resources for Help

When talking about the resources available to them, all participants mentioned friends. Four participants reported not being aware of resources available from the university such as counseling and tutoring.

Participant C said,

I just asked my friends. I did not know who else I could ask. My parents are so far away. They can't help me.

Participant D said,

If I have problems about class, I will go my professor. If I have questions regarding selecting classes, I will go to my advisors. Other things unrelated to study, I will ask my

roommates or friends. I do not think professors or the university will help me with these issues unrelated to study.

Participant E said,

When I have problems with my study and relationship, I do not know that I can ask university for help. I do not know what counseling center does.

Participant F said,

I don't know about the writing center that I can help me. Where is it?

Research Question Three

What changes did the students experience in the U.S.?(Changes)

Table 4-15

Sub code (total # of participants)	Types (total # of participants)
English ability is improved(6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening comprehension (6) • Self-expression (6)
Independence (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay bills (6) • Move (6) • Buy beds and furniture (6) • Deal with car problems (3) • Take care of oneself (4)
Ability to manage stress (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic related stress (6) • Relationship stress (6)
Participation in social activities (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese students' organization (4) • International students' activities (4) • Community activities (2)
Perception changes(6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes towards China (6) • Attitudes towards America (6) • Attitudes towards purchase(6) • Attitudes towards marriage (3) • Attitudes towards the power of individuals (3) • Attitudes towards life style (3)

English ability is improved

Even though the language barrier is a major source for stress, all participants indicated that their English has improved.

Participant A said,

My English ability is improved. I could talk to my American friends and they could understand me better than before. I could not have a conversation back then.

Participant E said,

I now can understand more in class even though I still have problem with class from time to time. But I am getting better.

Independence

All participants described themselves as more independent than their friends in China.

When they were in China, they did not have to do much because their parents took care of everything. Now in the U.S, with parents far away, they have to do everything on their own.

They reported growing very independent and feeling very capable.

Participant D stated,

In America, besides study, I manage my whole life here: paying bills, managing finance, renting apartment, dealing with car problems, balance study, work, friends, and boyfriend, etc. I used to feel that I would never feel proud in front of my friends because they were better in many ways than I was. Now, I feel that I grew so much more than they did because I can manage my life independently.

Ability to manage stress

All participants reported improved stress management abilities since having come to the U.S.

Because they did not share their problems with their parents, the participants had to develop other stress-reducing strategies.

Participant C said,

I can bear a lot of things. I don't become panic if problems happen. I can manage it.

Participation in Social Activities

Four participants reflected on their participation in social activities. They felt that they lived in a bigger world than only academics, which was the focus in China.

Participant D said,

I ran for student government's position. I help organized holiday celebration and social events for students.

Participant C said,

I have joined in international organizations, helping international students.

Participant B said,

My friends invited me to community events. I get to know community people.
Perception changes

Attitudes towards China

All participants reported an increased awareness of their Chinese identity while in the United States. In China, they did not pay particular attention to their identity. But in the U.S., they became more aware of themselves as Chinese and their attitudes toward China changed.

They paid more attention to what was going in China.

Participant E stated,

When I was in China, I did not care much about what is going on with China because I could not do anything about it anyway. After I came to America, I was constantly reminded that I am a Chinese, whenever I met someone or introduce myself to other people. I began to pay attention to news or anything related on China. When my friends and I heard Chinese anthem and saw Chinese flag on television, we all became so emotional.

Participants' attitudes towards China were adjusted to more moderate view: those who were positive about China saw some negative side of China; those who thought China was in bad situation became positive.

Participant B said,

When I was in China, I did not see things were too bad. After I came to America, comparing with China, our pollution in the air and water was so bad.

Participant C said,

When I was in China, I thought food were not safe. After I came to America, I realized there are food safety issues in America. So I think it was not that bad in China.

Before coming to the U.S., the participants conceptualized America as perfect, but their experiences in the U.S. have changed their views towards America and Americans.

Participant E stated,

In China, we all thought America is a world police man, who stands for justice, fairness and impartiality and protect the world or something. After I came to America, over the years, I am convinced that America is capitalistic and put self-interest first and selfish. America does not care about saving the people in the world. It is just for itself. But it always uses 'freedom or democracy' as a disguised excuse.

Participant B said,

America claims equality. It has a lot of discrimination, too.

Participant C said,

I thought Americans were all rich. But it is not true. Some of them are not even as rich as I am.

Attitudes towards purchase

These participants grow up in the economic environment where most Chinese want to buy products of "famous brand." In America they have found out that not many people chased after famous brands. Sometimes people buy second hand products, like books, cars, and house, etc.

Participant B said,

In China no students bought used books. I like buying used books here. It is cheaper.

Participant E said,

I think it is good to buy a used car. The new car depreciated so much.

Attitudes towards marriage

All participants expressed the realization that marriage is not easy. They discovered problems in Chinese marriages and American marriages.

Participant F said,

Out of my Chinese friends' family, eight of ten have problems. These families are rich. Money is not a problem. Sometimes because of their money, the marriage is problematic. I realized that marriage needs some management. Love itself does not keep a family together.

Participant D said,

I used to believe after one is married, it will be forever. But now I don't think so. I think even after one is married, he can get a divorce. A lot of my American friends' parents are divorced. Sometimes they even divorced twice or three times.

Attitudes towards the power of individual

Participant F said,

My regular Chinese friends in China worked so hard but only made about RMB3000 (\$500) per month, but a scarf of my rich Chinese friends in America would cost \$800. It is not that my Chinese friends in America is smarter or work harder but because they have good parents who give them everything. Even they did not work, they still would have everything. So I don't believe that one can make a good life by working hard in China. It is the power and connection that help you to make a living in China. I became more practical. Does this have anything that I come to America? Of course, because if I was in China, I would not have known these Chinese friends in America. I would not be able to get this kind of information firsthand.

Participant C said,

Life is very practical. When I was in China, my family is pretty good comparing with others. When I came to America, I realized that some Chinese families are so rich. Chinese girls today will look at what cars you are driving and what house you are living when they decide if they choose someone as boyfriends. Money and your family background are very important.

Changes in lifestyle

Participants talked about their changes in lifestyle.

Participant A said,

In China, people pay a lot of attention to what they wear every day, like Korean style, British style, and Japanese style. In America, most people in daily life just wear T-shirt and Jeans. I got used to the American easy style.

Participant B said,

When I was in China, most students don't work when they were in school. Now most American students work and make money. It changed my perspective about college life.

Participant C said,

In China, not many people buy second-hand things. When I first got here, I bought a new car. Then I discovered my American friends bought second-hand stuff, used cars, used furniture and used books. So I got used to buy second hand stuff, too. I sold my car and I bought a used car.

Participant E said,

In China, not many people go to gym. Now I go to gym more and a lot of my Chinese students go to gym, too.

Research Question Four

How did they evaluate the experience in the U.S.?(Evaluation)

Table 4-16

Sub code (total # of participants)	Examples (Patterns)
Advantage (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural environment (6) • Social environment (4)
Recommendation for future students (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not for all (6) • Improve English (6)
Recommendation for university (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the admission standard (3) • Provide more service (6)

Advantage in the U.S.

When evaluating their experience in the U.S., all six participants said that they have benefited from being in the U.S., from natural environment to social environment.

Participant A said,

The sky is blue. The air is fresh. The water is good. I don't need to worry about air pollution.

Participant B said,

I have a lot of freedom here. I can travel to a lot of famous locations, like Disney, Hollywood studio, which I heard in China. I could also go to other countries, much easier from the U.S.

Participant D said,

It is great to be away from my parents, not being controlled by them. I don't need permission to do anything from parents. I handle my life on my own. Without coming to the U.S., I would not have grown so much.

Participant E said,

I enjoyed the freedom. I have more freedom to choose classes. I have opportunity to work in school. I become more active.

Recommendation for future students

Even though participants appreciated and enjoyed their study abroad experiences, they don't think studying in the U.S. is for everyone, especially those who can't live independently.

Participant C said,

It looks good on the outside to people in China but everyone of us has challenges in the U.S. Studying abroad is not that easy, sometimes it is painful. If someone wants to have an easy life, I think he or she should stay in China. If students can't take care of themselves, they had better stay in China.

Participant F said,

It is not easy to "cheat" through schools here. Those who don't want to study should stay in China because it wastes parents' money.

In terms of recommendations they give to school, four of six participants commented that there are too many low-quality Chinese students in the university. They have problems not only with English but lack of an academic foundation, which created additional problems for themselves and other students.

Recommendation for the university

Participant A said,

The university seems to admit anyone that can pay the tuition. Some Chinese students should not be in university. They have not even finished high school. They could not

catch up with the study. They had to cheat through. They kept asking other students to get help. It is bothersome.

Participant E said,

I think university should have a standard in admission. In the future, our degree will not be respected when we return to China because it feels like anyone can get it as only as they pay enough money.

Participant B said,

I hope the university provides some training in how to study. We only memorize when we were in China. I don't know how to study.

Participant C said,

I hope the university can help me more in communication and relationship skills. I have a lot of issues I don't know how to deal with. I don't know who to talk to. Of course, I can talk to my friends but they are relying on me. They can't help.

Common topics participants spoke about but not under the four research questions

Dissatisfaction with Chinese Education

In discussing their motivations to study abroad, all participants indicated dissatisfaction with Chinese education.

Participant A said,

It is all about exams. We do not know why we are learning. We just need to remember the answers. Memorizing, memorizing, and memorizing.

Participant B said,

It is very competitive. Normal students can't get into those best universities. Only the super students can get into the best universities or universities they want to go. I can't get into the university I really want to go. So I go abroad.

Participant E went to college for a year, he said,

It is very boring in college class. We did not want to go to class. For my major, we did not have good labs. What we learn is not so outdated, not useful. Professors never told us why. We still just memorize the facts. I did not learn much.

Using Agents when applying for American university

The participants all discussed using agents to help them with choosing universities and the application process. This service is costly, ranging from \$4,000-8,000. The agents' goal is to get them admitted into foreign universities. Students' qualifications are of less concern.

Participant E said,

Some of the students are really low quality. They can't get into any colleges in China. But these agents can get them admitted into American colleges as long as they pay the money.

There is consequence when students are less qualified.

Participant B said,

Some students lack of the ability of study. They really can't follow. They would seek help from other students during exams. Although it is not right, but what can they do? Of course, some majors they can sneak through. Some majors they can't.

Cheating problems

All participants discussed students who do not study or do not know how to study as well as the prevalence of cheating.

Participant A said,

Some students don't study. When exams come, they just sit next to someone who study well.

Participant B said,

There are also companies or students who can provide some service to students who can't do their work, especially online classes.

Participant E said,

I saw some Chinese students who were talking about cheating strategies in the library. I felt shame as a Chinese.

Return to China eventually

Five out of the six participants indicated that they would go back to China eventually.

Participant A said,

I am the only child of my family. I need to go back to look after my parents.

Participant B said,

I am not used to America. I want to be near my family and friends.

Participant C said,

It will be easier to be in China because your family and friends can help you a lot.

Financial Support

All the participants said that their parents had set aside money for them to go abroad, but three of them are working part-time on campus to pay for their apartment or buy extra things.

Patterns Yielding Themes

A: male, come to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Research question = RQ

Findings based on Research questions	Themes (Patterns contributing to themes)
<p>RQ1 What stressors did Chinese undergraduate students in the U.S. have? (Stressors)</p> <p>RQ1a Total six stressors: Language barriers (L), cultural difference(C), life-skills related stressors (S), relationship with others(R), academic studies (A), concern for the future (F)</p> <p>RQ1b First year: all participants LC; participants who came after high school and during high school: SR</p> <p>RQ1c Second year: all participants: LCAR</p> <p>RQ1d Third year: all participants: L; participants who came after high school: C; relationship with others (participant AC); academic study (ACD)</p> <p>RQ1e Fourth year: all participants: concern for the future Academic studies(ABC); relationship with others (ABEF);</p>	<p>1. Participants did not know what to expect before they went abroad but managed to overcome difficulties in the U.S. (RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ1c, RQ1d, RQ1e, RQ2a, RQ2c, RQ4a, RQ4b,RQ5a, RQ5b, 5c).</p> <p>2. Participants are willing to make changes and improve themselves by overcoming many barriers, such as language barrier, culture barrier, relationship barrier, academic study barrier and uncertain future within the resource they have (RQ2a, RQ2c, RQ3a, RQ3b, RQ3c, RQ3d, RQ3e)</p> <p>3. Participants want the university to help them to overcome the barriers to achieve a better education.(RQ2a,</p>

<p>RQ2 What coping strategies did they use in dealing with the stressors? (Coping strategies)</p> <p>RQ2a All participants used problem focused coping and emotional focused coping.</p> <p>RQ2b Participants who came after high school tried to escape from problems (avoidance coping).</p> <p>RQ2c Students do not have much resource to cope, mainly depending on friends or roommates to help, not ware of university resource.</p>	<p>RQ2b, RQ2c, RQ4c)</p> <p>4. Participants seek better job opportunities whether in China or in the U.S. but eventually will go back to China (RQ1e, RQ2c, RQ4c, RQ5d).</p> <p>5. Participants' family fully support participants' endeavor to study in the U.S.(RQ1b, RQ2a, RQ2c, RQ5d, RQ5e)</p>
<p>RQ3 What major changes have they seen in themselves during the acculturation process? (Changes)</p> <p>All participants:</p> <p>RQ3a English ability is improved.</p> <p>RQ3b Independence</p> <p>RQ3c Ability to manage stress.</p> <p>RQ3d Participation in social activities</p> <p>RQ3e Perception changes: attitudes towards China, America, purchase, marriage, power of individuals and life styles.</p>	
<p>RQ4 How did they evaluate their experience in the U.S.?</p> <p>RQ4a Advantage: All participants felt that they benefited from being in the U.S.</p> <p>RQ4b Recommendation for future students: studying in the U.S. is not for all. Students to should evaluate themselves before they come here. Future students should improve their English before they come.</p> <p>RQ4c Recommendation for university: university should improve admission standards and provide more service to international students.</p>	
<p>Other common themes participant have shared(not under the four RQs)</p> <p>RQ5a Dissatisfaction with Chinese education</p> <p>RQ5b Cheating problems</p> <p>RQ5c Using agents applying universities</p> <p>RQ5d Students eventually return to China.</p> <p>RQ5e Family is students' financial resource.</p>	

Summary

This chapter presented findings of the study. The first section discussed the interview process and data analysis process. The second section presented the findings. The first research question about the participants' acculturation stressors found that the main stressors include: language barrier, cultural difference, life-skills related stressors, relationships with others, academic studies, and concern for the future. The second research question about what coping strategies participants used in dealing with the stressors found three primary strategies: problem focused coping, emotion focused coping, and avoidance-orientation coping. The third research question about the changes participants experienced in themselves found three main areas of change: improved English ability, development of stress management skills, active participation in social activities, and changes in perceptions. Regarding the fourth research question about their evaluation of the American university experience, the participants recommended future students to evaluate their suitability before going abroad. Future students should focus on improving language abilities before they go abroad. Their recommendation for universities is to increase the admission standard and provide more services to students.

Other common topics participants mentioned but did not cover by the research questions include: dissatisfaction with Chinese education; using agents when applying for American universities, cheating, intention to return to China eventually, and finances.

Themes derived from the patterns include (1) participants did not what to expect before they went abroad but managed to overcome difficulties in the U.S; (2) participants are willing to make change and improve themselves by overcoming all barrier, language, culture, relationship, academic study within the resource they know; (3) participants want the university to help them to overcome the barriers for a better education (4) participants seek better job opportunities

whether in China or in the U.S. but eventually will go back to China. (5) participants' family fully support participants' endeavor to study in the U.S. Based on the findings, chapter five will present discussions, implication and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Discussions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data from interviews with the study's six participants. The data addressed the research questions related to stressors, coping strategies, changes, and overall evaluation of the study abroad experience. This chapter will discuss the findings, their implications, and the opportunities they present for future research.

This chapter has three sections. The first section is discussion of the findings within Berry's theoretical framework and existing literature. The section presents the implication of the research. The third section points out the future research direction.

Discussion

Factors existing prior to Acculturation

Age, Gender, Education, Pre-acculturation

All participants indicated that their parents wanted them to study abroad and that they began learning English at a young age in preparation. Their desire and preparation made them willing to adapt to U.S. culture.

Despite their language study, the participants still struggled with the language barrier. The language challenges were in both the non-academic environment and academic environment. The language struggles the participants reported in the academic environment are similar to those identified by studies of Chinese graduate students (Ye, 1992; Yeh, 2000; Wan, 2001). The undergraduates' struggles in the non-academic environment may have seemed more pronounced because their participation in activities and social gatherings may be greater than Chinese graduate students focused solely on academics.

The participants who came to the U.S. during high school came when they were about 16 years of age. Transition challenges from childhood to adulthood were compounded by cross-cultural acculturation challenges. They reported having a difficult time during high school, such as isolation from the American high schoolers, but being adaptive to American culture during college. Their accounts of confronting the language barrier and cultural differences in college seemed less significant than those of the two participants who came to the U.S. after high school. The two participants who came as college transfers initially had more difficulty with cultural differences than those who came during high school.

The four participants who came during high school or immediately after high school reported stress related to life-skills. They indicated that at home, their parents served as “secretaries and nannies,” so adjusting to living independently was difficult. As Participant B said,

For the first year, every morning, my mom called me to wake me up. She would also tell me what to eat for breakfast.

In addition, these participants revealed that they had relationship problems with others, such as roommates and Chinese friends. They attributed this to China’s one-child policy and having no experience with siblings and sharing. In the U.S., sharing a room or apartment with others presented problems.

By contrast, the two college transfer participants reported fewer challenges in life-skills and relationships with others. They had already faced these challenges as first year college students in China. Their main areas of focus when arriving in the U.S. were language and culture adjustments and doing well in academics.

Academically, the two transfer students fared better than the other participants. They felt they had already proven their ability through successfully passing the notoriously tough Chinese

National College Entrance Exams and thus had more confidence. Additionally, they had already adjusted to the academic rigor of college. Participant E said,

I got into a pretty good university in China. I can't be that bad. I think I am a lot better in academic studies than some of the American students. After a year, I felt pretty ok with my studies. My GPA goal is 4.0.

The participants who came to the U.S. before high school or immediately after high school had not taken the Chinese National College Entrance Exams and felt that they could not compete with the good students in China.

The participants' gender did not impact stressors such as the language barrier, cultural differences, life-skills, academics, and relationships. Due to China's one-child policy, Chinese urban families typically treat girls and boys equally in terms of education and academic expectations. Males and females alike were sent to good schools where they were both expected to perform well. However, gender did show as a factor in marriage- and career-related stressors. The traditional Chinese view is "men need to choose the right career; women need to choose the right husband." In Chinese culture, men without good jobs and money for the family would be seen as shameful. Wealth and luxury brands become "normal" for many people, including the participants in this study. As all these male participants come from a well-to-do family, they have expressed feeling pressure to do even better for themselves and their future families.

Participant C said,

I need to raise my family to a next level. It is not just my life. It is for the whole family.

To achieve a more successful career and wealthier life, it is common in China for men to delay marriage until their late 30s or 40s. Especially successful men often marry women who are 10, 20, or 30 years younger. In one extreme case, an 82-year-old Chinese-American Nobel winner married a 28-year-old Chinese young woman. Participant C said,

As only as men are successful, women always available. If a man does not have money, no woman will not stay with him.

While the male participants identified career pressure as a significant stressor, the female students expressed feeling pressure to get married before turning late 20s. Due to “left-over women” are increasing in China---meaning more single women with high degree and high income—female participants and their families had more pressure in avoiding having “leftover women,” who are seeing as being problematic or burdensome for the families.

Participant B said,

My mom always asked me if I got a boyfriend or not. As I was about to graduate. I did not have a boyfriend. When I went home, it would be more difficult. There were many girls competing with me (for boyfriends) back in China.

Status, Motivation, Expectations

All of the study’s participants grew up in the Chinese “one-child” generation, a generation of children characterized as “Little Emperors.” As only children, the participants received excessive attention from parents and grandparents as well as increased spending power within the family unit. Their parents’ general desire was to give them everything, especially what the parents themselves were not able to have or experience. According to Pappas (2013), this type of parenting causes only children to grow up with poor life skills and dependence. These poor life skills and inability to live independently showed in the participants’ relationship stressors.

As Participant C said,

My roommate was so messy and dirty. He did not wash clothes: the socks smelled so bad. He did not wash dishes. The food smelt stink in the house...the toilet was stuck, the poop and water flew out of the toilet onto the bathroom floor...it was disgusting.

The participants had always relied on their parents to solve their problems and had not ever had to negotiate living with peers (i.e., siblings); accordingly, on their own, they struggled

to address life-related and relationship-related issues. Because the only-child is the attention of the family and does not have to think for other siblings, the only-child has been self-centered and needs a lot of relationship adjustment after they leave their parents. This also explained how relationship with other people have become the stressor of the U.S. experience, especially it explained the stress resulting from relationship with roommates and friends.

The participants' expectations of their study abroad experiences varied. One participant plans to return to China as soon as she finishes, hoping her year abroad will make her a more marketable job applicant. She does not immerse herself in American culture and with American friends, preferring to spend time with Chinese friends. Four of the six participants want to work a couple of years in the U.S. before returning to China. One participant wanted to stay if possible. These five participants integrated themselves into American culture and relationships as much as possible.

Academically, two college transfer students are more motivated to excel. One of the students who came after high school wanted to "pass" to get the degree. Participants who are motivated to get a higher GPA had more pressure than those who were not motivated to have a higher GPA.

Cultural Distance: language, culture, religion

Language barriers

Many scholars have identified language as a significant barrier to Chinese international students' acculturation in the U.S. (Kao, 1987; Liu, 1989; Chang, 1990; Ye, 1992; Yeh, 2000; Wan, 2001). Communication barriers most commonly fall into two categories: listening comprehension and self-expression. Lin's (2011) study of 103 Chinese students concluded that uncertainty is associated with communication competence, and communication barriers exist in

Chinese students' U.S. experience, regardless of age, gender, duration of stay, number of U.S. friends, or level of education.

In the present study, all six students identified communication barriers as stressors throughout their study abroad experiences. Waxin (2004) found communication barriers to be more culturally bounded than language itself, something Participant F experienced:

When American students talked about American football, baseball, and star-track, I don't know what they were talking about. I don't have the cultural background.

The participants' knowledge of American culture expanded over time and their listening comprehension improved.

Cultural Difference and value Challenges

Different cultures and value systems directly affect behavior choices (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). Hofstede (2001) pointed out five critical value dimensions that distinguish one culture from another: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientations. Chinese culture is very different from American culture. Hofstede's (2001) idea that values and norm systems tend to remain the same even through cross-cultural exposure explains why the participants' cultural differences and value challenges were major stressors, especially near the beginning of their study abroad experiences.

Chinese culture is largely based on the teachings of Confucius (Harrison & Berger, 2006; Marsh, 2005). It is tradition-based and has not changed significantly over the years (Chai & Chai, 2007; Street & Matelski, 2008). Confucian principles value collectivism and communal harmony over individualism (Chu & Ju, 1993; Luo, 2007).

By contrast, American culture, driven by protestant ethics and modern capitalism, emphasizes individualism (Harrison & Huntington, 2000).

This difference in emphasis between Chinese culture and American culture shows in many ways: 1) In addressing others, Chinese value the collective over the individual by always putting the family name first, whereas Americans often emphasize the individual over the collective by addressing each by first name bases; 2) Even in restaurants, Chinese eat family style, with all dishes ordered shared by everyone at the table, while Americans most often order and eat their own dishes. When paying a restaurant bill, Chinese will frequently pay others' as an indication of willingness to establish friendship, while Americans generally pay only for themselves.

Another significant cultural difference concerns presentation of self to others. Chinese emphasize humility, while Americans value self-promotion. All six study participants indicated stressors related to the values of collectivism versus individualism and humility versus self-promotion.

Religion

Atheism and Buddhism have a long history in China. Christianity is commonly thought of as the foreign devils' religion due to the perceived association between Christianity and foreign imperialism. Chinese often believe that that only the weak or ignorant would believe in Christianity. These assumptions about Christianity surfaced for the participants when American students, or sometimes Chinese students, wanted to teach them about the Christian faith. However, the desire to be in harmony with all people conflicted with their impulse to reject learning about religion. Trying to balance their assumptions about Christianity and their desire to have friends, American or Chinese turned religion into a stressor for the participants.

Factors during Acculturation

Phrase (Length of time)

Table 5-1**First year in college**

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school
 C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school
 E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code /Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural difference	x	x	x	x	x	x
Life-skills related stressors	x	x	x	x		
Relationship with others	x	x	x	x		
Academic Study						
Concern for the future						

First year

During their first year, the participants were mainly taking not-for-credit English classes, so they identified as insignificant stressors related to academics. All participants reported stressors due to the language barrier and cultural differences during their first year in the U.S. The participants who came during high school and after high school recalled life-skills and relationship issues as primary stressors. The participants who were transfer students had learned to manage their life and relationships with others during their years in Chinese colleges; therefore, they did not report stress these areas during their first year in the U.S.

Table 5-2**Second year in college**

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school
 C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school
 E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural difference	x	x	x	x	x	x

Life-skills relates stressors						
Relationship with others	X	X	X		X	X
Academic Study	X	X	X	X	X	X
Concern for the future						

Second year

The participants all reported experiencing language and culture-related stress during their second year. They also all reported experiencing academic stress that came along with taking for-credit classes. By this time, participants began to encounter American students through taking classes together. Relationship issues tend to be more inter-cultural related. Transfer students, who had not had life-skills-related relationship problems with Chinese roommates, etc., during their first year encountered relationship stress as they met more Americans. The students who had come during high school or after high school had learned how to handle life in college and relationship with others. Their relationship stressor remained because they encounter more American students like the transfer students.

Table 5-3

Third year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school
 C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school
 E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier	X					
Cultural difference	X					
Life-skills related stressors						
Relationship with others	X		X			
Academic study	X		X	X		
Concern for the future						

Third year

During the third year, the language barrier as a stressor largely disappeared. The transfer students overcame their academic stress due to their academic foundation in China. The reduction in language-related stress speaks well of the acculturation efforts of five of the six participants, but for one it in fact reflects a lack of effort. She had not necessarily overcome the stress but instead had never experienced the stress because she interacted mostly with other Chinese students and also had low expectations for her academic performance.

Table 5-4

Fourth year in college

A: male, came to the U.S. after high school, B: female, came after high school

C: male, came during high school, D: female, came during high school

E: male, transferred in college, F: female, transferred in college

Sub code/Participants	A	B(female)	C	D(female)	E	F(female)
Language barrier						
Cultural difference						
Life-skill related stressors						
Relationship with others	x	x			x	x
Academic Studies	x	x	x			
Concern for the Future	x	x	x	x	x	x

Fourth year

During the fourth year, academic studies were not stressors for college transfers. They remained being stressors for the student who came after high school. One of the students who came during high school reported stress in academic studies due to his highly technical major. Relationships with others were identified as stressful because of uncertainty about the future. Job-related stress also occurred during the fourth year.

Though Chinese graduate students often intend to stay in the U.S. upon graduation, most the undergraduate students in this study intended to return to China but desired some working experience in America. To work in the U.S., these students need an H working visa. Usually, international students study under an F visa. When they graduate, they need a company to apply on their behalf for an H visa. Anytime an H visa holder changes a job, he or she needs a new H visa, and more than two weeks lag time in between results in having to leave the U.S. In a strong economy, companies are willing to hire international students. Since the 2008 economic recession, the federal government has imposed rules and regulations making it difficult for American companies to hire internationals who do not have American citizenship or permanent residency.

Acculturation Strategies

The study site is a university located in a midwestern town of 50,000 people. Most American students of this university are from rural areas with a locally-focused mindset; many had limited travel experiences, whether nationally or internationally. All study participants reported that the American students did not know much about China and tended not to be interested in China. On some occasions, the participants experienced discrimination. Sometimes the participants spent time with American students. Sometimes they spent time with Chinese students. Those who plan to return to China immediately after their graduation spent even more time with Chinese students.

Coping Strategies and Resources

In terms of coping strategies, students used problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. In particular, the participants developed skills to cope with stressful situation, which was reported as change in their acculturation as reported in research question three. The students

who came after high school tended to use avoidance-orientation approaches, perhaps because they lacked problem-solving capabilities or they did not have enough friends to ask for help.

Although the participants could choose any major without financial restrictions, their choice often included consideration of its language demand. This agrees with the literature on graduate international students' choice of academic discipline. In general, disciplines based on science and technology are less language demanding and therefore more popular. Social sciences, humanities, and education require more language ability and cultural understanding so are often less popular choices.

Regarding the participants' awareness of resources for help, they reported that they had relied on their friends or roommates, especially their Chinese friends. They indicated that they were not aware of university support resources.

The Office of Student Affairs tends to refer study-abroad students inquiring help to the International Student Center. However, students reported that the location of the International Student Center on the outskirts of campus made them feel exiled, in a sense. They said they tended not to go there unless absolutely necessary and that while culturally helpful, it wasn't academically helpful. As a result, participants said, they felt like they were falling through the cracks.

Some participants also resented the International Student Center's portrayed Taiwan as a nation. This perceived insensitivity alienated them from the center.

Social Support

The participants expressed awareness of support services offered by religious organizations, but they were reluctant to seek these services because they did not want to be subject to proselytizing attempts.

Societal Attitudes: Prejudice and Discrimination

Among the six study participants, three of them had first-hand experiences of being discriminated against. The other three knew friends who were discriminated against. Participants perceived that lack of international experiences and knowledge about other cultures led American students to discriminate. These experiences made students feel unsafe and led them to seek support and friendship from fellow Chinese students.

Other Factors Affecting Acculturation

Chinese Economic Growth and Social Problems

China's 1978 economic reform led to economic growth in the 1990s, when the study participants were born. These students' parents benefited from Chinese economic reform to the point that they could afford sending their children to study in the U.S.

Participant B said,

My education would cost my parents more than RMB \$1million. But my mom said, my dad's salary is enough for my expenses. I don't waste their money. I bought some brandy bags, like LV, Gucci, but those are very common among Chinese students.

However, Chinese economic growth has created numerous problems in China such as air pollution and corruption, problems widely broadcasted by western media. Because one main principle of Confucianism is loyalty, the participants became more patriotic when facing foreign media's criticism.

Change in America's Global Influence

During the participants' growing-up years in China, America was the major influence on the world stage. They ate at McDonalds, spoke English, played American games, listened to American music, wore American brands, and watched American movies. As participant A said, "people said we are the generation believe that American's moon is rounder than China." To that end, the participants were open to many aspects of the American way of life, especially

perceptions of sexuality that contradicted what Participant E called Chinese “conservative and backward” views.

In other respects, however, participants’ assumptions about America’s greatness were challenged. Given their assumptions about America’s greatness, the participants expected it to be even more exciting than metropolitan China. But coming to a mid-west American college town where most students are from rural areas and many have never been out of the state or the country made them wonder, as participant E asked, “is America as great as we thought?” Further compounding their newfound uncertainty about America was America’s economic slide and revelations about the Iraq war.

Implications

As a growing population among international students studying in American universities, Chinese undergraduate students face challenges similar to Chinese graduate students, such as language barrier, cultural differences and academic stress. Unlike Chinese graduate students, Chinese undergraduate students, who are often from well-to-do families, experience less financial stress. However, growing up as only children, Chinese undergraduates may lack life and social skills, deficits that contribute to significant relationship stress. All these show that Chinese undergraduate students need assistance with integrating into American campus and achieving their educational goals.

American universities have been improving their service to Chinese undergraduate students, but there is still room for growth. Based on the findings and the perceptions of the researcher, the following suggestions are for American university administrators, professors, American students, and Chinese undergraduate students.

Recommendations for American university administrators

1. Universities would do well to foster university-wide learning about the cultures from which international students come; for the purposes of this study, this means the Chinese culture. With globalization, American students, faculty, staff, and administrators all need to learn about other cultures, especially those cultures brought to their doorsteps. Without this learning, the university community as a whole will not be able to serve Chinese undergraduate students in a culturally-informed way. For university students, more elective courses on China should be offered. For faculty and staff, especially those who will work with Chinese undergraduate students directly, lectures, seminars, and workshops on Chinese culture should be offered so that they have a better understanding of the population they are working with. This will help create a friendly and welcoming environment for Chinese undergraduate students.
2. Programs in fostering language learning and culture exchange should be established during first two years, such as language partners, international cultural exchange buddies. In such programs, each Chinese student can be paired up with an American student. As the study has shown, Chinese undergraduate students have significant language problems and cultural challenges during the first two years.
3. The university should provide some training on life-management, study skills and relationship skills to Chinese undergraduate students, especially those who came soon after high school and during high school. As the study indicated, these students particularly had stressors in these areas in the first two years.

4. Making service more visible and accessible to Chinese undergraduate students. The study shows that Chinese undergraduate students are not aware of university services on campus. Academic advisors, counseling, and other service providers should work together. Each of these service offices belongs to different departments and is located in different buildings. Chinese undergraduate students coming from a different education system don't know these services exist and how to find them. Information should be made available at any contact point where Chinese undergraduate students may go. No matter where the students go first, the students should be able to get all the information there.
5. Universities should require certain scores on English exams and basic college qualification exams before admitting Chinese undergraduate students to ensure the selection of highly qualified students. Due to Chinese education system issues and education agents' function, universities should watch the admission procedure more carefully, especially universities that do not require TOEFL exams: systematic examination is needed before the students come to reduce challenges for students and for faculty and staff.
6. Special attention should be devoted to providing career services. This study shows that Chinese undergraduate students have stress from job seeking in the U.S. and in China. For job seeking in the U.S., their knowledge on American society and American industries is very limited. The government-imposed employment rules and regulations require special career advisors for Chinese undergraduate students and other international students. This service would help link degree holders and the real world. Since majority students have intention to go back to China, a career specialist

- with cultural knowledge can be helpful in helping students with reverse cultural shock and look for jobs in Chinese market. Without proper transiting students back to the original culture, it will hurt the purpose of studying abroad. This service will elevate university's service and reputation.
7. Universities should fully utilize senior Chinese graduate students and Chinese faculty as resources to help with acculturation. Senior Chinese graduate students have already navigated the American education system and could offer helpful guidance. Graduate assistant positions could be created for Chinese graduate students to help Chinese undergraduate students. Chinese faculty, once students, have even more first-hand knowledge about dealing with the challenges these students face. Helping Chinese undergraduate students could be counted as a part of Chinese faculty's service responsibilities to the department.
 8. Universities should work with community organizations to help international students. Some of the needs can't be met by universities alone, such as looking for apartments, getting furniture, and getting public transportation. Whole community effort is needed.

Recommendations for university professors

1. Professors are advised to learn more about the culture and backgrounds of undergraduate Chinese students. Professors could do more to internationalize the curriculum and possibly illustrate course content with examples from China and other cultures so that students can better understand the contents of the teaching. Doing so will help the students better connect with the professors and thus improve learning.

2. Professors who work with Chinese students are advised to learn about the special challenges faced by Chinese undergraduate students. Under the influence of Chinese culture, most Chinese undergraduate students are afraid of bothering professors or lack the communication skills to connect with professors. Professors can be more attentive to Chinese undergraduate students' difficulties.
3. Professors also need to be familiar with university services so that they can refer students appropriately, whether the needs are related to study skills, life skills, relationship skills, or career services.

Recommendations for Chinese Undergraduate Students

1. Before coming to the U.S., Chinese undergraduate students and parents should learn more about what is involved in studying in the U.S. English language study is still as important as it has always been. Additionally, students need to learn more about cultural differences and improving their study skills, life-skills, and relationship skills.
2. Do a thorough self-analysis about the feasibility of studying abroad. Studying abroad is not for everyone. Students who can't live independently in a different culture should study in China or in a country with a similar culture, such as Japan or Korea.

Future Research

This study is limited to only six Chinese undergraduate students, and differences in students' geographic origins were not taken into consideration. Future studies could compare Chinese undergraduate students from different areas of China to see if there is significant difference between students from different areas of China in facing and coping with challenges.

This study is limited to one midwestern American university. More universities Chinese undergraduate students attend should be included in future studies to see if the challenges are consistent across universities. At the same time, as more and more international undergraduate students are coming to the U.S., future studies could compare international undergraduate students from different countries to see if there are any similarities in their acculturation process.

This study only considers the individual factors affecting students' acculturation. A more comprehensive study using both group-level factors and individual-level factors based on the theoretical framework should be conducted to have a better understanding of this special population. Also, a study examine this population from a different theoretical perspective is recommended to understand this population.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study based on the conceptual framework and comparison of the literature of Chinese graduate students. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are made to the universities administration and professors to improve the service and teaching. Recommendations are also made for future Chinese undergraduate students who are preparing to study in the U.S. This chapter provided a deep understanding of the problems Chinese undergraduate students faced. Future research is recommended to further investigate this special population.

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Appendix A - Interview Protocol

- I. Interviewee Codes and Pseudonyms:** _____
- II. Interview Location:** _____
- III. Interview Time: from** _____ **to** _____

Section One:

Interviewer: This section is about who you are and where you are from.

1. Tell me about yourself:

Name(Nickname):	Age:
Close family relationships:	Hometown:
Visa status:	Take TOEFL test or other tests?
High school completed in China or in the US?	College in China, major and how long did you study in China (if applicable)
Major in the U.S. Which year are you in college? When are you graduating?	

Section Two

Interviewer: now let us move to your experience in the U.S.

Explain acculturation

Interview Protocol

- I. Moderating Factors prior to Students' Acculturation
1. Age, Gender, Education, Pre-acculturation
- (1) What kind of education background did you have when you were in China and how did that affect your experience in the U.S.?

- (2) What motivated you come to the U.S.?
- (3) Coming to America was your parents' decision or your decision?
- (4) How did you choose K-state?
- (5) Did you use agents to apply for school? How much did you pay?
- (6) What did you know about America before you come?
- (7) What did you know about Manhattan before you come?

2. Status, Migration Motivation, Expectations

- (1) What was your academic performance when you were in China?
- (2) What was your social life like when you were in China?
- (3) What expectations did you have for yourself academically in the U.S. before you came to the U.S.?
- (4) What expectations did you have for yourself socially in the U.S. before you came to the U.S.?
- (5) What expectations did your parents have for you, academically, socially, before you came to the U.S.?

3. Cultural Distance (Langage, Religion, etc)

- (1) How did you prepare your English when you were in China before you came to the U.S.?
- (2) What knowledge did you have in religion in China?
- (3) What religion did you practice when you were in China?
- (4) How do you make friends when you were in China?
- (5) What dating experience did you have when you were in China?

4. Personality (Locus of control, flexibility) self-efficacy

- (1) What kind of personality would you say you have, open, flexible, or close, rigid?
- (2) What do you do if you encounter setback in your life?

II. Moderating Factors during Students' Acculturation

1. Phrase (length of time)

- (1) How long have you been in the U.S.?

2. Acculturation Strategies: Attitudes & Behaviors

- (1) What are your biggest challenges in the U.S.?

Academic adjustment (reference: Frank 2000; Li, 1993, Lin 1998, Wang 2004,)

- a. Language deficiency
- b. Financial difficulty
- c. Differences between the Chinese and American educational systems
 - class selection
 - Classroom atmosphere
 - Teaching strategy & learning styles
 - Teacher-student relationships
 - Academic evaluations

Social adjustment

- a. Communication in academia and out of academia
- b. Friendship
- c. Entertainment and relaxation
- d. Housing, shopping, banking, etc
- e. Religion
- f. Dating and love relationship

- g. Visa
- h. Job
- i. immigration

Psychological adjustment

- a. Homesickness/friendsickness

--How much do you miss your family or friends in China?

--How do you contact them?

--How often do you contact them?

(2) What pressures, in general, do you have in your personal or academic life in the U.S.?

3. Coping Strategies & resources

(1) How did you cope with the stressful situation? Task orientation, emotion orientation or avoidance orientation?

(2) What are your resources for help? Friends and family in China, Chinese friends in the US or American friends in the U.S., faculty or university?

(3) What school resources have you used for help?

(4) How did the stressful situation turn out?

4. Society Attitudes: Prejudice & Discrimination

(1) What kind of prejudice and discrimination do you think the U.S. has in general?

(2) What kind of prejudice and discrimination have you experienced in the U.S.?

(3) What did you do about the prejudice and discrimination?

5. Questions about change:

What perception changes did you have in the U.S.?

6. Evaluation

- (1) What is your evaluation of your study abroad experience in the U.S. (worthwhile? Will you do it again if you can go back to the time? Would you recommend it to your friends or other Chinese students?)
- (2) What do you want to do after graduation? To return to China or to stay in the U.S.?
- (3) If you use one or two sentences to describe your experience in the U.S., what will it be?
- (4) What suggestions would you give to other Chinese students to prepare for studying in the U.S.?
- (5) What suggestions would you give to the university to improve their assistance to students like you?

Appendix B - IRB Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: **Exploring Chinese Undergraduate Students Experience in in the U.S.**

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: **December 1, 2012**

EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT: **March 1, 2013**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Robert Shoop

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Wei Wu

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

Dr. Robert Shoop 785-532-5533; or Wei Wu 785-532-7359

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION: *(This information is for the subject in case he/she has questions, or needs or wants to discuss any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB)*

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.
- Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of the dissertation study is to discover and explore Chinese undergraduate students experience in the U.S. To understand what stressors they have encountered and how they cope with the stress; what changes have happened in them and how they evaluate their experience in the U.S. Hopefully the research will provide useful information to administrators, educators and professionals to make effective policies to meet the needs of international students, and help them to make a successful transition to American academic and cultural environment.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: The researcher will conduct semi-constructed interviews with Chinese undergraduate students, faculty and advisors who worked with Chinese students and students' parents to explore their experience in the U.S. The interview will last about 1-2 hours. Each interview will be audio-taped and complemented with note-taking. The students' participants will be given an opportunity to review and check the transcripts related to them. There will not be any payment involved.

LENGTH OF STUDY: 1 to 2 hours

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: No known risks

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Participating in the research will help students raise self-awareness in their experience in the U.S. and thus help them make conscious choice in adjustment to the U.S. environment.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Individuals and their responses will not be identified or attributed in the records. In transcription of the audio-recording, any references to participant names will be replaced. Tapes will not be duplicated and remain in the possession of the researchers only.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION:

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Witness to Signature (project staff) _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C - Certification by a Professional Translator

Minlingua Translation

16-8Cannon St. E.
Hamilton ON L8L 1Z5, Canada
Tel: +1(646) 727 9383
Email: project@minlingua.com

Certificate of Accuracy

I, Minran Pu, hereby certify that the English translation of the Chinese document presented, to the best of my abilities, to be true, accurate and complete. I further certify that I am competent in both English and Chinese to certify such translation.

SIGNITURE:



Project Manager,
Minlingua Translation Services

Minran Pu

FULL LEGAL NAME

Date: March 15, 2013

Appendix D - Probing Sessions with Participants

I. What happened during your years at the university?

First year:

1. What significant stressful situation or events happened during your first year?
2. What did you do about it?
3. Give me some specific examples?

Second year:

1. What significant stressful situation or events happened during your second year?
2. What did you do about it?
3. Give me some specific examples?

Third year:

1. What significant stressful situation or events happened during your third year?
2. What did you do about it?
3. Give me some specific examples?

Fourth year:

1. What significant stressful situation or events happened during your fourth year?
2. What did you do about it?
3. Give me some specific examples?

II. Clarification

1. (Going through the transcripts), what do you mean bycan you give me examples of...?
2. Tell me some observation you have had among the Chinese students?

Appendix E - Sample of Probing Sessions Notes and Translation

(Participant A)

Date: Feb. 18, 2013 Location: library Participant A

第一年

ELP 不太好 (厌学 不想学) 不知道怎么办。
不上学。需要心理导师

→ 压力来源: 学习

高中学习压力太多。生活不均衡。

别人父母老师能前推。不自配内在兴趣。

→ 压力来源: 室友相处 (90后。年龄相差 2-3岁)

个人特点不同。

生活习惯不同。

爸妈与他相处很少。家庭关系不好

性格。情绪不好。

接触当地人, 近距离高接触

宿舍环境好

生活上有很多困难。做饭。洗衣服。起床都能做点事。
→ 压力来源 英语环境, 说太多从来没听过这么多英语。

「上次你说的英语有很大挑战。你指这些吗？」

「对。自己说。和听别人说 (→ 等会儿, 问 example)」

你能举一些例子: 我听英语时, 反应比较慢。我需要一些时间才能反应过来。或者把英语翻译成中文, 但是等我翻译完前半句, 后半句他们已经说完了

所以就收听到。结果整句就过去了。我就不懂了。

“有时候他们用一些新词汇我也听不懂了，

如果他们说的词只有一两个生词的话，我还可以猜一下，但是如果有两三个，我就听不懂了。

我说英语的时候，我必须花一些时间去想我用哪些词汇，我说得很慢，当我讲句子或句子词汇的时候经常断断续续。因为我不知道我应该用什么词汇，我不能用英语完整的表达我的想法或是说的事情。

① 开始上大学。

→ 压力。上海听不懂，张老师无法交流，张同学也听不懂英语，很郁闷。

→ 压力。跟美国同学在一起，说话有障碍，我有一些中文笑话，他们觉得不好笑。他们讲美国笑话，我也觉得不好笑。

→ 压力 吃饭也不习惯。我有一个中国男，我及次习惯这边的沙拉或高汉堡。我觉得吃完美国食物以后好像跟吃饭一样。

A

1. 我在中国的时候从来没有说过或者听过这么多的英文。现在突然间生活中处处都要用英文。出去吃饭，买书，看电视，听课等等，所有的东西都是英文的，有点让人喘不过来气。
2. 我不能用理解中文的方式去理解英文。我需要一些时间去把英文翻译成中文后才能理解。我觉得美国人说英文说得太快了，他们说话的时候第一句话我上半句还没翻译完，美国人已经把下半句说完了，然后我就听不懂了。有些时候美国人用一些比较新颖的词汇我就听不懂了，如果他们说得话只有一两个生词的话，我还可以猜一下。但是如果有三四个，我就听明白了。
3. 我在说英语的时候，我必需要花一些时间去想我能用那些词汇，我说得很慢。当我说句子或者是词汇的时候经常断断续续的，因为我不知道我应该用什么词汇。我不能用英语完整的表达我想说的事情。
4. 我有的胃是地地道道的中国胃，我没法习惯这边的沙拉或者汉堡。我觉得吃完美国食物以后就跟没吃饭一样。我很想念中国的饭菜，尽管这里的中国饭菜没有中国的味道，但是我还是不习惯吃生的蔬菜，尤其是西兰花和蘑菇，我还是不习惯吃。
5. 还有一些中文的表达方式。像在饭店里我说“我想吃醋”，人们都笑话我，因为吃醋的另外一层含义是嫉妒。这种表达方式很难翻译给我的美国朋友，当我给他们解释的时候就没那么好笑了。
6. 美国人说共产主义不好。但是我父母和我朋友的父母都是共产党员，整个中国都是共产主义制度，我们也应该觉得不好吗？
7. 和美国人在一起没有和中国人在一起觉得自在。有些时候我会觉得有些冲突。我偶尔会和他们一起玩。如果我有选择的话我更喜欢呆在中国人团体里，因为我不用非得费力的他们互动。
8. 我不会做饭，在家的時候父母从来不用我做饭。不过我会烧热水。
9. 美国人阅读速度很快，我的英语课上老师会布置一些阅读类型的作业，阅读量很大，大概 100 多页。我读不了那么快，我连生词都查不完，太多了，根本读不完。生词太多，我没有办法读得快。
10. 在中国我们都能记得住，我们没有额外的技能，但是我还是能记得住。

11. 有些中国学生不学习就想考试作弊，他们想做你旁边，如果我被抓到帮助他们作弊的话，我会惹上麻烦的。有很多这样的人，以至于现在我都不想认识新的中国人，因为我不知道他们要让我帮他们做什么。
12. 在招聘会上，我在每家公司都问了一下，当他们听说我是国际学生的时候，那些公司连我的简历都不想看。他们和我说他们只招美国学生。很郁闷。
13. 因为来美国，我不得不和我的女朋友分手。因为我也不确定我什么时候能回去。来到美国以后和在这边的女朋友也分手了，因为谁也不能保证我们在同一个城市里工作。如果我们不在一起工作，就一定会分手。
14. 意识到我需要提高我的语言能力后，我开始看英文的电影，交美国朋友来提高我的听力和口语能力。
15. 当我上课听不懂的时候，就坐在那，什么都做不了。我已经尽力了，剩下的就是时间的问题了。
16. 有时候我整天憋在家里打游戏，因为我听不懂，一点上课的心情都没有。
17. 我的英语水平得到了提高。我可以和我的美国朋友交流，而且他们能听得懂，我之前都没法和别人完成一个对话。
18. 在中国，人们每天都很在意着装问题，想像哈韩，英伦风，日系。但是在美国，大多数人每天都穿着体恤衫，牛仔裤，我也习惯了美国人穿衣服的习惯。
19. 天很蓝，空气很新鲜，水质也很好。我不用担心空气污染问题。
20. 貌似能交得起学费的人学校就要，有些中国学生都不应该在大学里出现。有的人还没有上完高中，根本跟不上学习的进度，所以他们不得不作弊，总是找人抱大腿，很烦人。
21. 一切以考试为目的，我们不用知道我们为什么学这个，只需要记住答案，一直背一直记。
22. 有些学生根本不学习，到考试的时候他们就在学习好的学生旁边。
23. 我是独生子女，我需要回中国照顾我的父母。

1. I have never spoken or heard so much English outside classroom when I was in China. Now suddenly everything in life is spoken in English. Buying a meal, buying a book, watching TV, in class...literally, everything is in English, It is overwhelming.
2. I could not understand English the way that I can understand Chinese. I needed some time to translate English into Chinese so that I could understand. The native speakers (Americans) spoke too fast for me. When I was still translating the first half of the sentence in my head, they (Americans) finished the second half of the sentence, which I missed. Then I got lost. Sometimes, they (Americans) used news words that I did not know what they mean. If there were one or two new words in a sentence, I could guess. If there were 3 or 4 new words, I would not be able to understand.
3. When I was speaking, I had to take some time to think of words that I could use. I spoke slowly. I spoke with broken sentences or broken words because I did not know what word I should use in English. I could not fully translate what I wanted to say.
4. I have a “Chinese” stomach. I can’t get used to eating salad or hamburgers. I felt like I was eating nothing if I ate American food. I miss Chinese food a lot. Even the Chinese food here was not like the Chinese food at home. I could not get used to eat the raw vegetables, especially broccoli and mushrooms. I still can’t eat them
5. There is also Chinese way of expression. Like in the restaurant, when I said “I want to eat vinegar,” people all laughed because it was funny in Chinese because it meant I got jealous. It is so hard to explain that to my American friends. When I explained, it lost the fun.
6. They (Americans) say communists are bad. But my parents and my friends’ parents are all communists and the whole country is communist. Are we supposed to feel bad about it?
7. Being around Americans is not as natural as being around Chinese students. I felt conflicted from time to time. Once in a while, I will hang out with them. If I have a choice, I would rather stay with Chinese because I would not have to “work hard” at the interaction
8. I don’t know how to cook. My parents never needed me to cook at home. I could boil some hot water.

9. American students read so fast. My English class would assign some reading, like 100 pages. I can't read that fast. I can't even look up all the vocabularies. It was too many. I read too slowly. I can't be fast because I don't know the words.
10. We all have skills to memorize when we were in China. We don't have any additional skills to use. I still just memorize them.
11. Some Chinese students did not study and they wanted to copy your answers for exams. They requested to sit next to you. I would get into trouble if I got caught helping him. There are a lot of them. Now I do not want to know new Chinese students because I would not know what they would ask me for favor later.
12. I went to every table at the job fair. When they heard me saying that I am an international student, these companies did not even take my resume. They told me that they only hire American students. It is depressing.
13. I had to break up with my girlfriend because I came to America. There was no definite time that I could return. I face the separation again with this current girlfriend because no one could guarantee us to have job in the same city. If we separate, we will have to break up.
14. Knowing that I need to improve my language, I watched English movies and made friends with American students to improve my listening and speaking ability.
15. When I could not understand class, I just sat there. I could not do much about it. I tried the best as I could. Time will help.
16. Sometimes I just played video games all day because I really did not want to go to class. I did not understand.
17. My English ability is improved. I could talk to my American friends and they could understand me better than before. I could not have a conversation back then.
18. In China, people pay a lot of attention to what they wear every day, like Korean style, British style, and Japanese style. In America, most people in daily life just wear T-shirt and Jeans. I got used to the American easy style.
19. The sky is blue. The air is fresh. The water is good. I don't need to worry about air pollution.
20. The university seems to admit anyone that can pay the tuition. Some Chinese students should not be in university. They have not even finished high school. They

could not catch up with the study. They had to cheat through. They kept asking other students to get help. It is bothersome.

21. It is all about exams. We do not know why we are learning. We just need to remember the answers. Memorizing, memorizing, and memorizing.
22. Some students don't study. When exams come, they just sit next to someone who study well
23. I am the only child of my family. I need to go back to look after my parents.

Appendix F - Interview Questions for the faculty and advisors who work with Chinese undergraduate students

The purpose of this interview was to develop interview protocol, not used as data.

1. What sources of stress did you see in Chinese undergraduate students?
2. How did they manage the stress if you have the knowledge?
3. What needs do you see they have?(needs met, and unmet needs)
4. What positive and negative changes did you see in them?
5. How did they evaluate their experience according to your knowledge?
6. What other challenges did you see they have?
7. What recommendations do you have for future Chinese undergraduate students?
8. What recommendations do you have for the university administration in relating to Chinese undergraduate students?