

BECOMING MORE VISIBLE: THE EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE VISITING SCHOLARS
AT A U.S. UNIVERSITY

By

Sara Bano

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education—Doctor of Philosophy

2020

ABSTRACT

BECOMING MORE VISIBLE: THE EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE VISITING SCHOLARS AT A U.S. UNIVERSITY

By

Sara Bano

Despite the increasing number of visiting scholars at U.S. higher education institutions, limited research exists about the experiences and learning process of these visiting scholars. This research study explored the meaning making process of Chinese visiting scholars during their visiting scholars' program at a U.S. university. I used Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory to understand the meaning making process of Chinese visiting scholars. A socio-constructivist qualitative approach helped me to understand the lived experiences of Chinese visiting scholars at a U.S. campus. I employed multi-case study as a research method and applied triangulation techniques for data analysis and interpretations of findings.

The findings of this study suggest that making meaning of cross-cultural learning experiences is a complex process. Although this study used Transformative Learning Theory as the lens to understand these cross-cultural learning experiences, the participants of this study made meaning of their visiting scholars' experiences through economic, social, and cultural perspectives. The participants used their sense of self, relationships, language, reflection, and agency to make meaning of their experiences. Their meaning making process was of a developmental nature. Their sense of self was deeply rooted in Chinese socio-cultural values and was affected by globalization and market forces. Their conceptualization of learning was relational and moralistic. They used language as a context and as a tool for self-development and meaning making simultaneously. Agency helped to shape their experiences to achieve their goals and attain their desired levels of self-development. They employed reflection to constantly refer back to their

existing meaning frames and to give meanings to their new experiences. This experience helped Chinese visiting scholars expand their perspectives, however, it is hard to claim based on the findings of this study that Chinese visiting scholars considered this experience transformative, since they did not report any significant change in their meaning frames and behaviors after their return to China. Overall, they considered this experience an opportunity for self-development which included professional growth, perspective expansion, and claims to global citizenship.

The implications from this study indicate need for further exploration of learning and the meaning making process in cross-cultural contexts, particularly, there is a need for better understanding of the underlying socio-cultural frameworks which shape these experiences. Also, there is a need to further explore the concepts and phenomenon of transformation in relation to cross-cultural experiences in order to better facilitate and create more meaningful and deeper learning experiences in international and cross-cultural settings.

Copyright by
SARA BANO
2020

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother who gave me wings to soar!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I think completing a doctorate degree is not merely an academic pursuit, but an emotional, spiritual, and intellectual journey. Being an international student, I had my fair share of challenges and hurdles in this process. I was very fortunate to have a supportive community at Michigan State University where my teachers, friends, and colleagues supported me in numerous ways and helped me to grow as a person and as a scholar and I will forever remain in debt to all these people who believed in me and supported me in my life journey.

I would especially like to thank Prof. John Dirkx, my advisor, my teacher, my guru who has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He not only taught me the skills and knowledge to excel in my academic life but also showed me how to be a good human being. He taught me lessons of life that will last with me forever and I hope I can be half as good an advisor to my students as he was to me. I am also deeply grateful to my Dissertation Committee members Prof. Roger Baldwin, Prof. Marilyn Amy, and Prof. Lynn Paine for their unprecedented support for me. Each one of them has provided me extensive personal and professional guidance and taught me a great deal about both academic research and life in general. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for their care, consideration, kindness, and of course for all the intellectual stimulation and valuable feedback on my work. They believed in me and remained my biggest cheerleaders throughout my PhD program. Certainly, I could not make it without their unwavering support.

I appreciate the support of my friends from the College of Education who provided me intellectual guidance, helped me with day to day life affairs, shared with me numerous fun-filled lovely moments brimming with life and joy. In particular, Idris Abubakar and Sarah Fitzgerald stood by me in every single step of my PhD journey. Sarah remained my constant reviewer and

editor who never fell behind in giving me her feedback on each and every writing draft. My thanks also go to my friends Elizabeth Gill, Taeyeon Kim, Kris Windorski, and Lisa Domke who listened to my ideas and provided their feedback whenever I needed. I am so grateful for these lifelong friendships which came as a bonus of my doctorate journey.

I would also like to thank all the Chinese visiting scholars, (years 2016-2019) for sharing their stories with me, student mentors for talking to me about their experiences, and faculty mentors for opening their classrooms for me. I also want to thank the Office of International Scholars in Education (OISE)'s administration and staff members for welcoming me in academic, social and cultural events organized by OISE. This research project would not have been possible without their help and support.

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank my mother; whose love and faith in me kept me going regardless of all the challenges and hurdles I faced in this process. Although we were thousands of miles apart, her daily video calls and poetry kept me alive. I am forever grateful for her love and her presence in my life. I also want to thank my sister Ammara, who is another source of constant joy and positivity in my life. I also thank Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta, a friend, a mentor, a guide who believed in me and stood by me in all challenging situations.

In the end, this work would not have been possible without the financial support of the College of Education through several fellowships and grants, the Asian Studies Center, the Graduate School, and funds from CIES, AAACE, and NAFSA for presenting this work in national and international forums.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Difference between Visiting Scholars and Other International Students	7
Definition of International Visiting Scholars.....	9
Elements of Visiting Scholar Programs	10
Conceptual Framework	12
Research Questions	13
Significance of the Study	13
Terms	16
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
History of U.S.-China Education Exchange	17
First Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1872-1881)	20
The Second Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1909-1929).....	24
Third Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1978-present)	26
Chinese Visiting Scholars and Exchange Programs	27
Experiences of Chinese Students in Foreign Countries	29
Experiences of Visiting Scholars at American Campuses	31
Educational Exchange Programs between China & the U. S.: Concerns	35
Theoretical Framework	39
Transformative Learning Theory	40
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	44
Qualitative Multi-Case Study Research Design	44
Research Paradigm.....	45
Case Study	46
Exploratory Case Study	47
Multi-Case Study	48
Qualitative Approach	48
Data Collection	49
Institutional Review Board	50
Research Site.....	50
Case Selection	51
Data Collection Tools	51
Semi-structured interviews	52
Observations	53
Focus group.....	54

Reflection papers	54
Documentation	55
Data Analysis	56
Working Data from the Ground up	56
Case Description & Explanation in Chronological Sequence	58
Cross Case Synthesis	59
Validating Data	61
Data Source Triangulation	62
Investigator Triangulation	62
Methodological Triangulation	63
Theory Triangulation	63
Researcher's Position	63
Limitations	66
 CHAPTER 4: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	 69
Program Goals	69
Program Structure and Activities	70
Orientation	70
Mentors	70
Weekly Lectures	71
Classes	76
School Visits	77
International Breakfast and Potluck	78
Cross Campus International Programs	79
Living Arrangements	80
Other Activities	80
Research Project Presentations	81
 CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS	 83
Lucy: A Passionate Teacher and Lifelong Learner	84
Life before the Visiting Scholar Program	84
Life during the Visiting Scholar Program	86
Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program	107
Wei Fei: An Aspiring Academic & A Traditional Chinese Man	109
Life before the Visiting Scholar Program	110
Life during the Visiting Scholar Program	116
Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program	128
Emily: A Free-Spirited Explorer	130
Life before the Visiting Scholar Program	130
Life during the Visiting Scholar Program	134
Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program	146
 CHAPTER 6: CROSS CASE SYNTHESIS	 149
Making Meaning of International Visiting Scholars	150
Self at the Core	150
Relationships	161

English Language.....	168
Reflection.....	176
Freedom and Agency	182
Conclusion	185
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION.....	187
Meaning Making of Chinese Visiting Scholars' Experiences as Self-Development	188
Meaning Making from a Socio-Economic Perspective	191
Meaning Making from Socio-Cultural Perspectives.....	197
Meaning Making and Transformative Learning Theory	205
Conclusion	211
Implications for Practice	212
Implications for Scholarship	214
APPENDICES	216
APPENDIX A: Research Participant Information and Consent Form	217
APPENDIX B: Entry Interview Protocol for Chinese Visiting Scholars	219
APPENDIX C: Departure Interview Protocol for Chinese Visiting Scholars.....	221
APPENDIX D: Online Interview Protocol after returning to China	223
REFERENCES	225

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Percentage of Chinese students studying in the U. S. under various funding types (Li, 2005). Table created by Sara Bano	27
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Percentage of Chinese Scholars who returned to China from the U.S. (Li, 2005). Figure created by Sara Bano	38
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Most days, I wonder around feeling invisible. Like I am a speck of dust floating in the air.”

— (Anonymous)

It was the first class of spring semester on a late afternoon of January after a severe snowstorm, which had knocked down many trees and caused quite a havoc in people’s lives in a small Midwestern town. The classroom was chilly and dark, maybe due to low-hanging dark clouds or maybe due to the dark wood interior, which sucked all the light out of the room. The professor hurriedly entered the classroom and glanced at the students, mostly white Americans and a few Asian and African Americans. They did not seem very pleased with the old, dark classroom, but looked eager to know the professor and what the class had to offer. Since the professor was already fifteen minutes late, she decided to start the class with introductions and discussion of the syllabus.

The introductions started, and they proceeded quickly, until a Chinese student stood up when it was her turn to introduce herself. She stood there, and a few seconds slipped by, but still there was complete silence. The teacher asked her what her name was. She said, “My Chinese name is 美风 (Meifeng), but my English name is Jenny. You can call me Jenny.” The professor asked again what her Chinese name was and insisted that she would prefer to use her Chinese name instead of her English name in the class. The Chinese student seemed very apologetic for bearing such a difficult name that was so hard to pronounce for her American teacher and class fellows, but the professor started repeating her name and after five more attempts got it right.

I was thinking how complicated this small ritual of introduction had become for both the professor and the Chinese student. Both were trying hard to comply with each other’s cultures, one

trying hard to make her name American, and the other by insisting on keeping it Chinese. The class seemed fidgety and bored with this minutes-long name practice activity.

The professor next asked the student about her research interest and once again, the room fell into deep silence. All eyes were on the Chinese student, who seemed terribly confused and lost. She mustered her courage and, in broken English, said that she was a visiting scholar from a Southern University (pseudonym) and was here to study for six months. It took her a while to produce these two coherent sentences, and I could feel the restlessness in room. The professor moved on to discussing syllabus. For the rest of the six months, Meifeng hardly ever spoke in the class and hardly anyone tried to talk to her. If at times she missed classes, nobody even noticed and with time, it seemed as if she slowly became invisible in the American classroom. After six months, she left and almost faded from our memory as no one ever mentioned her.

Almost every semester, in one of my classes we have had a Chinese visiting scholar who mostly remained invisible. As an international doctoral student studying higher education, I always had questions in my mind about why these scholars choose to come to study in a country where the language of instruction, teaching pedagogy and even the research is very different and what they learn from their short-term international exchange experiences. How do they make sense of these experiences during their stay at foreign campuses and how do they use these experiences on their return to their home countries?

Statement of the Problem

The number of international and particularly Chinese students at American campuses has increased enormously in the past two decades (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2015). According to Institute of International Education (2015), in the 2014/15 academic year, the number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities had the highest rate of growth in 35 years, increasing by ten

percent to a record high of 974,926 students. In fact, 50% of all international students come from mainland China, India, and South Korea (Institute of International Education, 2015). According to Institute of International Education (2015), Chinese students represent the highest numbers of international students in the U.S. since the United States attracted 304,040 Chinese international students, which comprised 32% of the international student population in the USA. One subgroup of these international students is comprised of “visiting scholars,” Chinese visiting scholars represent a unique group within the larger population of international students. According to the Chinese Scholarship Committee (2002, 2010) the number of Chinese scholars in the U.S. institutions increased from 2,044 in 1996 to 13,038 in 2004, and in the past 15 years more than 84,000 Chinese visiting scholars have studied in the West (Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). By far, Chinese visiting scholars in the U. S. make up the largest population among visiting scholars and they are increasing in number. Despite the fact that this group is rapidly expanding on foreign campuses, research about who they are, and their experiences abroad remain scarce.

This increase in the numbers of international students at American campuses is often understood and explained by scholars and practitioners of higher education from a neo-liberal perspective. From the neoliberal perspective, this growth is a result of an increasingly knowledge-based global economy (Altbach, 2002; Altbach & Knight, 2007). Where international education is perceived as a market and international students are considered a source of economic growth for sending and host societies. Olssen and Peters (2005) consider “neoliberalism as a dimension of globalization” and argue that “In a global neoliberal environment, the role of higher education for the economy is seen by governments as having greater importance to the extent that higher education has become the new star ship in the policy fleet for governments around the world and universities are seen as a key driver in the knowledge economy” (p, 313). This state of affairs has

created a number of stakeholders in international education such as governments, institutions of higher education, students and faculty. Governments and institutions are constantly pushing to increase the number and scope of international education programs through increasing the number of international students and the number of study abroad and exchange programs. The interest of the U.S. government and higher education institutions in international education and creating more international experiences for foreign students and scholars is not limited to creating a global workforce and strengthening political ties with other countries. There is a major economic gain for the U.S. in attracting more international students and visiting scholars. In 2007, international education became the fifth largest U.S. service sector export (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). As Ku, Lahman, Yeh, and Cheng (2008) argued, there are numerous benefits of recruiting and retaining high caliber international students to United States postsecondary institutions. International students not only contribute in the U.S. economy significantly each year, but they also bring their cultures and different perspectives, which influence the culture, environment, and learning experiences on American campuses. International students also bring different academic culture and create a global academic community, both as graduate students and faculty (Association of American Universities, 1998; Trice, 2001). Trice (2001) argues that international collaborations and connections between institutions and organizations can be promoted by recruiting international students. Also, international students can be effective ambassadors to present a positive image of the U.S. after their return to their home countries (Ebersole, 1999).

Similarly, for the Chinese government, sending students and scholars abroad for education was historically a part of economic and military development. This is especially true in the case of Chinese visiting scholars studying in America after 1978 (Bevis, 2014; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). The Chinese government created international exchange programs in the 1970s and started

sending Chinese university professors to western countries to create a world-level academic community and build world-class universities to meet the needs of socioeconomic and scientific development (Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). Since China's reopening to the world in the late 1970s, many Chinese visiting scholars have been sent to Western countries to meet the increasing needs of China's socioeconomic and scientific development (Huang, 2012).

The Chinese and U.S. governments claim mutual benefits of international exchange programs; however, scholars in the field of international higher education criticize and challenge these claims. However, Altbach (2004) accepts the idea of globalization as a source of growth to some extent, saying, "Globalization encourages these flows and will ensure that growth continues. As academic systems become more similar and academic degrees more widely accepted internationally, as immigration rules are tailored to people with high skill levels, and as universities themselves are more open to hiring the best talent worldwide, the global marketplace will expand" (p.12). (Altbach, 2004) also challenges the economic benefits of these international exchange experiences for sending countries by claiming that it is mainly benefiting the North because students' mobility flows to the North from the South. The students from developing countries pay a large amount of tuition money, which is almost equal to the foreign aid these countries receive. These exchange experiences lead to immigration of global talent from South to North and large numbers of the most talented academics from developing countries move to work in the North. (Altbach, 2004) further questions the benefits associated with the international academic experiences these students get, when they return home with "a desire to transform their universities" after their training abroad proves to be "unrealistic and unattainable" (p.12). International students and scholars serve as carriers of an international academic culture, a culture that reflects the norms and values of major metropolitan universities and which in many ways lacks

relevance to the developing world. These are serious concerns and it is very important to find out the experiences of these international students and visiting scholars to study in the United States.

As a result of neo-liberal interpretation of international education experiences international students have been perceived by host countries as customers. Due to the customer perspective on international students at foreign campus, the experiences of international students have been studied from an adjustment paradigm (Zhu, 2016). In the past two decades, many studies have focused on the experiences of international students and the challenges they face at foreign campuses (Ackers, 1997; Andrade, 2006; Coles & Swami, 2012; Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Lewthwaite, 1996; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2007; Zhou & Todman, 2008). As the forces of globalization increased, however, China sent larger number of their students to study at American campuses, shifting the scholarly interest to Chinese international students (Sun & Chen, 1997; Li, 2005; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Li, 2014). These studies demonstrate that international students experience considerable pressure to navigate new systems, learn a new language, and create social and academic networks, reflecting the prominence of globalization and neo-liberalism in international education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Altbach & Knight, 2007). So, there is a need to fill the void of information about visiting scholars' experiences at foreign campuses. Also, I believe we need to move beyond the adjustment paradigm and neo-liberal perspectives that have been used in the past to conceptualize the experiences of international students because they limit the scope and impact of these experiences to mere monetary benefits. In the literature Chinese students and scholars are perceived and presented in a certain stereotypical way without diving deep into their cultural value system. These experiences are studied as separate segments without considering human experience as holistic and deeply embedded into their cultural norms and values. So, this study is an attempt to move theory and

practice to a different direction by focusing on how Chinese visiting scholars perceived and made sense of the experiences and activities in which they were engaged while at their host institution. It examines how they made meaning of their experiences and how their encounter with different people and cultures influenced their lives.

Difference between Visiting Scholars and Other International Students

Although visiting scholars are a different population from other international students, exchange students, and study abroad students, most of them face similar challenges of language, transitioning, navigating, and adjusting to different academic and social cultures of the host countries (Howe, 2008; Zhao, 2008; Shimmi, 2014; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). There are many studies available about the experiences of international students, study abroad, and exchange students, but visiting scholars remain a neglected sub-group among other international students (Zhao, 2008; Shimmi, 2014; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015), so there is need have a clear understanding what it entails to be a visiting scholar. In this section, I will describe the differences between visiting scholars and other types of international students because I think it is important to clarify the difference between different types of students and scholars who visit foreign countries for different programs and how these programs are different than visiting scholar programs.

International visiting scholars are different from international students, although they may share some similar challenges at foreign campuses. "An international student is defined as an individual who is enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in the U.S. on a temporary visa, and who is not an immigrant (permanent resident with an I-51 or Green Card), or an undocumented immigrant, or a refugee" (The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006).

International visiting scholar programs are different from study abroad, since study abroad is usually used for students going abroad to learn about the culture and language of other countries. The students who participate in study abroad programs are enrolled in universities and can receive academic credit for their study abroad experience. The duration of a study abroad program may last from one week to a semester. Study abroad programs are also offered at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The visa requirement for these programs depends on the visa and immigration policy of the host country.

International visiting scholars are different from exchange students since exchange programs host students from secondary school to the graduate level. These exchange programs focus on language learning, cultural exchange, and learning about the history and cultural values of different countries. These programs focus on foreign language learning, and on service learning. Students are able to receive academic credit and usually these programs' duration ranges from one week to three months for short term and six months to a year for long term. For long term, students may be required to get an F-1 or J-1 visa.

International visiting scholars are different from international postdocs since a postdoc is a paid position and international postdocs are considered foreign university employees, which is different than visiting scholars and researcher positions, which are externally funded by the sending institution, organization, government, or at times self-funded by international visiting scholars. Although visiting scholars are a different population from other international students, exchange students, and study abroad students, most of them face similar challenges of language, transitioning, navigating, and adjusting to different academic and social cultures of the host countries (Howe, 2008; Zhao, 2008; Shimmi, 2014; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). There are many studies available about the experiences of international students, study abroad, and exchange

students, but visiting scholars remain an unattended sub-group among other international students (Zhao, 2008; Shimmi, 2014; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015).

Definition of International Visiting Scholars

It is hard to define the term “visiting scholars”, since their selection, funding, time in foreign countries, field of study, and the purpose of study abroad has changed over the time. Shimmi (2014) defined international visiting scholars as scholars who maintain their affiliation with their home institutions while they are studying at a foreign university and return home after their stay. They engage in academic activity such as research, study, and teaching at a foreign university with non-degree seeking status for a limited period of time. They usually hold a graduate degree or are trained in a professional field prior to their visit. Shimmi (2014) mentioned that there are other terms to describe international visiting scholars such as “*visiting researchers, visiting professors, visiting fellows, and visiting scientists*” (p.3).

Zhao (2008) used the term “sojourn” in his study for visiting scholars. According to Zhao (2008), a sojourner is different from other types of travelers, tourists, and immigrants and spends a medium length of time (six months to five years) at a place with intent to return home. They have specific goals and motives. Zhao (2008) also explained the difference between visiting scholars and undergraduate and graduate students. According to Zhao (2008), visiting scholars already hold a degree, have been trained in the area of their specialty, and are sojourning for a short time. They are sponsored by a host institution for J-1 visa requirements. They are not required to take an English standardized test, finish course work, or take classes, and their primary aim is to advance their research while working closely with the faculty from the host institution. Their duration of stay is tied to their funding; therefore, they are under a great deal of external and internal stress to achieve their research goals.

Literature about visiting scholars is limited, so to better understand the concept of visiting scholars and the scope of their work, I randomly selected and looked into visiting scholars' programs offered at five universities in the US: Stanford University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University, The University of Utah, The University of Texas at Austin, and UC San Diego (Stanford University, 2017; David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2017; The University of Utah, 2017; The University of Texas Austin Office of the Vice President for Research, 2017; UC San Diego Office of Postdoctoral & Research Scholar Affairs, 2017). Some of these programs are open for domestic and international visiting scholars. International visiting scholars are required to have a J-1 visa to participate in a visiting scholar program in the United States. After studying the websites and policy documents regarding visiting scholars, I found the following characteristics, which define and explain what it entails to be an international visiting scholar. According to Stanford University (2017), "visiting scholar status is a privilege, not a right and an individual holds this status at the pleasure of Stanford University." This statement shows how visiting scholars are perceived by the host institutions. These institutions used different terms to describe visiting scholars based on their program requirements and educational level, such as visiting researcher, visiting students, visiting graduate students, visiting intern, etc.

Elements of Visiting Scholar Programs

The following is a list of the common elements of visiting scholar programs with their definitions.

Visa. All institutions required a J-1 visa from international visiting scholars, which can be obtained based on an invitation letter from the host faculty, department, or institution.

Duration. The duration of the visiting scholar positions offered at these universities ranged from a minimum of 2 weeks to a maximum of one year in most cases, and at times extendable to another year.

Purpose. The primary purpose of visiting scholars is to advance their individual research agenda; also, sometimes they are required to work in research collaboration with host faculty. Some institutions require participation in academic activities, attending seminars, studying, and at times encourage visiting scholars to participate in the academic and social life of the host institution.

Degree. There are different requirements for minimum qualification from different institutions for visiting scholars ranging from bachelor's degree to PhD with expertise in their field of specialization. The institutions also use different terms to refer to visiting scholars at different academic levels, such as visiting graduate student, visiting research student, visiting researcher, visiting scholar, and visiting intern.

English Language Test. Some programs required an English Language Test for international visiting scholars to prove their English language proficiency.

Funding. Most of these universities required visiting scholars to provide proof of external funding sources such as individuals self-funding, external organization, industry, institutions, or government agencies. The exception is David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University, which offers a \$25,000 living stipend, round trip travel, and health insurance for the visiting scholars and accompanying immediate family (David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2017). According to the UC Berkley Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs website, visiting researchers, scholars, and visiting student researchers are not compensated. The

unit may provide a stipend of up to \$10,000 per year to cover living expenses, travel costs, and incidental research expenses, but not as a form of salary compensation.

Privileges. Common privileges included library use, on campus parking and housing, permission to audit classes without a fee, and use of laboratories and computers on campuses. Some institutions also provided office space, library borrowing, discounted recreational activities on campus, discounts at the campus bookstore, and health insurance.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights. Some institutions require visiting scholars to sign legal papers regarding copyright and the institution's intellectual property rights for the research they do at their institutions.

This list describes the major elements of an international visiting scholar program.

For this study, I define international visiting scholars as scholars who maintain their affiliation with their home institutions while they are studying at a foreign university and return home after their stay. They engage in academic activity such as research, study, and teaching at a foreign university with non-degree seeking status for a limited period of time. They may or may not have a masters or PhD degree. They may be self-funded, or funded by an external organization, university, or government, or at times, a host institution may provide some financial support based on their program and department policies and needs. They hold J-1 visa status and most of the time are required to pass an English language proficiency test.

Conceptual Framework

According to Institute of International Education (2015), in the past decade, the number of Chinese visiting scholars has increased more than two-fold in different programs in foreign institutions, especially in the United States. For the most part, the study of these programs has been dominated by a neo-liberal perspective on the nature of learning attributed to these programs. In

this study, I explore the lived experiences of Chinese visiting scholars in a United States higher education institution to develop a deeper understanding of their international education experiences beyond a neoliberal explanation of their experiences. Since I am interested in the meaning making process and how their learning experiences at American campus influenced their beliefs, values, behaviors, and worldview I use Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1991) to examine the goals, motivations, and experiences of these visiting scholars, what meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991) they used to frame and make sense of their experiences, and how these meaning perspectives and meaning frames changed or transformed throughout and after their international exchange experience on return to their home countries.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this exploratory study.

1. What is the nature of the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students and faculty who participate in a visiting scholars' program at an American campus?
2. How did they perceive and make meaning of their international visiting scholar experience?
3. How did this international visiting scholar experience influence their sense of self, perspectives, beliefs, values, behaviors, and worldview?

Significance of the Study

This is an important study because it will contribute to the fields of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and Study Abroad. There is a dearth of knowledge created in the past two decades regarding the experiences of international students and particularly about Chinese students at foreign campuses. In particular, there is limited information available about short-term visiting scholars' experiences and how these experiences impact individuals, institutions, and societies.

This study will contribute new knowledge to the existing limited body of literature particularly about the international exchange experiences of Chinese visiting scholars. This study will provide a comprehensive view of short-term Chinese visiting scholars' international academic and social experiences at an American university.

Another important contribution is the perspective and approach to study these experiences. This study does not merely explain the academic and socio-cultural experiences of Chinese visiting scholars, it also focuses on how the Chinese visiting scholars made meaning of their international exchange experiences. Furthermore, this study aims to critically analyze the current perspective of market forces as a major driving force behind these international experiences and applies a different theoretical lens of transformative learning from the field of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. This study will provide a basic understanding of the meaning making process of participants in short-term international experiences. The study will enhance our understanding about the components of the meaning making process in cross-cultural settings and analyze how meaning is constructed in different cultural environments. It will examine how participants view and experience the world based on their past and present experiences.

The study will also investigate the transformational elements of these international learning experiences. Often in literature, international educational experiences, particularly study abroad experiences, are presented as transformative experiences. This study will tease out the notion of transformative and explore what is meant by a transformative learning experience? How does transformation happen and to what extent do the participants consider their international experiences transformative? Along the way, it is my hope to clarify the terminology regarding visiting scholars and what it is meant by being a "visiting scholar" and how the term "visiting scholar" has evolved over time. Also, I will try to understand how Chinese visiting scholars

perceived their role as visiting scholars and made sense of this professional identity in a new academic and socio-cultural environment. This study will provide a detailed historical overview to better explain the cultural and historical context of international academic exchanges between the USA and China because I believe in cross-cultural studies it is important to understand historical and socio-cultural elements to develop a better understanding of the participants' meaning making process.

Another significant contribution of this study is it treated each participant as an individual, as a whole person with rich past life experiences and future goals and aspirations. Overall, this study tried to capture the essence of the participants' experiences in the most human and cohesive manner by telling their stories in great detail rather than just treating their experiences as fragments of data. The methodology used to conduct this study and to explain their experiences as a multi-case study will illuminate further the field of qualitative research and especially case study methodology.

This study will provide the detailed contextual account of the program and program activities to enhance the transparency of the study and provide practitioners a clear idea of the nature of the program. Practitioners and administrators can draw knowledge from this study and can improve short-term study abroad programs. This will also help faculty members understand what constitutes a meaningful learning experience from the participants' perspective in short-term international academic experiences and how to create deeper and more meaningful learning experiences for their students.

Overall, this study will contribute theoretically and practically to existing literature in the fields of Study Abroad and Adult Education and Lifelog Learning and provide policy implications for higher education institutions to further improve teaching and learning and institutional

performance through enhancing programs and services for visiting scholars. Also, this study will investigate how to utilize the knowledge and experiences of these scholars to further improve institutional diversity and capacity for global knowledge and network building to create a more tolerant and peaceful world.

Terms

The literature about study abroad is vast and there are several terms used in the literature that should be clearly defined. Some of the important terms that I will use in this proposal follow with their intended meaning.

International Students. Students from different countries who go for study to a country different from their country of origin.

J-1 Visiting Scholars. J-1 is a visa type for exchange program participants. (Note: university or college students engaged in certain scholarship or exchange programs comprise only one of 14 J-1 categories; the others include physicians participating in graduate-level training, summer work-travel students, visiting professors and research scholars)

International/Foreign Exchange Program. An international student exchange program in which students from an educational institution study abroad at a partner institution.

Learning. “The process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1991).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to explain what is known about Chinese visiting scholars' international academic experiences, how my proposed study is situated in the existing literature, and why it is important to study the experiences of Chinese visiting scholars. It is also important to note that literature specifically about Chinese visiting scholars is scarce, so I will be drawing insights from studies about international students and visiting scholars, and studies about Chinese international students. Chinese visiting scholars share common characteristics and at times face similar challenges as other international visiting scholars and Chinese international students. In this chapter, I will explain the history of U.S.-China educational exchange and discuss and analyze the concepts and studies related to Chinese visiting scholars in the existing literature. This historical overview will explain the evolution of education exchanges between China and the U. S. and will help readers understand the role of different stakeholders and how the visiting scholars population situates in this phenomenon from a broad historical perspective.

History of U.S.-China Education Exchange

This historical overview from the 1800s to 1950s is largely drawn from the works of Bevis (2014) and Li (2007) to explain the history of educational exchange between the U.S. and China. Zhao (2008) wrote a brief history of the U.S. and China educational exchange, but I found Bevis (2014) and Li's (2007) books more detailed and comprehensive. I will explain three major phases of China-U.S. education exchange efforts starting from the 1800s to the present day. The first wave of academic exchange between the U.S. and China started in 1872 and ended in 1818. The second phase of academic exchange between the U.S. and China started in 1909 and ended in 1929. The

third phase of academic exchange between the U.S. and China started from 1978 and is still going on.

It is important to note that due to political unrest and turbulent relationships between the U.S. and China there were phases when these academic exchanges were halted especially from 1881-1909 and 1929-1978. The history of U.S. China educational exchange is turbulent and is often characterized by mistrust. This marriage of these two divergent philosophical systems has seen it all, from intense moments of hate during the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) to today's ever-increasing participation of Chinese students and scholars in American higher education.

Prior to that, China enjoyed its triumph of education in 1200 and led the world in the fields of herbal medicine and alchemy and with inventions such as gunpowder and printing. China of the 1800s was an agricultural society and its earliest interaction with the western world was through trade ties. In the mid-1800s, as the United States was embracing scientific research in a new industrial age, China was under Qing (Manchu) rule, the last dynasty of a long dynastic tradition holding fast to ancient Confucian philosophy, which focused on “mundane happiness” by enhancing moral cultivation and controlling material wants. Confucians had deep appreciation for learning, but strong resistance to change (Bevis, 2014, p. 12).

American higher education institutions started attracting foreign students in 1800 (Li, 2007; Bevis, 2014). A few Chinese students studied in the United States from 1817-1825, (not at the college level) at a school established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission in Cornwell, Connecticut. One student, Zeng Laishun, is considered the very first Chinese person to attend American college in the 1840s, but he did not receive a degree and returned to China in 1848 (Bevis, 2014). The number of foreign students at American campuses was low at

the time and most of these students were from Latin America. “American colleges and universities were ill-equipped to teach or serve the few foreign students on campus and English-language training programs were nonexistent” (Bevis, 2014, p. 27). Furthermore, international travel was time consuming, difficult, and costly during mid-1800s. Also, multiculturalism was not popularly viewed as beneficial for learning among faculty and administrators until World War II.

The role of Christian missionaries and Christian ideology has deep roots in American-Chinese international educational exchange history. Historically, Christian missionaries have always influenced Chinese study abroad, dating back to 1650. Until around 1900, Christian organizations were sponsoring these Chinese students to study abroad (Li, 2007; Bevis, 2014). Western missionaries were convinced if China wanted to progress it needed to embrace Christianity and western education. Arthur Smith, a Dean of missionary education, stated publicly that “Chinese people lacked character and conscience” and they needed to learn “the knowledge of God” (Bevis, 2014, p. 22). Yung Wing (Rong Hong) who graduated from Yale in 1854 and became the first Chinese person ever to earn a College degree from a U.S. university, was able to study in the United States with the help of American Christian missionaries who provided guidance and sponsored his education (Bevis, 2014). Yung attended American missionary school and learned English for four years before going to Yale with the help of his teachers who were missionaries in China. In later years, Christian missionaries played a significant role in establishing U.S.-China educational exchange programs (Bevis, 2014).

By 1854, Yung Wing had been in the United States for almost eight years and was preparing to go back to his country. He was already thinking about how to use American education to modernize China. Back home in China, the political and economic situations had further deteriorated due to several oppressive treaties imposed on China by the Western world to end the

Opium wars in 1845 and in 1858. In these treaties, Britain, France, and America demanded further authority over Chinese trade while undermining China's sovereign rule. To control the situation, China adopted a number of strategies to manage the "western barbarians", such as acquiring western language and technology. By 1863, the Qing court opted to send students west to earn college degrees in science and technology to improve China's backward military and alleviate poverty, since western knowledge was seen as a source of economic prosperity and power. It was expected that returning students would apply their expertise to modernize China (Li, 2007; Bevis, 2014).

The decision to send Chinese students to learn western knowledge was controversial, since many opposed the plan and objected that it was a time consuming and expensive affair with no definite assurance of the expected results. Also, it was considered China would lose face by admitting it needed foreign help to stand on its feet again (Bevis, 2014). In spite of all the resistance, the Bureau of Foreign Affairs was created in 1861, the College of Foreign Languages was established in 1862, and the following year, the School of Western Languages and Science was established to pave the path for the first wave of Chinese students to study in the United States.

First Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1872-1881)

On his return to China Yung Wing set a precedent in establishing academic ties between China and the U.S. After completing his education at Yale, he convinced the imperial court to establish academic ties with the United States by sending Chinese students to the United States to learn scientific knowledge. Finally, Yung was successful, and the emperor approved sending 120 Chinese schoolboys age twelve to fifteen to study in the United States for fifteen years. Thirty carefully selected Chinese boys arrived in the United States in 1872 as the first group of the 120 students planned to study in the U. S. (Li, 2007; Bevis, 2014). This was an important diplomatic

step and a transformative exchange program to modernize China since the Chinese government spent a large sum of money for these students' education in the U.S.A., which was not an easy venture for agricultural China. These students were not allowed to naturalize after their education and were required to return to China and work for the Chinese government to modernize the Chinese military and economy. These boys were selected and trained to speak English and learn the American lifestyle before travelling to the United States. Special arrangements were made to ensure that the boys did not lose contact with their Chinese culture and values during their stay in the United States. They were required to wear Chinese dress, attend all Chinese cultural events, and study Chinese language while in the U. S. President Noah Porter of Yale made the room and board arrangements for the boys and it was decided that the boys would stay with American families. "In these settings, the boys became Americanized with amazing rapidity, quickly learning how to communicate in classroom, the church yard, and on the playground" (Bevis, 2014, p. 50). The second installment of thirty students was dispatched from China in 1873, and the final dispatch arrived in 1875 in the United States. These students attended school, and some were able to attend college before they were called back to China due to unstable bilateral relations with the United States.

Yung wanted China to import American technology through academic exchange, but from the beginning, his intention was to acquire American weapon technology as well. This shows Sino-American higher education exchange has always co-existed with China's effort to rebuild its economy and military security. It was always clear from the Chinese perspective that whenever students were eligible, they would enroll in American military academies to "learn America's secrets of military strategy and weaponry", but from the American perspective, there was "no room for Chinese students" in military academies (Bevis, 2014, p. 58). The Chinese viewed this rejection

as betrayal and the relationship between both countries became hostile. Also, in post-war America, the influx of Chinese laborers and workers increased, and anti-Chinese sentiment grew in America since the Chinese were accused of taking American jobs and being an unwelcome burden on American society. Anti-Chinese sentiment included mob violence and unflattering cartoons with cruel captions stating, “Chinese worked cheap and smelled bad” (Bevis, 2014, p. 59). In California, the slogan of the Workingman’s Party was “The Chinese Must Go!” American media openly bashed Chinese people. It was just months before these students returned home and the Chinese Educational Mission ended. The growing hostility against Chinese in the United States led to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1881 and with this, the United States started enforcing immigration limits from 1882.

Chinese boys returned home Americanized, dressed in western clothes, and “some of them wore gold trimmed eye-glasses, nicely balanced before their almond eyes” from the “land of freedom” (Bevis, 2014, p. 62). The mission students’ return to China was bittersweet due to the anti-western hostile environment back home. Only after the end of the Confucian order would these students be able to play any transformative role in China. An article titled “Graduates of Our Colleges in High Posts in China” appeared in a 1910 issue of the *New York Times* (Reid, 1910 as cited in Bevis, 2014). This article captured the accounts of several students from the China Educational Mission thirty years after their education in the United States. The author, Gilbert Reid, asked some of these questions. “What became of these boys who were received into the homes of our best people in Hartford, in Springfield, in Andover, at Exeter, in New Haven, in New York...? Was the commission a failure?” (Bevis, 2014, p. 63). After their return to China, these boys were assigned to work in different projects and many of these students became “instrumental in the operations of new enterprises such as Telegraph Administration, the Kaiping Mines, the

Tianjin Naval Academy, and the Tainjin Medical School, in addition to the Zongli Yamen and the newly established diplomatic corps” (Bevis, 2014, p. 64). Though it took several years for former students to make any impact after their return home, most of them rose to high positions in their careers and tremendously impacted the Chinese modernization process and “their education in the United States had not proved fruitless” (Bevis, 2014, p. 65). Despite their incomplete American education and the inhospitable conditions of their return and readjustment, they were able to lead China into the Industrial Age. Due to strained relationships between China and the United States, Chinese students’ enrollments in American institutions were very low from 1881 to 1909.

The structure of exchange programs has changed and diversified over time, but some of the characteristics of these programs remain the same, such as the selection process, English language learning, learning about American culture, and staying with host families. The pressure of holding Chinese values while staying in the United States, navigating different academic systems, and English language learning remains a struggle for most Chinese students who come to the U. S. for studies. It is also important to note that this educational exchange program was driven by political and economic reasons by both governments; other important stakeholders were Christian missionaries and Yale University leadership. The students who participated in this initial program had almost no agency since their parents decided to send them to study abroad. During their stay in the U.S. educational institutions, they had strictly prescribed rules and were directly monitored and controlled by the Chinese government since they were funded by the Chinese government. Their abrupt return was also due to the changing political situation between both countries.

U.S.-China relations were an anomaly from 1881 to 1909 due to the United States’ stringent and biased immigration policies for Chinese people. As a result, anti-western sentiment

reached a peak in China in the form of the Boxer movement, whose slogan was “support the Qing dynasty and destroy the foreign” (Bevis, 2014, p. 83). During an eight-week siege against thousands of foreigners in Shanghai, many groups damaged railroads and post offices and killed 475 foreign civilians and 450 troops from eight nations, mostly American and European missionaries. The western world reacted to the Boxer Rebellion with military force, which led to a treaty that required China to compensate for the loss of life and property in the form of 450 million taels (Chinese money) over a period of 39 years. Of the total indemnity, the United States was to receive 7.5 percent, about 25 million dollars was distributed among other countries such as Russia, Britain, Japan, and Italy (Bevis, 2014). Meanwhile, Theodore Roosevelt became the president of the United States and renewed the Chinese Exclusion Act to keep Chinese people out of the United States. In 1905, an anti-American boycott began in China as a protest against anti-Chinese actions in the U. S. China refused foreign goods trade as a remonstrance against U.S. policy on Chinese immigrants and to pressure the American government to treat Chinese immigrants, students, and travelers with respect.

The Second Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1909-1929)

The second wave of Chinese students studying abroad started with the Boxer Indemnity Fellowships in 1909. It was China’s defeat by Japan that forced the Chinese government to start sending Chinese students to have Western education to build a strong military. In 1906, American missionary Dr. Arthur H. Smith, who lived in China, proposed to President Roosevelt that about twelve million dollars should be returned to China from the Boxer indemnity funds so that the Chinese government could use this money to send Chinese young men to study at American institutions in China and later in the U.S. As a result of negotiations, the Qing government recruited 183 talented Chinese students to study in the United States using Boxer indemnity funds from

1908 to 1911 (Li, 2005). The selection process for the indemnity scholarships was thoughtfully laid out by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although there were some disagreements regarding the purpose and selection process, such as age of students to be admitted, and the significance of English language proficiency in the selection process. The exams were held in 1909 in Beijing for five days and were open to male citizens only. The students were tested for their abilities in Chinese and English languages, and on their knowledge about Chinese history and geography for the first round of the test. The second round of testing was more focused on science and math subjects such as biology, physics, algebra, geography, and world history. The first selected group of students arrived in the USA and was dispatched to five preparatory schools in Springfield, Massachusetts. Later, in 1911, the Qinghua School was established to train students for study abroad. The school sent 1,279 school age students to study in the United States from 1911-1929. Altogether, 1,800 Chinese were able to study in the United States. The selection process of the students for fellowship was rigorous and the students studied in the U. S. for a long period of time, often starting from grade school and continuing to PhD. We do not have much information about these students' experiences in the U. S. due to a lack of literature. Also, the terms to define different types of students and visa types were not introduced yet. The participation of female students in this program started in 1914. This second phase is also significant because the returning students and scholars became the leaders in Chinese academia in the years to come.

Many of these students received PhD degrees from prestigious American universities, and later became the founders of new academic disciplines in China. Also, it is important to note that some students from the first phase who were working at important positions in different Chinese ministries played important roles in the second phase of the education exchange effort by providing resources and guidance.

Overall, the second phase was turbulent in terms of the political situation in China and anti-Chinese sentiment in the U. S. For China, the education exchange was an effort to improve the Chinese military and economy. For the U. S., it was a way to restore bilateral relations with China and create soft power in the region and for missionaries it was an opportunity to spread the message of God. According to Gill and Huang (2006) “Soft power is a directing, attracting and imitating force derived mainly from intangible resources such as national cohesion, culture, ideology and influence on international institutions” (p. 17).

Between 1945 and 1949, a civil war started in China and by the end of the war, Chairman Mao Zedong announced the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Mao was in favor of education, but he condemned any endorsement of Western ideals. During the war years (1937-1945), the number of Chinese students studying in the United States dropped drastically and entirely stopped in 1949 and would not resume until after the death of Chairman Mao, three decades later. Under Chairman Mao, the Chinese education system was highly influenced by Soviet Union Communist philosophy. Most Chinese scholars and students studied in Russia during these years.

Third Phase of Chinese-U.S. Educational Exchange (1978-present)

China reopened its door to Sino-American education exchange in the late 1970s due to the efforts of U.S. President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) who was determined to repair the U.S.-China relationship. Prior to President Jimmy Carter, President Richard Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 was also an important step in restarting student exchange programs between the United States and China. According to Huang (2003), Chinese government polices focused on sending students and scholars abroad to learn English and gain advanced knowledge in the fields of science and technology. The purpose of these educational exchanges was to prepare manpower for the

economy (Huang, 2003). A total of seventy-three delegations were sent from both countries from 1972 to 1979. In 1978, with the signing of an “Understanding on Educational Exchange”, fifty-two Chinese scholars were sent to the United States. Unlike the previous students who were school age and trained before travelling to the U. S., these students were poorly prepared and mostly were scholars of older age “some were in their forties” (Bevis, 2014, p. 135).

“Chinese students and scholars who came to the United States during this time were categorized in three groups: (i) state sponsored students and scholars who were centrally selected by the Chinese government to study abroad (guojia gongpai), (ii) institutional sponsored students (danwei gongpai), and (iii) self-sponsored students (zifei)” (Li, 2005, p. 77). Approximately 80% of these people educated abroad were visiting scholars from 1978-1984. After 1984, the number of self-sponsored students started growing gradually and in 2002, as presented in the Table 1 below among the total 125,000 students and scholars, 2.8% of students were state funded, 3.6% were institution-sponsored, and 93.6% were self-funded (Li, 2005, p. 77).

Funding	Number of Students	Percentage
State Funded Students/Scholars	3,500	2.8%
Institution-Funded Students/Scholars	4,500	3.6%
Self-Funded Students and Scholars	117,000	93.6%

Table 1. Percentage of Chinese students studying in the U. S. under various funding types (Li, 2005). Table created by Sara Bano

Chinese Visiting Scholars and Exchange Programs

It is important to note that during 1978-1984 the number of visiting scholars studying in the U.S. peaked as compared to graduate and undergraduate self-funded students. Also, these visiting scholars already had their PhD degrees from China or Russia since China had strong ties

with Russia during the three decades of deadlock with the United States. In 1978, the Chinese Ministry of Education sent 52 Chinese visiting scholars to the United States and after that many Chinese scholars started their educational journeys towards European countries such as Britain, Germany, and France (Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015). These visiting scholars were faculty in Chinese universities and were professionally trained in their fields.

During the period of 1978-1992, most of the policies about internationalization of higher education in China focused on realizing modernizations, achieving economic reforms, and dealing with the shortage of highly educated personnel (Zhao, 2008). As a result, in the early 70s and 80s research studies focused mostly on policy issues regarding exchange programs between China and the U. S. Lampton, Mandancy, and Kirsten's (1986) study entitled, *A Relationship Restored: Trends in U.S. -China Educational Exchanges, 1978-1984*, was one of the earliest studies that looked into the Chinese exchange programs with U.S. higher educational institutions. This study was funded by the Committee for Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (CSCPRC), with the support of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), and the Ford Foundation. This CSCPRC study indicated that U.S. policy had created difficulties for educational exchange with China and presented some suggestions for how to improve these policies. Also, this study mentioned the lack of reciprocity, since a large number of scholars were coming to the U. S., but only small numbers of scholars were going to China. This study suggested that instead of focusing on numerical reciprocity, Americans should focus on the need for the Chinese to improve the quality of the experience of American scholars in China by increasing access to places, archives, and documents. Later, Orleans's (1988) study looked at the exchange programs from a different perspective than Lampton's study. Orleans's (1988) study focused on the Chinese perspective in policy formation and the development process with regard to sending Chinese scholars and

students abroad, and highlighted Beijing's concerns regarding the return of these students and scholars during the 80s. In terms of enrollments, Lampton and Orleans' studies show that during 1979-1983, 19,872 scholarly exchange visas were issued to mainland China, of which 63% were J1 category, and the remaining 37% were F1 visas. These trends changed drastically in later years due to the fast-economic reforms in China.

Experiences of Chinese Students in Foreign Countries

After 1992, China initiated deeper economic reforms and started transitioning to a market economy. A market mechanism and the concept of global competition for talent were introduced to Chinese higher education (Zhao, 2008). As a part of the internationalization of higher education, to increase the supply of human capital, the Chinese government encouraged more students and scholars to study abroad (Huang, 2003). This led to a great influx of Chinese visiting scholars to western countries and many of the visiting scholars did not return to China after finishing their studies. As a result, during the 1990s, the focus of research studies shifted from policy analysis of exchange programs and the brain drain phenomenon to understanding and highlighting the challenges Chinese students faced at foreign campuses. A book regarding Chinese students in America, *Chinese Students Encounter America*, which was written in Chinese by Qian Ning in 1996, and translated into English by T.K. Chu in 2002, is one of the earliest attempts to understand the experiences of Chinese students in America from the Chinese perspective. Qian Ning himself was a Chinese international scholar at an American university during the late eighties and early nineties. His book became an instant bestseller, not only in mainland China, but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan. This book also influenced Chinese policies regarding Chinese students' study abroad programs to some extent. The book explains the history of Chinese students' study abroad

programs, changes in Chinese policies regarding study abroad programs, and social, cultural, and emotional challenges Chinese students faced in the U. S. until 1995.

Sun and Chen (1997) studied the dimensions of difficulties Mainland Chinese students encountered in the process of adjusting to American culture. Chinese students face academic, social, cultural, and personal challenges in American higher education. The researchers found that primarily adjusting to American teaching and learning styles was a major challenge for Chinese students, among other social adjustment challenges. Huang and Klinger (2006) found that loneliness was a common feeling among Chinese graduate students. The students reported that they had few or no friends in the new country, mainly because their time was restricted due to the heavy academic workload and due to language limitations. Sun and Chen (1997) mentioned that Chinese students face three adjustment challenges in U.S. higher education: first, language barriers; second, cross-cultural awareness; and third, academic achievements. According to Sun and Chen (1997), the lack of English language proficiency and cultural capital caused miscommunication between American and Chinese students, which lead to loneliness and stress for Chinese students. Also, Chinese students were academically driven, so lack of time to build social networks added to their loneliness and stress. Yan and Berliner (2011) in their book titled, *Chinese Learning Journeys: Chasing the Dream*, and Li (2014) in his study, *Identity Development of Chinese International Graduate Students: Growing and Developing In New Academic, Social, And Cultural Contexts*, highlight language barriers, academic adjustment, and cultural and social adaptation and adjustment, and explain how these factors impact the experiences of Chinese scholars in the United States.

Overall, the above-mentioned studies show that Chinese students and scholars succeed in their international academic career, but they go through loneliness, alienation, and a lot of stress

during their studies (Huang, 1997; Orleans, 1988; Huang, 2012). Despite the success of students in previous studies, these studies show that Chinese students encounter difficulties in adapting to the differences in teaching and learning in the US. The literature on the experiences of these students is relatively sparse (Wang, 1999). According to Yan and Berliner (2011), only a few studies have focused on understanding the unique characteristics of Chinese international students in the United States. Yan and Berliner (2011) found in their study that Chinese international students in the United States face multifaceted life-stresses. “America is strange and alien to most Chinese students” and this strangeness of life is due to the short length of the stay and enormous differences in the cultures of China and the U. S. (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Experiences of Visiting Scholars at American Campuses

After 1985, the number of Chinese visiting scholars funded by the Chinese government declined as compared to the self-funded graduate and undergraduate students. However, government funded students were still at least 20% of the Chinese international student population on U.S. campuses. Over the past three decades, this population has changed in terms of funding, age, and fields of studies. However, it is hard to find much information both in the literature and in educational databases that focuses on the experiences of Chinese visiting scholars studying at foreign campuses. Chinese visiting scholars are a special sub group that is underrepresented in the research field (Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015) and few studies are available regarding the experiences of short-term visiting scholars’ experiences at American universities (Shimmi, 2014).

Xue, Chao, and Kuntz (2015) studied the academic socialization experiences of 15 Chinese visiting scholars in US institutions of higher education. Their qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Chinese visiting scholars through interviews and observations. Their study identified strategies used by Chinese visiting scholars for academic socialization and explored the

challenges these scholars encountered during their academic socialization process at American campuses. These scholars mentioned motivation, goal orientation, social network development, academic recognition, and community involvement as important academic socializing strategies. Chinese visiting scholars also faced challenges in their academic socialization process, such as marginalization and time constraints. Some participants reported that they did not receive enough support from their American advisors because there was no direct economic link between them and their advisors. They also felt marginalized due to their language deficiency and lack of cultural competence. The visiting scholars did not feel a sense of belonging at American campuses. The participants mentioned since there was no proper evaluation mechanism in place for the assessment of their study abroad experience, most of them considered it a travelling opportunity. Also, some Chinese visiting scholars felt this international exchange experience was not very beneficial for their intellectual and academic growth. One participant said he “would rather attend international academic conferences using the CSC scholarship than wasting national resources on ineffective visiting” Xue, Chao, and Kuntz (2015, p. 301). Also, many visiting scholars reported that one year was not enough time to complete their research, especially in STEM fields.

Xue, Chao, and Kuntz’s study reveal that some informal experiences, such as travelling across the U. S., enabled visiting scholars to have first-hand knowledge about American culture, which helped them to perform better in class. Although many visiting scholars highlighted that the exchange program provided them cross cultural learning and academic development opportunities, there is public criticism on short-term exchange programs in China. Xue, Chao, and Kuntz (2015) mentioned an article published in *China Youth Daily* by an international student who criticized that Chinese visiting scholars spend a lot of time travelling instead of in academic activities. The

article emphasized the need for better assessment and accountability systems to assess the academic output of these visiting scholars.

Zhao (2008) studied the academic adjustment of 24 Chinese visiting scholars in an American university. Zhao (2008) focused on Chinese visiting scholars' motivations to participate in these non-degree programs abroad, obstacles they faced, and contextual/environmental factors, which affected their experiences at American campuses. Zhao (2008) found that the majority of the participants (75%) were motivated to become visiting scholars to learn advanced theories in their academic fields and exchange ideas with American counterparts. A large majority (96%) of the participants mentioned English language proficiency as the most critical barrier in achieving their academic goals. Almost half the participants (46%) stated that a positive attitude was crucial in dealing with challenges related to adjustment at a foreign campus. More than half (58%) of the participants mentioned limited access to the library and class website significantly affected their understanding and participation in classes. Although this study provides us some basic knowledge about Chinese visiting scholars' adjustment in an American campus, Zhao (2008) suggested that it would be beneficial to investigate how the visiting scholars are when they return to their home institutions and find out how their newly adjusted communication style helps or inhibits them from fitting back in their academic and social environment.

Another recent and quite relevant study is *Experiences of Japanese visiting scholars in the United States: An exploration of transition* by Shimmi (2014). Although this study focuses on Japanese students, it has implications for Chinese students. This study examined the reasons why Japanese visiting scholars visited the United States, their activities and experiences during their visit, challenges and support for their transition, and personal and contextual factors which affected their transition. Shimmi (2014). used qualitative methods and interviewed 26 Japanese visiting

scholars. The researcher interviewed Japanese visiting scholars during their stay at US campuses about their transition experience to the US and anticipated challenges on their transition back to Japan. The researcher found that the purpose of visiting varied among Japanese visiting scholars from conducting research, to networking, to teaching, but mostly it was professional. Some scholars were interested in learning the English language and about American culture. Some mentioned creating institutional relationships and some scholars were interested in experiencing social life with their families in a different culture. Japanese visiting scholars faced different challenges at different stages of their transition process, such as setting up life in a new community, finding opportunities for interactions, and dealing with language and culture issues on their arrival. They also anticipated challenges while transitioning back to their home institutions, such as lack of a supportive environment to continue their research work. Although some visiting scholars recognized American academic practices as positive and insightful, they considered it challenging to create institutional changes back home because of cultural differences. Some of the scholars considered using American instruction methods such as discussions and reading assignments, but they thought it would be challenging because of lack of resources, students' attitudes, and a different teaching culture back home. Shimmi (2014) suggested further exploration of support structures for visiting scholars, and consideration of the cost and benefit of international visiting scholars programs. Shimmi (2014) also suggested studying the actual challenges of these visiting scholars on return to their home countries.

Overall, these three above mentioned studies (Zhao, 2008; Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015; Shimmi, 2014) provide some important information about the experiences of visiting scholars in American institutions. These studies provide us information about motivations and goals of visiting scholars to join these programs, transition challenges, academic socialization issues and

strategies, and anticipated challenges of their reentry in their country. These studies are limited in terms of exploring these experiences from adjustment and challenges perspectives. Also, these studies are just focused on visiting scholars' experiences in the U. S. My study not only focuses on visiting scholars' experiences from a transformative learning dimension, but also focuses on visiting scholars' experiences on their return to China. My focus is on the meaning making process and the nature of learning that happens during these programs. This study focuses on how these experiences influence scholars' perspectives, beliefs, values, behaviors, and worldviews. It is an important contribution to knowledge about visiting scholars in general and especially about Chinese visiting scholars and about the impact of international exchange programs on participants' lives. Also, this study is an attempt to create knowledge about the impact of these experiences after their return to China. This study allowed participants to reflect on their experiences and think how these experiences have influenced their values, worldviews, and career choices after their return, which is less known so far.

Educational Exchange Programs between China & the U. S.: Concerns

The history of academic exchange between China and the United States has gone through different intense phases from cordial, enthusiastic efforts to a diplomatic freeze with no political or academic relations for decades. The opposing philosophical approaches of both countries remained constantly at odds with each other. Mistrust and a clash of values affected the academic exchange programs immensely and affected the lives of thousands of students and scholars and both societies profoundly. These academic exchanges remained a one-sided affair until the 1970s when American scholars and students started visiting China for academic purposes. Also, it is important to note that China wanted to use these academic exchange programs to modernize the Chinese military and economy while holding tight Confucian values and traditional customs (Li,

2005). Some Chinese scholars mentioned the risk of the “unavoidable spread of Western ideas” and “inevitable brain drain” since they believed that half of these scholars do not return home (Li, 2005). However, over the decades these trends have considerably changed, especially since the past decade, with a large number of Chinese students moving back to China and contributing to the economic and scientific development of their home country. Meanwhile, the United States saw these programs as a way to establish its supremacy and exercise soft power. Thus, these international academic experiences are mostly viewed and presented in the literature from economic or political perspectives. According to Li (2005) in the study of US-China relationships, economic interactions, political disputes, and military tension have received much scholarly attention and there is a dearth of scholarly research on the subject of the growing Chinese-study abroad movement and on the returning scholars and students. Especially in the case of visiting scholars, it is very difficult to even find their numbers over the past three decades, let alone understand their experiences. Li (2005) argued that these exchanges “did not just happen” but required time, vision, leadership, pilot institutions, strategies, and “a belief in the transformative power of educational relations between the nations” (p.15). There is a need to study the transformative nature of these experiences at the individual level to better understand overall societal changes.

Historically, there have been concerns about the value and impact of these international exchange programs on both societies, so there is a need to understand how these experiences impact Chinese visiting scholars’ careers and behaviors and to understand exchange programs from visiting scholars’ perspectives to understand the impact of these programs on participants. During the first phase of the Chinese Education Commission, Chinese public critics were apprehensive of Emperor Qing’s decision to send 120 Chinese students to the United States to

study science and technology. Many criticized the decision as a waste of national resources, a time-consuming affair, and saw it as threat to core Chinese Confucian values. During the second phase, 1909-1929, although the American media was presenting a glowing picture of the success of Chinese students, among the Chinese public, critics' dissatisfaction with the Chinese education system and study abroad programs was growing. Shu Xincheng criticized the Chinese government for creating a special class through study abroad programs and benefiting only the rich instead of modernizing China. Shu criticized Chinese government policies and the recruitment process for study abroad. He was of the opinion that study abroad programs were westernizing China. Also, the education those students received was not applicable to Chinese society due to different political, cultural, and economic systems. In another book, *Chinese intellectual in the West* (1966), Y. C. Wang voiced similar concerns regarding study abroad programs and argued that they are not an efficient use of China's social resources since these Americanized students on their return chose to settle in westernized coastal areas and were not very helpful in modernizing Chinese society. Wang and Shu both agreed that most students wanted to naturalize in America and only 50-60% of students returned home with degrees.

During the 1990s, due to increasing demand for an internationally experienced workforce in the growing Chinese economy, institutions of higher education in China started developing their exchange programs and shifted the cost of participating to students and scholars. Previously the Chinese government funded most of these exchange programs and focused on societal transformation. The value of these programs was measured through the parameters of socio-economic change and scientific development of the overall society. Now with the cost shift to students and scholars however, due to a rapidly growing middle-class during China's economic boom, the perspective of understanding these experiences should also shift to the individual level.

What do these experiences mean to the scholars who participate in these experiences and what are their learning motivations and experiences at foreign campuses?

This is especially important to consider for the short-term visiting scholars who remain the largest number of returners after finishing their programs abroad. The number of returns has always been high among visiting scholars as compared to self-funded degree students. As presented in *figure 2* below, according to official Chinese resources, a total of 130,000 Chinese students and scholars were sent to study abroad and 20,000 (15.4%) returned from 1978 to 1995. Degree candidates were most likely to stay in the western countries as compared to visiting scholars (Li, 2005).

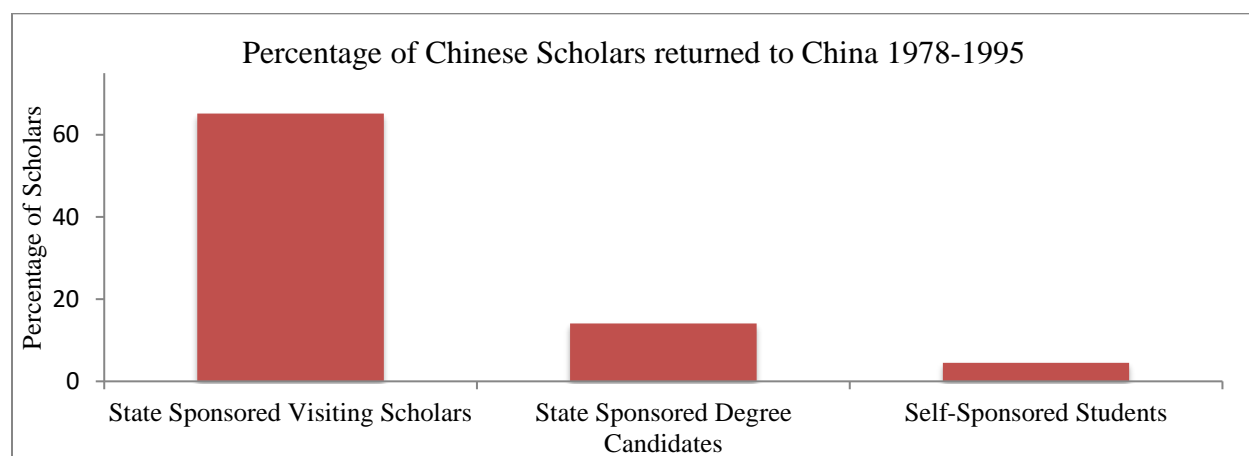


Figure 1. Percentage of Chinese Scholars who returned to China from the U.S. (Li, 2005). Figure created by Sara Bano

The decision to return home is mostly due to scholars' visa type. A J1 visa requires two years of home residency after an international exchange experience. As mentioned above, now the visiting scholars may be graduate students or faculty who stay from a few weeks to a couple years in foreign countries and most of these programs are organized and facilitated by institutions and are usually funded by the participants.

It is important to study the experiences of this growing population of visiting scholars in the United States to understand their learning process and how they make sense of their experiences to provide them better resources and make these experiences more meaningful. My study furthers the scholarly conversation based on the suggestions of Zhao (2008); (Xue, Chao, & Kuntz, 2015); and Shimmi's (2014) studies, and new empirical data provides insights about how these scholars perceive international experiences and later translate these international experiences on their return to their home countries. Using a different theoretical framework than these studies, which brings some fresh perspectives and furthers the theoretical understanding of this complex human and social phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

Overall, the studies about international mobility explain the phenomenon of international students and scholars' mobility from a neoliberal perspective. Which means international education is perceived as a market and international students are considered customers and the source of economic growth for receiving and sending countries. Many scholars suggest that economic benefit is the motivating factor for the rapid increase of these international exchange programs. However, these studies do not provide any empirical evidence to prove their case. (Altbach, 2004) pushes beyond the neoliberal agenda by arguing that "students from industrialized countries who study abroad typically do not earn a degree but rather spend a year or two in the country to broaden their horizon, learn a language or gain knowledge they could not acquire at home" (p.12). My study explores the kinds of learning visiting scholars may experience beyond the neoliberal perspective. It is important to think deeply about the goals and objectives of visiting scholars and their experiences, consider these experiences from a humanistic perspective, and start a scholarly conversation about how these visiting scholars experience new systems of education,

new cultures, and new language, and how they make sense of these experiences because the growing visiting scholar population at foreign campuses has implications for sending and receiving countries. It is also important to understand the impact of these experiences on participants' lives and learn how these experiences influence their values and worldview. How do they translate these experiences into their lives back home? In short, to further this scholarly conversation we need to move beyond institutional and governmental neoliberal agendas and explore what more there is to these international experiences. For this purpose, I used Transformative Learning Theory.

Transformative Learning Theory

I chose Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) as a theoretical lens because I am interested in exploring the process of learning and understanding learning as a kind of meaning making process in a different cultural setting through study abroad experiences. Study abroad experiences are often considered transformative, since these experiences can challenge previously held beliefs and values of the learners. Since I am interested in the meaning making aspect of learning, I believe TLT is useful because it is constructivist in nature, which means the learners construct meanings from their experiences and transform their values, beliefs, and behaviors based on these newly learned experiences.

According to Mezirow (1991), to “make meaning” means to make sense of the experience, by interpreting it. When interpretation of experiences is used “to guide decision making or action, the making ‘*meaning*’ becomes ‘*learning*’” (p.1). Mezirow (1991) defined learning as “the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (p.1) Critical reflection is central to the learning process because it enables learners to correct distortion in their beliefs and guides them towards revised interpretation of meaning of an experience and subsequent action. “By far the

most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 1). Mezirow (1991) defined two types of learning, Instrumental Learning and Communicative Learning. Instrumental learning involves learning to control and manipulate the environment or other people. Results are amenable to empirical demonstration. Communicative learning involves making a judgment regarding a certain situation. TLT was first articulated based on Mezirow’s research about women’s reentry to community college programs in the 1970s. According to Mezirow (1978, 1991) transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of self through an analytical and rational process. Mezirow (2000) defined transformational learning as the process by which the learner transforms their taken-for-granted frames of reference (meanings perspectives, habits of mind, mind sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove true or justified to guide action (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (1978) argued that transformations often follow some variation of the following ten phases of meaning making process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

According to Mezirow (1994), these ten steps may not all be linear or at times required for transformation, and a number of researchers have condensed the process into three or four steps (Taylor, 2007). Although Mezirow (1978, 1994) has stated that not all steps are required to experience transformative learning, Brock (2010) showed quantitative evidence that the more of these steps are remembered, the more likely transformative learning occurs.

According to Mezirow (1978, 1994) there are four main components of the transformational learning process (i) experience, (ii) critical reflection, (iii) reflective discourse, and (iv) action. The process begins with experience. According to Mezirow (1978, 1994) human beings have different experiences and learning occurs from processing these experiences through critical reflection. This cognitive process helps the learners to reflect and examine their underlying assumptions and beliefs that influence the manner in which they make sense of these experiences. Mezirow (1994) described three different types of reflections (i) content reflection, (ii) process reflection, and (iii) premise reflection. Content reflection means thinking and reflecting on actual experience. Process reflection is how the learning from the new experience will be used. Premise reflection is the most complex and it allows the learners to compare and contrast their new experience with their previously held assumptions and long held values and beliefs. The learners analyze whether this experience fits with their previously held beliefs or transforms their mindsets. This leads into reflective discourse, which means objectively analyzing the experience. The

learners categorize the experience to act. These actions may be immediate, delayed, or just the confirmation of previously held beliefs.

A single theory can only explain a complex social phenomenon to an extent. As far as transformative learning theory is concerned, it is important to keep in mind that not all learning is transformational. Mezirow (1994) himself believed all learning is change, but not all change is transformational. Sometimes learning is just acquiring new information and adding to the information or meaning schemes we already have. Transformational learning requires risk taking and is not an easy process, since our beliefs are deep rooted in our cultures and changing these beliefs takes time. However, there are some strengths of this process, it is based on a highly social process, encourages collaborations, and helps to create relationships. It also allows self-reflection, builds confidence, and encourages emotional maturity. I choose Transformative Learning Theory for this study because I believe this theory will provide the basic framework and the lens to look deeply into the experiences of the Chinese visiting scholars and understand their meaning-making process while transitioning and navigating a different culture and education system. It will also help me explain how these experiences impact their beliefs, values, behaviors, and worldviews.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research approach and research design of my study. I discuss my choice in using an exploratory, qualitative, multi-case study research design. I then explain my data collection process and describe the data collection tools I used in this study. Next, I explain my data analysis strategies and process in detail. After that, I present a statement about my position as a researcher and how it might have impacted my interactions with my participants and my interpretation of the data. I conclude this section with the limitations of this study.

Qualitative Multi-Case Study Research Design

This qualitative, multi-case study investigates the experiences of international visiting scholars from a transformative learning perspective. I wanted to move beyond the perspective of institutional and governmental neoliberal agendas. I used Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) to frame my study to understand the humanistic aspect of these international experiences. For my research purposes, Transformative learning theory provided a helpful framework, since it focuses on critical self-reflection. Using TLT, I examined what “meaning perspectives” (Mezirow, 1991) participants used to frame and make meaning of their experiences, and how these meaning perspectives and meaning frames changed or were transformed through their engagement in the program and after their return to their home countries.

One of the major challenges about TLT is how to assess transformation among learners. I examined literature to find a suitable research method for assessing transformative learning. According to Cheney’s (2010) literature review of 51 empirical studies of transformational learning from 1999-2009, the vast majority (43 out of 51) used qualitative research strategies.

Qualitative research strategies are divided into the following seven categories by Conrad, Haworth, and Lattuca (2001), ethnography, case study, phenomenology, narrative methods, grounded theory, participatory action research, and practitioner/teacher research. Cheney (2010) found that case study was the most common method used to study transformative learning because case study provides “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 21 as cited in Cheney, 2010, p. 58). Only eight studies used quantitative strategies or mixed methods. According to Cheney (2010), there is not a single widely accepted strategy or instrument to measure transformative learning and the effectiveness of interventions by the teacher. So, I chose to use qualitative, multi-case study research design because it provided my research participants ample opportunities to reflect on their experiences and record their reflections in the form of written essays and interviews.

Research Paradigm

This study reflects a constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism is often used for qualitative methods to explore and interpret any phenomenon instead of controlling or explaining it (Glesne, 2011). Glesne (2006) mentioned that most qualitative researchers use a social constructivist approach in their research. The terms social constructivist paradigm and interpretivist paradigm are often used interchangeably. Social constructivists believe that individuals construct their own realities based on personal history and social context (Glesne, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This ontological belief tends to portray a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing (Glesne, 2006). Researchers who use this paradigm reconstruct social phenomena by interacting with people and interpreting multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon (Glesne, 2011). Special attention is paid to how participants in the study interact with each other to reach some consensus on the truth or reality of the given

situation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For this study, the aim was to find out how Chinese visiting scholars make meaning of their experiences at a Midwestern Research University (pseudonym) in the U. S. The study investigated how Chinese visiting scholars interacted with each other and their American peers and faculty mentors. It also examined how these experiences influence their lives and worldview.

The social constructivist approach allowed me not only to study this social phenomenon in-depth, but also to create a boundary for my study by limiting it to a certain location and time period. According to Glesne (2006), what is “real” becomes relative to the specific location and people. The role of researcher is to explore human experiences through interacting with his participants and subjectively interpreting their experiences Glesne (2006). This approach maintains that human beings construct their perception of the world, and no one perception is “right” or “more real” than another; these realities should be seen as a whole, and then divided into discrete variables that are analyzed separately.

Case Study

The concept and approaches of the case study method have evolved over time. “Case studies mean different things to different disciplines and in qualitative study they refer to almost anything” (Glesne, 2006, p. 13). For example, according to Merriam (1998), a case can be “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” or it can be a person, a group, a program, or a policy (p.27). Yin (2003) defined a case as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context” (p. 13). Stake (1995) considered a case “a specific, a complex, functioning thing,” in “an integrated system” which “has a boundary and working parts” and is purposive (p. 2). That is why case studies are considered a research

strategy rather than a method by many methodologists such as Glesne (2006, 2011) and (Stake, 2005b). Cases are bound in terms of space and time, so case studies provide researchers a chance to conduct in-depth analysis of a person, place, or phenomenon (Glesne, 2011).

Exploratory Case Study

Stenhouse (1978, 1979) was an early supporter of case study in education research because he believed that case study was a means to capture the complexities of this field. Yin (1984, 2009), who had a social scientist's perspective rather than an educator's, tried to characterize case study as a method and identified three forms of case study: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. The exploratory case study investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research, especially a formulated hypothesis that can be tested, or by a specific environment that limits the choice of methodology (Yin, 2003). Descriptive case study is based on an articulation of descriptive theory, which means "it uses a reference theory or model that directs data collection and case description" (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p. 4). Explanatory case study is used to explain phenomena. Explanatory case studies consist of accurate description of the facts of the case, consideration of alternative explanations, and conclusions based on facts (Yin, 2003). I used exploratory case study because there is not enough prior research and data available about this particular phenomenon. So, the transformative learning framework guided my data collection process, but my findings and discussion are expanded beyond the transformative learning lens, which is the result of exploratory nature of this study. The purpose was not to limit the study or to affirm any particular theory, but to understand this complex human phenomenon deeply.

Stake (2005b) does not characterize case study as a method. According to Stake (2000) "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is being studied" (as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 13). Stake (2005b) presented three types of case studies, intrinsic, instrumental,

and multiple. Intrinsic case studies focus on a single entity because of the uniqueness of the entity and are not meant to contribute to a broader theory. The instrumental case is used to explore a specific phenomenon for broader understanding. Multiple case studies are used to explore a particular phenomenon by comparing and contrasting individual cases.

Multi-Case Study

Yin (2018) argued that the major “criticism about a single case study usually reflects fears about the uniqueness or artefactual conditions surrounding the case” so this skepticism can be best addressed through conducting more than one case study. Yin (2018) believed that “having more than two cases will produce an even stronger effect” (p.62). According to Stake (2005a) “An important reason for doing multi-case study is to examine how the program or phenomenon performs in a different environment” (p.23). Yin (1994) states, “Every case should serve a specific purpose with the overall scope of inquiry. (p.45). Yin (1994) considered multiple cases the same as multiple experiments for replication purposes. For these reasons, I used a multi-case study approach to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to understand it from different perspectives. I treated each case as “a specific entity” (Yin, 2006, p. 2).

Qualitative Approach

Although some methodologists consider case study a type of qualitative research (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998), Yin (2003), as a positivist, considers that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used. Yazan (2015) mentioned that research methodologists do not have a consensus on the design and implementation of case study, so it is a contested domain. In this study, I employed a qualitative approach. The purpose of this approach is to determine how Chinese visiting scholars think, perceive, and experience their participation in the exchange program with the College of Education at Midwestern Research University. I used a qualitative

approach because it is suitable to understand the lived experiences of my research participants. Qualitative methods are grounded in the lived experiences of their participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) and rely on the collection of primarily non-numerical data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative research approach is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue. Creswell (2014) further explains that the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures and the researchers usually collect data at the participants' site.

Data Collection

In terms of data collection, different methodologists have different approaches. Yin (2018) mentioned the following four principles of data collection:

1. Use multiple sources of evidence
2. Create a case study database
3. Maintain a chain of evidence
4. Exercise care when using data from social media sources

I used Yin's (2018) principles for data collection to ensure quality of data. Yin (2003, 2018) suggested combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and using six data gathering tools: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, practical observations, and physical artifacts. However, (Stake, 1995) and (Merriam, 1998) suggested using only a qualitative approach for data gathering and using observations, interviews, and document review as data collection tools. Yazan (2015) mentioned that all three methodologists (Yin, Stake, and Merriam) "contend that it is incumbent upon the case study researchers to draw their data from multiple sources to capture the case under study in its complexity and entirety" (p.142). I decided to use Yin's (2003, 2018) approach because he advocates for multiple sources of data gathering and has

provided the most comprehensive list of data gathering sources, which is useful for triangulation purposes during the data analysis process.

Institutional Review Board

As per the requirement of Midwestern Research University's Human Research Protection Program, this study is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and institutional policies and procedures. I prepared written consent forms both in English and Chinese (See Appendix A). Participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to and there would be no financial compensation for participating in this study. Pseudonyms for schools, students and faculty participants were created to ensure that all participants' identities were kept private. Also, any data in audio, written, or print form was destroyed after use.

Research Site

The study is based at Midwestern Research University, a large, research intensive, land-grant institution in the Midwestern U.S.A. I chose this particular research site because of Midwestern Research University's strong commitment to globalize its campus by promoting internationalization through participating in international academic programs. Midwestern Research University serves more than 7,000 international students, and among them more than 5,000 are Chinese students. The College of Education at Midwestern Research University hosts a number of international exchange programs and this particular program is an ongoing phenomenon. In 2008, a formal partnership agreement was signed between the College of Education at Midwestern Research University and the Faculty of Education of Southern University, China to establish an international scholars exchange and study program. As mentioned in the program information document the purpose of the program is to help future

researchers and scholars develop a global perspective on educational policies and practice. This program's objectives directly resonated with my research agenda and it was a reasonable choice to study the phenomenon of internationalization and experiences of visiting scholars through this program.

Case Selection

According to (Glesne, 2006), in qualitative research, careful and purposeful sample selection is important. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling... leads to selecting information-rich cases for study" (Patton, 2002, p. 46 as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 34). Yazan (2015) argued that determining the unit of analysis or sampling is one of the most crucial phases of case study research design and occurs through the selection of the case in the bounded system. Since my goal was to understand the lived experiences of different types of visiting scholars, I carefully chose three visiting scholars who participated in the 2016-2017 group. In the year 2016-2017, five female masters' level scholars, one male PhD scholar, and one female professor from Southern University participated in the exchange program. I decided to focus on three participants: the male PhD scholar, the female faculty member, and a female master's student. I treated each individual as a separate case to represent different age groups, genders, and academic and career levels to understand how these factors shaped and impacted their experiences at an American campus and how they navigated the visiting scholars' program and made sense of their experiences.

Data Collection Tools

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) suggest incorporating a variety of data collection tools and exploring different perspectives. According to Yin (2003, 2018), six common sources of evidence are used in case studies, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations,

participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Yin (2003) suggests, “Various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” (p. 85). (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) included films, photographs, and videotapes; projective techniques and psychological testing; proxemics; kinesics; street ethnography; and life histories in the list of sources of evidence for case studies. I used semi-structures interviews, observations, focus group, reflection papers, and documentation (orientation guide, program information flyers, and emails).

Semi-structured interviews

According to Yin (2003), interviews are one of the most important sources of information for case study. He suggests that interviews should be “guided conversation rather than standard queries” (p. 89). The interview questions should be more fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 1995 cited in Yin, 2003). Semi-structured interviews may be used to obtain information about the experiences of the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). I used semi-structured interviews because they allow flexibility for follow-up questions and additional issues to be addressed by the interviewer (Esterberg, 2002). Only probes and points of clarification were offered so that the participants could share the information comfortably (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). There were four rounds of interviews: the first round can be considered as entry interviews and was conducted during the first month after the scholars’ arrival to understand their motivations, goals, and expectations and their early experiences. The second round was conducted around mid-term and was a focus group with all seven participants of the program to better understand the group relationships and how Chinese visiting scholars made sense of their experiences as a group, since they participated in the program as a group. The third round consisted of departure interviews and was conducted a week before the scholars’ departure from

the United States to find out their overall experiences and preparation strategies for returning home. The fourth round of interviews was conducted three months after their reentry to their home country to follow up and find out the impact of the program in their lives back home in China. The first three rounds of interviews were conducted in person in a private room in the College of Education. The fourth round was conducted via Skype from China. The duration of all the interviews was from thirty to ninety minutes, and the interviews were digitally recorded. All these interviews focused on gathering information about the nature of their lived experiences and how they made sense of their experiences. These interviews also provided them a chance to reflect on and verbalize their experiences which in itself was a meaning making process and allowed them to think about themselves and the environment and explain their meaning making through their narratives.

Observations

According to Yin (2003), field visits to the case study site provide opportunity for direct observation and can serve as another important source of evidence for case studies. The formal process involves observations of meetings, and classrooms, but the less informal observations include unspoken information about the working conditions of the participants. Yin (2003) suggests that observations can be so valuable that researchers may consider taking photos at a case study site. I observed different academic and social activities of my research participants, which included a weekly lecture series, a college wide lecture series, monthly local teacher's professional development sessions, monthly International breakfasts, Chinese cultural events, and school visits throughout their stay at Midwestern Research University. Spending a great deal of my time with them allowed me to develop good relationships with my participants and made us comfortable to ask questions and share our opinions openly with each other. Also, I lived in close proximity with

my research participants. Since we were in the same neighborhood and often travelled in the same bus, our proximity also allowed us to meet more frequently and allowed me to understand their day-to-day experiences.

Focus group

I organized a focus group as a form of data collection during mid-semester because a focus group is considered an efficient use of time since it allows access to different perspectives of a number of people at the same time (Glesne, 2011; Morgan, 1997; Sim, 1998). Another reason to choose focus groups was to understand group perspectives and group dynamics around different issues. Chinese visiting scholars go through similar experiences during their stay at Midwestern Research University, so this technique of data collection provided me a chance to understand how group members view and perceive different aspects of their experiences and discuss these among themselves. According to Butler (1996 as cited in Sim, 1998), focus groups may encourage a greater degree of spontaneity in perspectives and expression of views, which is why I used focus groups as a supplementary technique to bring nuance to my study. I arranged an hour and a half long focus group meeting at the College of Education and audio taped the discussion for analysis purposes.

Reflection papers

I used reflection papers as part of my data collection process since reflection is an important aspect of Transformative Learning Theory. I requested my research participants write a page or two-page reflection paper after their return to China and reflect on their learning and experiences as visiting scholars in the U.S. I collected their reflection essays with their written permission (through a signed consent form). The purpose of these reflective pieces was to capture data that may not have been gathered during the interviews and observations and allow a different

type of outlet for sharing their experiences. I chose a reflection paper as a data collection tool because I thought written reflections would allow participants to articulate their thoughts more easily. If they did not feel comfortable speaking in English, writing would provide them a different outlet to express themselves. I believed reflections would provide them time to think, reflect, and internalize their learning experiences and express them in their own words.

Documentation

Yin (2018) suggested collecting a variety of documents for case study research. Yin (2018) argued that documentation is helpful in many ways. First, it can help to check and consolidate different types of information such as names of people, organizations, dates of events, etc. Second, documents can provide specific details about events which can be verified or corroborated from other sources. Third, inference can be made on the basis of available documentation. However, Yin (2018) warns that these inferences should be treated “as clues worthy of further investigation rather than definitive findings” (p.115). Yin (2018) suggested the following types of documentation for case study research.

- Emails, memorandums, letters, and other documents such as diaries, calendars, and notes.
- Agendas, announcements, and minutes of meetings, and reports of events.
- Administrative documents, such as proposals, progress reports, and other internal records.
- Formal studies or evaluations related to the case you are studying.
- News clipping and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newspapers.

I used emails, program documents, weekly schedules of visiting scholars, meeting agendas, minutes of meetings, administrative documents, program and department websites and reports to gain understanding of the context and explain the program and its components. I also used

PowerPoint presentations created by visiting scholars and information about schools' sites and papers shared with them by the program administrators and faculty.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) considers data analysis “the process of making sense of data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (p. 178). According to (Yin, 2003), data analysis “consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (p. 109). Merriam (1998) explained the data analysis process and mentioned that multiple or comparative case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from more than one case. Merriam (1998) mentioned two stages of data analysis: the first stage involves data analysis within each case, and the second stage is cross case analysis. “For within-in case analysis each case is treated as comprehensive case in and of itself” (p.194). In this stage, the researcher learns about contextual variables specific to a case and can present the case in descriptive form (Merriam, 1998). After completing the analysis for each case, cross-case analysis is conducted “to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1994, p.112 cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 195). This process can lead to developing a sophisticated explanation of the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Working Data from the Ground up

Although my theoretical framework helped me to design the study and my data collection tools, while analyzing data I used a “working your data from the ‘ground up’” strategy because this inductive strategy allowed me to notice patterns beyond my theoretical framework. For data analysis, I read and re-read the transcriptions to become familiar with the data while paying special

attention to patterns. I also constantly went back to audio recordings to understand the tone and mode of the conversation to better capture the emotion and understand the experiences of my participants. I printed all transcripts and organized them in a folder, along with reflection papers and observation notes. I shared these transcripts with my PhD advisor and two fellow doctoral students. Using the “ground up” strategy suggested by Yin (2018), we generated initial codes by labeling certain patterns with categories on our own to get a sense of the data and emerging trends. As a group, we generated 48 codes during the first round of coding such as “goals”, “language”, “English”, “Research”, “Learning”, “Education”, “Culture”, “International”, “Global”, “Travel”, “Relationships”, “Different”, “Mentor”, “Friends”, “Family”, “Feelings”, “Challenge”, “Freedom”, “We”, “Group”, “Fear/anxiety”, “Lecture”, “Resources”, etc.

Since each case was unique in its own way, in the case-based coding process some codes emerged as more significant for a certain case. Since each participant had different backgrounds and life experiences, they valued different things based on their identities, goals, and life experiences. For example, for Lucy’s case, as a teacher, “Teaching”, “Education”, “Learning”, “America/ American”, “Class”, “Friends”, “Research”, “China/Chinese”, “School”, and “English” were important and often came up in data. For Wei Fei, a PhD student, “Research”, “School”, “China/Chinese”, “English, America/American”, “Different”, “Learning, Experience”, and “PhD” were significant in the data. For Emily, a master’s student, “Different, “Experience”, “American/American”, “School”, “China/Chinese”, “Research”, “Feelings”, “English”, and “Learning” were often repeated in different data forms.

Following major trends emerged from the data: self-concept in relation to larger world, participants’ relationships, the role of English language in their lives, reflection on differences and similarities between American and Chinese education systems and agency vs institutional

pressures. According to Merriam (1998), categories should reflect the purpose of your research, since they are answer to your research questions.

Case Description & Explanation in Chronological Sequence

The second level of data analysis involved individual case analysis. According to Merriam (1998), in the data analysis process, often data is organized chronologically and is presented in narrative that is largely descriptive. After initial data analysis and coding, I started individual case analysis. Yin (2018) suggested “developing a case description” as a general analytic strategy. I created detailed descriptions of each one of my cases in chronological order incorporating different sets of data such as interviews, observations, informal conversation notes, and reflection papers to create a comprehensive understanding of my participants’ meaning making process and learning experiences. This strategy helped me in organizing my findings and recognizing patterns since I had collected a large quantity of qualitative data over the time period. According to Yin (2018), “the original purpose of the case study may not have been a descriptive one, but a descriptive approach may later help to identify the appropriate explanation to be analyzed” (p.172).

Explanation building. According to Yin (2018), this procedure is used for explanatory case studies and has been commonly used for hypothesis generation and the main purpose is not to conclude the study, but to develop ideas for further studies. I used this technique since my goal was to explain the phenomenon “to stipulate a presumed set of casual sequences about it, or “how” or “why” some outcomes have occurred” and the challenge was to measure the causal sequences in a precise manner. According to Yin (2018), “in most case studies, explanation building occurs in narrative form” (p.197). Yin (2018) stated, “given the likely imprecision of such narratives, case studies of greater interest are those whose explanations may reflect some theoretical significant propositions” (p.179). I used a descriptive and explanatory method and presented the data of each

case in chronological sequence. I created detailed descriptions of each case after a careful reading of the transcripts of individual interviews, and reviewing my field notes, documents, reflection papers, and my memos. Then I drew some inferences from my participants' comments, the experiences they shared upon my questions, my observations in their classes, and their reflections.

Chronological Sequences. Yin (2018) suggested time series analysis as a third analytic technique and presented three sub-categories simple time series, complex time series, and chronological sequences. Yin (2018) argued that the chronological sequence focuses directly on the major strength of case studies, since it allows the researcher to trace items or behaviors over time. Yin (2018) argued that chronological sequences should not be considered “a descriptive device only”, but also, “the procedure can have an important analytic purpose to investigate presumed casual relationships because the basic sequence of cause and its effects cannot be temporally inverted” (p.184). “Moreover, the chronology is likely to cover many different types of events (e.g., behavioral events, but also the timing of participants’ perceptions). In this sense, chronology can be richer and more insightful than general time series.” I used a chronological sequence in my multi-case study because it gave me the opportunity “to build an overview as well as deeper understanding of change that might be occurring” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, pp. 16-17). I was able to get to the core of this phenomenon by asking fluid questions, “linking present, past, and future” (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 18).

Cross Case Synthesis

“The third level of data analysis involves making inferences, developing models, or generating theory” (Merriam, 1998, p. 187). This is a cognitive process of making inferences based on the relationships between categories (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998) cross case analysis of data differs from single qualitative case study because “the level of analysis can result

in little more than a unified description across cases; it can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize data from all the cases” (p. 195) or it can lead to building substantive theory incorporating data from all cases.

According to Merriam (1998), “Moving beyond basic description on to the next level of analysis, the challenge is constructing categories or themes that capture some recurring patterns that cuts across” the cases (p.179). Merriam (1998) argued that designing categories is largely an intuitive process “systematic and informed by the study’s purpose, investigator’s orientation and knowledge, and meanings made explicit by the participants themselves” (p.179). Merriam (1998) suggested using a constant comparative method of data analysis to create categories and themes within cases and across cases.

Yin (2018) suggested, “When doing cross-case synthesis, be prepared to link upward conceptually, rather than downward in the domain of individual variables” (p.197). Yin (2018) argued that this is an important strategy because in case study research holistic analysis is favored and considered important and the main goal is to understand the phenomenon in its real-world settings. So, I choose cross-case synthesis to retain the holistic feature of each case rather than settling for a variable-based approach. According to Yin (2018), it is highly important to synthesize potentially contaminating differences among cases. Yin (2018) argued, “no two cases are identical”. Yin (2018) also said, “helpful if not essential will be the discussion of how the individual cases were sufficiently comparable along important dimensions (e.g., their cultural or institutional settings) to warrant a presumed common finding among them. Similarly, the discussion needs to show how marked differences among the cases, if any do not plausibly undermine the presumed multi-case findings” (p. 198). Cross case synthesis identified common themes from the data about the meaning making process across all cases: Identity/ Self-Concept,

Freedom/Agency, Comparison/Reflection, Language and Relationships. However, transformative learning outcomes varied across cases in terms of each participants' specific goals and identity.

Validating Data

While thinking about data collection strategies, it is important to consider trustworthiness and validity issues (Glesne, 2006). In terms of ensuring data quality, different methodologists suggested different strategies based on their epistemological approaches. Yin (2003), as a positivist researcher, is concerned with construct validity, internal validity, and external validity. However, Stake (1995), as constructivist and qualitative researcher, believed that "Each researcher needs through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that works for him or her" (p.77). Based on this approach, Stake (1995) suggested using triangulation for data validation. Stake (1995) suggested using Denzin's (1989) protocols for triangulation. Denzin (1989) presented the following four strategies for triangulation: data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation.

Also, (Creswell, 1998, pp. 201-203) presented a comprehensive list of eight verification procedures used in qualitative research: (i) prolonged engagement and persistent observations, (ii) triangulation; using multiple data collection methods, (iii) peer review and debriefing, (iv) negative case analysis, (v) clarification of research bias, (vi) member checking, sharing interview transcripts, drafts, and analytical thoughts with your participants, (vii) rich, thick description, and (viii) external audit. I considered most of these important points while creating data collection strategies and embed the above given rules in my techniques. However, I focused on Denzin's (1989) and Stake's (1995) approach of using triangulation for data validation and incorporated Yin's (2018) principles for data collection and Creswell's (2014) suggested points from the above-mentioned list.

Data Source Triangulation

According to Stake (1995), data source triangulation means that the researcher checks if the phenomenon or the case remains the same in different times, spaces, and situations. This case study lasted over a year and a half and data was collected at various points in the program such as at the start, middle, and end of the program, and after the participants' return to their home country. This data was collected in different situations (classrooms, informal meetings, school visits, etc.) and geographical locations (the U. S. and China, in person and online). This technique helped me to analyze and compare participants' responses and actions in different phases of the program and develop a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and observe their sense making process and how it evolved and changed over a certain period of time.

Investigator Triangulation

Investigator triangulation means "other researchers take a look at the same scene or phenomenon" (Stake, 1995, p. 113). In this study, three other researchers helped me to verify my findings in different ways. My advisor played a key role as co-researcher and at times co-observer. Two of my colleagues from my doctoral program were also at times part of field observations and generating initial codes. We had regular meetings every two weeks to discuss our data collection plan and impressions of collected data and often those meetings were audio recorded or I kept notes of those reflections. All the research questions and instruments used in the research process were thoroughly discussed with and vetted by my advisor, which helped to reduce the risk of individual bias. I shadowed my advisor to learn better techniques of asking questions and to get some training before starting independent interviews. In addition to this, I have included a statement of my positionality to address my biases and limitations as a researcher, which might have influenced the interpretation and results of this study.

Methodological Triangulation

I used multiple methods and data sources for collecting data, such as interviews, observations, written materials, and reflections. This allowed me to compare findings and analysis for convergence or divergence (triangulation). Even during interviews, questions were repeated at different stages of program to understand participants' sense making process throughout the program. Formal and informal interactions provided me the opportunity to compare and contrast the participants' answers for a fair analysis process. I used less structured interview questions and kept updating them based on my experience while using them. The use of a variety of methods helped me to check the validity of my findings.

Theory Triangulation

Stake (1995) argued that no two investigators interpret things in the same way, so whenever multiple investigators interpret data there is theory triangulation. In my study, each researcher came from different theoretical understandings and epistemological viewpoints. Also, we had different cultural understanding of the phenomenon, since all the other researchers were Americans and I am Pakistani and all of us were trying to make sense of Chinese visiting scholars' behaviors and learning experiences in the American context. So, during meetings when we all presented our interpretations it often generated a discussion which lead to mutually agreed upon interpretations of the opinions and behaviors of participants during the program.

Researcher's Position

In qualitative studies, the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) which means data is mediated by a human instrument. So, it is important to know about the human instrument. (Greenbank, 2003) argued that the complex interaction of the researcher's moral competency and personal and social values have a significant influence on

research and the researcher should describe relevant aspects of his or her biases, assumptions, expectations, experiences, and ability to conduct the research. (Glesne, 2006) described qualitative research as the intersection of personal narratives and as a way of meaning making, that is why I consider myself an important part of my participants' meaning making process from designing and conducting this study to interpreting their stories. Hence, it is important to reflect on my role as a researcher, on my personal narrative as an international student, and how my worldview and epistemological approach may have influenced this study.

I am a female Pakistani international student who was born and raised in Pakistan for most of my life. I studied and taught in Japan and the U. S. and have traveled to several countries including China, which has provided me a chance to experience different cultures and develop understanding of the complexities of human interaction with foreign cultures. My experiences of studying as a graduate student in Japan and the U. S. have provided me firsthand experience of not only navigating foreign culture in general, but also understanding academic challenges for non-native speakers of English in particular. This means that I have prior assumptions regarding international academic experiences. I participated in short-term study abroad programs in Thailand, Mexico, and Indonesia which has provided me some understanding of differences between programs based on duration, goals, and the overall nature of these programs. Personally, for me these experiences have emotional and spiritual significance and I entered this study with the assumption that these experiences have lasting impact on participants and at times prove to be life changing experiences. I am a traveler and I see the world in many colors. I am an inquisitive learner and avid reader who does not believe in absolute truth and I believe context is important to frame human experiences and reality is socially constructed.

This study was conducted at a large Midwestern Research University where I was an international student for the past five years. This is an interesting situation, since I am a representative of this large Midwestern Research University as a full-time PhD candidate and a researcher, but I am also an international student. I was able to connect with my participants on many levels as an Asian female international student. I knew the challenges of studying in a different country and had empathy for my research participants' struggles with foreign language, navigation of a different academic system, and frustrations with their daily life living independently for the first time in their lives in a foreign country. As an Asian woman, I also shared some common cultural values and beliefs, fears, and anxieties with my participants. My position as non-American and non-Chinese made me an outsider and insider at the same time. As a part of a large Midwestern university and especially the Education Department, I felt more like an insider, but at the same time I am neither American nor Chinese, which created a sense of neutrality.

Also, it is important to share my linguistic background. My mother tongue is Punjabi, Urdu is my national language, and English is my third language. English was the medium of instruction for most of my education in Pakistan. I am a fluent speaker of English and I can communicate in English with ease, since I have near native level English proficiency. During my graduate studies in Japan, I learned Japanese language. I have elementary level Japanese language proficiency certification. I am familiar with Chinese Kenji characters, but by no means can I make any claims to proficiency in Chinese language. I cannot read, write, or speak Chinese language, which I consider a limitation to my research study. I address the issues of my linguistic and cultural understanding of China and Chinese language in the next section in detail.

Limitations

This is a cross- cultural and cross-lingual qualitative research study, since there are certain cultural and linguistic barriers between the researcher and the participants (Squires, 2009). After living in different countries, I believe language is a doorway to understand any foreign culture. I consider my inability to speak, read, write, or understand the Chinese language a limitation to this study. Although my participants could speak a functional level of English, still their level of English language proficiency was at times a barrier in our communication. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), trustworthiness is an important measure of research studies' rigor. Often, the language barrier is mediated by using translators or interpreters (Squires, 2009). In cross-cultural and cross-lingual research studies the use of translations can affect the quality of the study. Squires (2009) suggested several techniques to address language barriers between the researcher and the participants such as maintaining conceptual equivalence, disclosing translator's credentials, and explaining the translator or the researcher's role in the research process.

According to (Jandt, 2017), conceptual equivalence means that a translator or researcher provides technically, and conceptually accurate translated communication of concepts used by the participants. It is also important to consider that most communication is dependent on contextual clues and body language. My process of creating conceptual equivalence was organic and I paid attention to contextual clues, body language, emotions, and frequently probed for further clarity of verbal communication. I was mindful of my participants' linguistic limitations, so I often asked follow-up questions to have a clear sense of terms or words my participants used on a regular basis. Edwards (1998) considered the nature of interaction between the researcher and participants important in the data interpretation process. The longitudinal qualitative nature of my study provided me multiple chances to interact with my participants on a regular basis during my data

collection. This also helped me to observe and see within a certain context what they meant by their words or terms. Although I used English as a medium of communication in my study, I came across certain terms my participants used frequently for example “broadening horizons” which seemed to be the translation of some Chinese concept or idea, since all my participants used this term more than once in the study.

A second technique to address linguistic barriers between the researcher and the participants is providing credentials of the researcher and translator because poor quality translation can affect the quality of the study. Edwards (1998) argued this is very important for the coding and data analysis process and poorly translated concepts can threaten the credibility of a research study. For my data collection process, I provided Chinese translations for the questions asked. These translations were done by PhD students who were Chinese and were well versed in both English and Chinese. Most of our conversations happened in English and as a researcher I was the main interpreter of data. To address my personal limitations and biases I used triangulation to interpret data. Edwards (1998) also suggested triangulation as an important technique to address researcher/interpreter’s biases. However, my colleagues were Americans and did not speak or understand Chinese. So, I think my inability to communicate in Chinese language remains a limitation of this study.

The third technique to address a language issue is explaining the role of the researcher as a collector and interpreter of data. I provided a detailed statement addressing my positionality as a researcher. I addressed my theoretical and philosophical approach and explained my socio-cultural background which shaped my worldview.

Another limitation of my study is my limited knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture. I tried to learn about Chinese history, culture, and socio-economic situations, but my

knowledge is limited to books and articles. I provided a detailed historical background of the Chinese-US educational exchange programs. I used the literature created in English which might have certain biases. I believe my inability to include Chinese literature in the study is another limitation of the study.

My original data collection plan included a visit to China to observe my participants' re-entry in the country and develop better cultural understanding. I tried to visit China for data collection during the last part of my study, but I was denied a visa twice. So, I had to conduct interviews online, which I think is another limitation, since I was not able to observe the transition of my participants back to their home institution in China in person.

Since this is a case study and focuses on an in-depth analysis of social phenomenon, it has limits in providing a broader picture of the issue. The study is limited to one program at one particular type of institution; the sample size is small, and only covers visiting scholars from one social science field. I believe a diverse sample in terms of gender, field, and ethnicity could have brought forward more diverse perspectives related to the experiences of international visiting scholars.

CHAPTER 4: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In this section I describe different components of the visiting scholar program between Midwestern Research University (pseudonym) in the U.S. and Southern University (pseudonym) in China. This program evolved over the past eight years and is still going through changes under a new administration. Over the years the duration of the program and the lengths of Chinese visiting scholars' stay at Midwestern Research University varied from four months to a year. In the year 2016-17, six visiting scholars participated in the program. There were four female masters' students, one male PhD candidate, and one female faculty mentor. In this study I focused on three participants. Their pseudonyms are Lucy, Wei Fei, and Emily. The program provided individual and group activities and resources to support the visiting scholars to develop their research skills and scholarly identities. In the following sections I explain program goals, structure, and activities for the academic year 2016-17.

Program Goals

The program goals for the 2016-17 year were as follows:

- Provide visiting scholars comprehensive understanding of the education system in the U.S.A.
- Provide a guided scholarship opportunity for each visiting scholar
- Expand the English proficiency of all participants
- Develop professional relationships between visiting scholars and Midwestern Research University students and faculty
- Contribute to the intellectual life and scholarly development of Midwestern Research University faculty and students

- Assist in determining exchange program impact (research and data collection)

Program Structure and Activities

The program offered structured activities, both social and academic, to support the learning goals of the visiting scholars. Academic activities included weekly lectures by faculty from the College of Education, a college wide lecture series, school visits, and library and museum visits. The program also offered opportunities to create social and professional networks through activities like international breakfasts and encouraged the visiting scholars to attend monthly professional meetings of local teachers for building professional and social networks. A description of various components of this program follows, based on my observations, interviews, and the information provided by the program through their website and shared folder online.

Orientation

The program started with an orientation session organized by the Office of International Education and Studies at Midwestern Research University. During the orientation session, the program director at Midwestern Research University provided an overview of the program and explained the expectations of the Chinese visiting scholars. The orientation session also included an introduction with different faculty members, students, and staff from the College of Education at Midwestern Research University who have been active participants of this program for the past several years. Following the orientation session, Chinese visiting scholars attended an informal reception where they had an opportunity to meet and interact with their faculty mentors and peer mentors.

Mentors

As mentioned above in the year 2016-17, six visiting scholars participated in the program. There were four female masters' students, one male PhD candidate, and one female faculty mentor.

Except for the faculty member, all the Chinese visiting scholars were assigned three mentors. This included one faculty mentor and two peer mentors who were PhD students from the College of Education. The Chinese faculty member was assigned two mentors, one faculty mentor and one student mentor. The role of the faculty mentor was to provide academic support and guide visiting scholars on their research projects. The role of student mentors was of a social nature. They were supposed to provide social and cultural support to visiting scholars and help them in their adjustment process in American social and academic life. The frequency and length of meetings with mentors were at the discretion of mentor and mentee. The participation of faculty and peer mentors in the program was on a volunteer basis, as they did not receive any compensation for their involvement with the program. Most of the faculty mentors were involved in international research. Often, the peer mentors had participated in a fellowship program in China or any other country (as offered in the fellowship that year) and were required to complete twenty hours of service after the completion of the fellowship. Some of the student mentors had academic or social ties with China because they had lived in China or studied China or Chinese culture in the past. Also, many international students from the College of Education participated in the program as peer mentors.

Weekly Lectures

The program offered a weekly faculty-led academic lecture series covering a comprehensive set of topics about the American education system. These lectures were designed to provide the scholars a general overview of the American education system. These lectures were usually two hours long and were organized on a weekly basis from 10 am to 12 pm every Wednesday morning. During the first hour, a faculty member from the College of Education shared his/her research and, for the second hour, led open discussion about the presented research topic.

The faculty members often used PowerPoint presentations in their lectures, but some faculty members organized their sessions as a seminar with a special focus on discussion based on provided articles. The topics and guest lectures were organized based on faculty's availability and willingness to present and be part of the lecture series. The topics presented in these lectures did not necessarily correspond to Chinese visiting scholars' majors or research interests because of differences in the areas of specialization of scholars and the COE faculty's expertise. The topics covered during the 2016-17 session were the following, in the order they were presented: governance of public education, a history of public investment in early education, designs for telepresence in synchronous hybrid classrooms, developing global curriculum for teacher preparation candidates, globalization and education, testing and assessment of teaching in the era of accountability, intercultural learning in the American context, transformative learning historical context and use, and global lifelong learning.

The visiting scholars were required to come prepared to these lectures by reading the assigned articles or book chapters before coming to the lecture and were expected to actively participate in the discussion by asking questions and sharing their views about the reading and lecture during the discussion. Most of the faculty members provided one or two journal articles for prior reading. Some faculty members provided up to four articles, but it was rare. Also, some faculty members shared their lecture slides and videos before their lecture.

These lectures were offered in a room where all the Chinese visiting scholars would sit around a large table while American faculty presented their work. Most of the faculty who participated in this lecture series had either worked with Southern University in China or had focused on international education or topics related to international education in their research. Often, delivery of information was through the lecture method, followed by open discussion. In

observation sessions, I noticed that initially the Chinese visiting scholars' participation in the discussion was more information seeking or asking clarifying questions rather than asking complex analytical questions, but, with time, Chinese visiting scholars started to engage in in-depth discussions, especially when the topic was relevant to their research. I particularly noticed Chinese visiting scholars were very interested in the technology related session when the professor brought robots to the class and let them wear headsets and operate robots. This seminar focused on augmented reality in teaching. Scholars were very interested in this seminar, but they did not ask any questions. Also, they did not respond to any direct questions from the professor. During the last 5 minutes of the session, the scholars were allowed to try a Google device and experience artificial intelligence. After the class, I talked with several of the scholars and they suggested that they found the seminar very interesting, but it was not really relevant to their research. They were engaged because it was about technology and they did like that element, even if it didn't intersect with their work.

Often, faculty members were mindful of their use of English language in the classroom and tried to adjust their speaking speed according to the level of Chinese visiting scholars' understanding. During observations, I noticed a few professors often stopped and asked if they were going too fast. One professor in particular attempted to engage them with specific questions requiring answers. The scholars seemed hesitant to contribute at first. However, direct questions created more engagement after some hesitation. The professor lectured for about 45 minutes about global challenges, then asked more questions. Only a single question was asked by the Chinese visiting scholars, but when the professor asked specific questions from the scholars, it generated a full dialogue.

Another session about transformative learning was of great interest for some of the students, regardless of the fact that the topic was complex, and the reading was dense. The faculty member was extremely mindful of her delivery method. She presented her topic through a PowerPoint presentation and spoke at a considerably slow pace. If there was a difficult word or term used during the lecture, the faculty member tried to rephrase it and provided alternative easier words. Another significant part of this lecture series was a reflective session offered by the program director and faculty member. The overall focus was on the Chinese visiting scholars' goals and learning process. The session provided them a chance to reflect on various components of the program, such as weekly lectures, school visits, and their social interactions and how their learning experience was shaping their global perspective. They were also asked to reflect on their assumptions and preconceptions, and rethink education research based on their new experiences. During the session, the faculty member asked questions such as: what most stands out about their school visits and why? What questions do you have now, which you did not have before and how do these school visits inform your research? They were asked to reflect on each lecture, their social activities, and campus tours or class observations with their readings, and find common themes and describe the patterns they noticed through different activities and lecture sessions. They were also asked to share what was working for them and what was not working for them. This session was special in the sense that it allowed the Chinese visiting scholars to think about their experiences and reflect on their learning. I noticed it was one of the most interactive sessions in the lecture series. The faculty member not only created a simple and easy to follow PowerPoint presentation, but also provided Chinese translation of certain terms and phrases. Since the faculty member was fluent in Mandarin, she switched languages whenever she needed to explain some

complex idea or term. She was also very careful not to speak too fast and often repeated instructions to make sure that all the scholars understood.

I noticed during the observations, whenever Chinese visiting scholars had trouble understanding words or terms, they frequently used their phone dictionaries. Also, they often used Chinese language while communicating with each other during the class, especially when they did not understand a term or a concept. I noticed their learning experience was of a communal nature, rather than individualistic, especially at the early stages of the program. If any member of the group did not understand the question, they often helped each other while using Chinese language to explain the concept. It was rare to see them disagree with each other during discussion sessions. Their social hierarchy was evident from their interactions, since the group consisted of one faculty member, one PhD scholar, and four master's students. Often, they addressed the professor in a formal way as Prof. Lucy. They also considered Wei Fei more experienced and knowledgeable as a PhD student. In later lectures, they often compared American teaching and learning practices, particularly in one session when the professor discussed early childhood education in the U. S. It sparked a lot of response from the Chinese visiting scholars and they compared the system and teaching practices with China.

The Chinese visiting scholars were required to attend the College of Education sponsored lectures and series on a regular basis. These lectures and seminars were related to education, but not necessarily directly linked to their research area.

Chinese visiting scholars were required to work on periodic individual and group assignments. Mostly, these assignments provided them a chance to write reflections on their experiences as visiting scholars and understanding of the American education system based on weekly lectures, discussion, and school visits. The Chinese visiting scholars were required to write

an assignment a month after their arrival and reflect on their experiences at Midwestern Research University. One example was, a faculty member asked them to write a one-page answer to the following questions: what are you seeing that confirms your earlier assumptions about American education? How has your time at Midwestern Research University influenced or connected to your research focus? How has it influenced your thinking about education research? How has your time affected your sense of or view of yourself? I used these reflection papers as part of my data.

Classes

The Chinese visiting scholars could audit undergraduate or graduate level classes offered by faculty or peer mentors in the college of education with prior permission from the faculty and program administrators. All the Chinese visiting scholars were allowed to audit classes if the concerned faculty member allowed them to attend their class, but only a few Chinese visiting scholars audited classes. Prof. Lucy and Emily were more interested in gaining classroom experience as compared to Wei Fei, who did not attend any class during his one-year time at Midwestern Research University. He decided to spend most of his time working on his research and completing his dissertation work. Prof. Lucy was very interested in attending classes and she was able to audit a graduate-level seminar offered by her faculty mentor about international education. She also observed an undergraduate level class during her stay at Midwestern Research University. She felt that she really needed to observe classes and experience “the real American classroom” to observe the teaching and learning experiences of American students. Since she was a teacher, she was more interested in the teaching and learning aspects of this program, so she was very active in participating in the class experiences as compared to the graduate students in her program.

In the past, Chinese visiting scholars had the option to attend classes instead of participating in weekly lectures. In the past, Chinese visiting scholars experienced difficulty in classes because of their limited English language skills. Also, the faculty members were not really comfortable with Chinese visiting scholars showing up in their classrooms every now and then without seeking prior permission. In the past two years, the program changed this pattern and allowed Chinese visiting scholars to attend classes if they wanted to and only if the faculty member in the COE agreed to host them in their classes. In the revised version of the program, weekly lectures were included to address the language issues of Chinese visiting scholars, but the downside was all Chinese visiting scholars were clumped together in a group and did not have enough chance to interact with American peers, practice English, and experience “real American class”.

School Visits

The visiting scholar program organized periodic K-12 school visits and all Chinese visiting scholars were required to participate in school visits for classroom observations to gain firsthand knowledge and to develop broader understanding of the American education system. The school visit coordinator would usually share resources and information about the school before a visit and encourage the Chinese visiting scholars to read about schools prior to their visit. The school visit included different types of schools such as primary, secondary and high schools, and sometimes community colleges. One example of a school visit was visiting a primary school during the first month of their arrival. The school visit started early in the morning around 8 am. All the scholars were driven to the school by the university van by a volunteer doctoral student. Often, the school staff member gave a building tour. Mostly, Chinese visiting scholars clumped together and remained silent observers during these visits. Once, a school staff member was a little disappointed, because she was hoping to get photos of students while interacting with the Chinese

visiting scholars. I noticed during the question and answer session, they were far more involved than during the building tour. However, many of their questions were related to funding and the school administrator was not able to fully answer their questions.

Another example of a school visit was visiting a community college during the month of November. All the visiting scholars arrived at the community college at 8:30 am. The first half of their trip was focused on a presentation by the community college administrator about the college mission statement and an overview of courses offered. The scholars focused on information-gathering questions during the session. The Chinese visiting scholars had a chance to visit the Early Childhood Center on campus and most of them were quite engaged, except Wei Fei, who wandered aimlessly during the visit. However, Emily was really interested in this part of the community college, and she said she really enjoyed the store and dining hall of the Early Childhood Center. Emma and Mavis said they really enjoyed the tour. They really liked the fact that they could visit a college other than Midwestern Research University. Wei Fei was far more engaged in the second half of the tour, when he was able to visit west campus where the focus was technical Education. He considered the second half of the trip far more relevant to his area of interest than the first part of the trip.

International Breakfast and Potluck

The College of Education at Midwestern Research University organizes a monthly international breakfast and potluck to provide a chance for international students, scholars, and faculty to connect with each other. The College of Education Office for International Education (Pseudonym) provided breakfast items and space. All Chinese visiting scholars were required to participate in the international breakfast to create social and professional networks. During the international breakfast, often all the Chinese visiting scholars sat together at the same table.

Sometimes, I noticed them talking to different students in the college during these activities. At times, their student mentors attended the international breakfast and had a meeting with them during the session. The purpose of the international breakfast was to provide an opportunity to international students in the college to interact with each other and discuss topics of interest, which may lead to research collaborations. Another social interaction activity was the international potluck, which was also organized by the College of Education Office for International Education. This activity was also organized once a month and had a similar purpose, that students and scholars can come and share not only their food, but also culture and discuss topics of interest and may work together on their research projects, especially related to international education. Most of the time, the students who participated in these social activities were international students in the College of Education from different countries such as Nigeria, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea, and China. It was not very common to see American students participating in these activities. This opportunity provided the Chinese visiting scholars a great chance not only to talk to a few American students, but also to learn about other cultures and people from different countries.

Cross Campus International Programs

The Chinese visiting scholars were encouraged to attend cross-campus international programs, such as events organized by the international office and to participate in monthly meetings of local teachers who were involved in international and global education. Often, Chinese visiting scholars were not interested in participating in these suggested activities. I noticed hardly any Chinese visiting scholars participating in the meetings of the network of local teachers. During their interviews, some of the Chinese visiting scholars mentioned that those meetings did not provide them an opportunity to actually connect with people. They also felt these connections were of a superficial nature because often they met a person only once and were not able to meet with

that person again, so they did not find these momentary interactions useful because they wanted to develop lasting relationships with American peers and colleagues.

Living Arrangements

The Chinese visiting scholars were provided accommodation in university housing. Two female masters' students shared an apartment, Wei Fei lived with another male Chinese student, and Prof. Lucy lived by herself in single bedroom apartment. They all lived in the same housing area and often used the same buses and travelled together for classes and other activities. It was quite common to see them together in a group. Since they lived together, travelled together, went to the same lectures, and attended the same social activities, they had less chance and need to communicate with other students and practice English. However, they developed strong relationships as a group. Wei Fei mentioned in one of the interviews that he is like an older brother to all the girls. Prof. Lucy also mentioned, "we are like a family here". However, living together stripped them of the opportunity to interact with Americans more often. Some of the scholars also voiced their concerns about this lack of opportunity to interact with Americans and other international students. They had assigned each other duties for cleaning and cooking and Prof. Lucy's job was to ensure that all the scholars were safe and lived in harmony with each other.

Other Activities

Apart from the program activities, the Chinese visiting scholars participated in several social and cultural activities and made some friends even outside the campus. Two masters' students bought bicycles and enjoyed bike rides around the campus and nearby parks. Some of them joined a church, mostly for social purposes, to learn English and to interact with Americans. They mentioned during the interviews that they found "church people" kind and welcoming. Prof. Lucy also made some friends in the church and went for Thanksgiving dinner to one of her church

friends' home. Prof. Lucy was very outgoing and participated in several sports and cultural activities. She mentioned during the interview that she especially enjoyed participating in a dragon boat race, which is China's national sport, at Midwestern Research University but she had never participated in this sport in China. Although Wei Fei spent most of his time studying, he also liked to play badminton with his international and Chinese friends sometimes.

Research Project Presentations

All the Chinese visiting scholars were required to have a solid research proposal before coming to the U. S. They were expected to work on their research projects with the help of their faculty mentors during their stay at Midwestern Research University. Also, it was required that they present their research projects in English in a conference style seminar at the end of their program. The goal of this seminar/ mini conference was to provide the Chinese visiting scholars an experience of presenting research in an American academic setting. They worked with faculty and peer mentors and at times on their own in the library to find resources for their research projects and to create their research presentations. The Chinese visiting scholars were provided access to library resources and the internet. They could use library materials only in the library and were not allowed to take books home.

All the Chinese visiting scholars presented their research projects at end of their program in a research seminar. All the presentations were delivered in English and some faculty members and students from the College of Education at Midwestern Research University attended these presentations. Each presentation lasted for 15 minutes with 5 minutes for a question and answer session, however, the Chinese visiting scholars did not ask any questions from each other. When I asked after their presentations why they did not ask questions from each other, one of the scholars told me that they had shared their presentations and practiced their presentations with each other

several times before the actual presentation, so they had already asked most of their questions during those practice sessions. All the presentations had a research presentation format and consisted of research problem, research question, significance of the topic, literature review, theoretical framework, findings, and discussion sections.

The formal structured part of the program concluded after six months with an informal reception where the Chinese visiting scholars were provided a chance to formally say good-bye to their faculty mentors, peer mentors, friends, and colleagues in the COE at Midwestern Research University. Four female master's students returned to China after the reception, however, Prof. Lucy and Wei Fei stayed for full academic year and engaged in different activities and research projects based on their goals for the program.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Chinese visiting scholars at an American university by exploring their meaning making process. Using Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1991), I examined the goals, motivations, and outcomes of international visiting scholar's experiences to understand what meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991) they used to frame and make sense of their experiences, and how these meaning frames changed throughout and after their international exchange experience on return to their home countries. I explored their meaning making process and potentially transformative dimensions of their international academic experiences. I used Transformative Learning Theory to design this study and for the data collection process. A qualitative, multi case study methodology was used for data collection. I used interviews, observations, a focus group, reflection papers, and document analysis as my data collection tools (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 2009). All findings presented serve to answer the following research questions for this study:

- What is the nature of the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students and faculty who participate in a visiting scholars' program at an American campus?
- How did they perceive and make meaning of these experiences?
- How did these experiences influence their perspectives, values, behaviors, and worldviews?

The findings are divided into two chapters. In this chapter, each case is presented in detail. This will be followed by a cross-case synthesis in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I used chronological sequence as my method of description and analysis of these cases and I used three phases: (i) Life before visiting scholars' program, (ii) Life during

visiting scholars' program and (iii) Life after visiting scholars' program to present the detailed experiences of participants and their meaning making process. I believe time is an important factor in the meaning making process and retrospection is an important tool my participants used to make meaning of their experiences. Each case describes the experiences of my research participants and how they made meaning of their experiences. As a researcher I tried to present each case in detail to stay true to my participant's story and highlight their perspectives in best possible way I could. Although there is uniqueness to each person's life and personality, they also shared some common experiences during their visiting scholars' program at Midwestern Research University. So, in the description of each case I tried to capture both unique and common features or aspects of each case. The common themes that emerged from each case are: Sense of self, Relationships, Language, Agency, and Reflection.

Lucy: A Passionate Teacher and Lifelong Learner

This is the story of Lucy, a mid-career faculty member in her mid-forties who was the leader of the Chinese visiting scholars' group from Southern University, China in the year 2016-17. Lucy is a well-travelled and well-read woman, who was self-aware and had vigor for life and a thirst for knowledge. Her experience was deeply shaped by her self-image and what she wanted to be in the future. Her role as a teacher, her natural curiosity, and her desire to become a better version of herself were the forces behind her motivation to join this international visiting scholar program and shaped her experiences at Midwestern Research University.

Life before the Visiting Scholar Program

Lucy grew up in Yunnan province in China. She went to school at Southern Normal University (pseudonym) for undergraduate and graduate studies. She has been teaching at Southern University in China for the past ten years. Her area of research was curriculum and

instruction and she was deeply interested in teacher education. She taught courses about teaching skills, educational studies, and education evaluation. She was passionate about her work, which was evident as she beamed with pride while sharing that she teaches undergraduate students “to how to be a good teacher. How can they design teaching methods and so on and how they teach primary school students or high school students” She also provided professional development training to primary and middle school teachers. Overall, her love for teaching remained central to her international experience along with her love for learning about the world around her.

Since Lucy was always interested in “multiculturalism”, she really wanted to participate in international exchange programs. Her first opportunity to participate in an international exchange program came two years ago when her department wanted to send her to Canada to lead an exchange program. She readily agreed to participate in the program and started taking classes to improve her English, since it was required that she “must learn English” to go to Canada. Unfortunately, the program did not continue, and she could not go to Canada, but she continued learning English. After a couple of years, a second opportunity for participating in an international exchange program came her way when her department needed a faculty member to lead an exchange program at Midwestern Research University in the U. S. She approached the dean and expressed her interest and willingness to lead the program. She had already known about this program for the past few years and had met with some faculty members from the American university when they went to China. She was “very anxious to have this chance to come to America.” She thought she had skills and qualities that meant she could lead a successful exchange program.

Life during the Visiting Scholar Program

Lucy arrived at Midwestern Research University in August with her group of four female masters' students and a male PhD student. Her four female master's students were attending this program for five months, but she and her male PhD scholar colleague were initially sent for a ten-month duration, which later extended to one year because of a change in her university's policy. Their university required faculty members and PhD scholars to have a one-year international experience instead of ten months. The first five months of the program were fairly structured, but the remaining time Lucy and the PhD scholar were expected to spend on their own and work on their individual research projects.

After Lucy arrived, the next morning she attended an orientation session organized by the college of education at Midwestern Research University. There, she and her group members were briefed about the goals and structure of the program, the expectations from the college were explained in detail, and all group members were asked to sign a contract agreeing to adhere to the expectations of the program. Since she was the group leader, it was her job to make sure that her group members abided by the program rules and fulfilled the expectations from both institutions. During the orientation session, her remarks showed that she considered herself and her group the representatives of her institution and country and wanted to make sure that her group represented the values of her institution and country. Her role was a bridge between two institutions and her job was to ensure students' safety and success in a foreign country. She was also required to send regular reports to China regarding her group activities in the U. S.

My first interaction with Lucy was during the group orientation and later in the same day during the reception. She seemed quite outgoing and easy to talk to since she was easily making small talk with different faculty members and students during the reception. She knew the program

director prior to coming to the U. S., since the program director and some other faculty members had visited her university in China a few times in the past. She seemed to be at ease in the new environment because of the past acquaintances. We had a brief chance to chat during the reception and our first conversation was of an introductory nature. She did not know the students in her group before coming to this program, since they were from different disciplines, so she was a little anxious about her role as an effective group leader, but she certainly seemed to have motherly affection and concern for them as she considered her role as a group leader important for her students' success. Although her group members did not know each other before the trip, they all seemed outgoing, as they were trying to engage in conversation with different people.

Sense of Self

Lucy's goals to participate in the program and the ways she engaged in the program were derived from her sense of self and how she wanted to improvise and upgrade her 'self' with new skills and knowledge and expand her identity from local to global.

Globalization and Sense of Self

Lucy was aware of globalization and its impact on Chinese society and higher education and she considered globalization to some extent a driving force behind her decision to participate in the program. According to Lucy, "Globalization is a very trend in China. Education reform is focused on how to face challenges of globalization." She considered her participation in the visiting scholars' program a professional development opportunity and personal and professional development were intertwined in her understanding of the experience and were deeply ingrained in her sense of obligation to her society. Her goals evolved over time. At the start of the program, research was not a large part of her focus, but since the College of Education at Midwestern Research University focused on research and expected Chinese visiting scholars to develop

research proposals and work on a research project of their choice during their time her focus on research grew. During the program, she included research as one of her goals. “I want to do some research about teacher education between America and China, compared, especially I want to focus on globalization of teacher education.” This additional goal suggests how institutional goals and expectations were shaping and reshaping her goals as she was learning what was expected of her as a visiting scholar. To expand her identity further as an international teacher, she incorporated Midwestern Research University’s expectation in her goals.

Multiple Identities

Her goals for the program, the activities in which she chose to participate, and the way she engaged with American culture were deeply rooted within her understanding of her “self” and what she hoped to become. She was self-aware and constantly connected her choices and decisions with her multiple identities. During the first five months of her program, she actively participated in required program activities, both academic and social, with her students. She was aware of her multiple identities. She talked about her goals through the lens of her multiple identities and how she viewed herself. “I think I am a student. I am a learner. When I came here, I nearly forgot I am a teacher.” Her multiple identities shaped her experiences at Midwestern Research University, since she prioritized certain activities over others, depending on her role. She made sense of her experiences through her multiple identities of teacher, group leader, student, and the representative of her institution and country. She constantly reflected on her goals, activities, and program outcomes in light of her multiple identities. While muddling with all these identities, some of these identities overpowered others at times. She mentioned that at times she forgets that she is a teacher. She said,

At the same time, I know I'm a leader of this group too, double. Maybe sometimes I am third role. I think this is most different between me and five students because they are just students. I am a student and I am a teacher, so I think my thinking is different from them.

She was self-aware and was conscious how her different identities shaped her experiences at Midwestern Research University. However, she focused on her professional identities of teacher and group leader more to shape her academic experiences.

Teacher. Lucy's identity as a teacher remained very important in shaping her experience during this international exchange program. She considered herself "a good teacher" and had a very positive self-image as a teacher. She said, "Our students really love me, very like me." She believed as a teacher she had broad interests and had many goals for this program. As a teacher, she was particularly interested in learning about American teaching and learning methods. Her learning goals for the program were based on her role as a teacher and she had specific goals for exactly what she wanted to learn during her stay at Midwestern Research University. Later, these goals defined her participation in the program and how she made sense of her experiences at Midwestern Research University. She thought this experience would provide her a great chance to experience "American education" and she would be able to learn about a different system of education through first-hand experience. She said, although "I read some books, read some articles, I know some information about American education, but I haven't seen it by myself." She considered this experience important for her because of her work as a teacher trainer and her research focus in teacher education. She said,

Because my major and my work is focused on teacher education, so I want to learn how American teachers teach. So, I hope I can have chance to go to middle school, high school, go to classroom, observe the teachers and learn how they teach. For example, English

teachers, mathematics teachers, how they work, and I can compare Chinese teachers and American teachers, and can see if their work different or same.

Also, all the above mentioned goals are focused on her professional development. She is focused and aware of her “self” as a teacher and somewhat had a plan for how she wanted to spend her time during her visiting scholars’ program. Although she had this strong notion of learning “good method” which implies her perception about American teaching as better or at least good enough that she can learn from it, at the same time, she was analytical and wanted to compare American and Chinese teaching practices. Also, she hoped for and seemed willing to change her teaching practices for good.

Group leader. Lucy considered her role as group leader really important. During the first five months of her program, her role as a group leader took precedence over her role as a researcher, since she completely focused on activities related to her role of group leader and in fulfilling the information transfer obligations from her department in China and ensuring that her group complied with Midwestern Research University’s expectations. It was her responsibility to ensure the safety and security of her group members. She did not know her group members very well before coming to the U. S. Although she was very confident and considered herself a “good teacher” and knew her students liked her a lot, she stayed constantly connected with them on WeChat. Since she prioritized her role as group leader, she postponed her goal of working on a research project about globalization and education until her four master’s students left for China after finishing their program. She thought she had several months to focus on her personal goals for research, so she decided to prioritize her role of group leader for the first half of the program.

Collective Identity and Sense of Social Obligation

I observed that the way Lucy expressed herself during her interviews and our conversations often blurred lines when her identity spread from individual to collective. At times, she used the pronoun “I” for herself, but often slipped into “we” and “our” while referring to herself. While talking about her work as a teacher trainer she said, “In China, we think teachers’ knowledge areas, skills and some others, they need to learn new knowledge, new technologies and so on.” She used “us” and “we” to express her thoughts, which could be a shared idea with her institution, society, or government. At times, her identity extended to her group, her country, or the world. She wanted to learn from American educational practices to enrich her knowledge and teaching practice and she also wanted this for her communities. She shared a sense of obligation to her country and her institution while sharing the rationale behind her goals for the program. “I need to help my students to understand different culture” because of “globalization now we have students from 56 nationalities in China.” She further explained:

We need teachers who can teach foreign students. These students come from Australia, Germany, so teachers need to improve their English and learn how to teach foreign students. In the past, all our students were from China, now our department needs teachers to improve their English to teach foreigners.

The sense of obligation is evident through her use of words such as “we should”. This quote also shows her assumptions about America and American education as superior and better. She mentioned, “We can learn” and “can learn many new things.” She had an expectation to gain better and new knowledge and she also expressed her institution’s expectation that they change their habits based on new knowledge. She shared, “I think I will change because I come here to study many new methods and I think I can change my teaching method and other aspects.” For her

personal goals for the program, Lucy hoped on her return to China she would continue working in her university and “take part in international education work.” She hoped to teach courses in Chinese and English.

I want to find some good method and when I come back my university, I can introduce some good methods to my students while training. I think teacher quality, teacher skill is very important, so I want to test, I want to try to do some reform. This is my first aim and I hope to get a chance to take part in some activities. For example, how they re-train the teachers. And training undergraduate students to become good teachers.

Her goals and her institution’s goals for this program were aligned, “For me, my wish, maybe same as my faculty (department) wish” and there was no dichotomy between personal good and social good. She considered herself part of her institution and society and hoped to make a positive contribution as a teacher trainer by gaining new knowledge and learning new skills by participating in this program.

Curious and Outgoing

Lucy was a curious and energetic person who enjoyed experiencing different cultures. She passionately shared her love for travelling and said, “I like to travel. In China, I often go to another place to travel. I like to watch beautiful places; taste their delicious foods and I have interest to know other cultures.” She had travelled quite frequently within China and shared her amazement at the vastness of Chinese land, and its cultural and ethnic diversity. Also, she had travelled extensively as a tourist and had visited more than ten countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Germany, Italy, Australia, Canada, and France prior to coming to the U. S. She seemed to be totally intrigued by all these experiences of wonder. Her curiosity was not bound to travel only. She liked to read books to learn about the world. She had read many books about American culture and

education and had watched several American TV shows, but this was not enough, and she wanted to learn about “real America” and “other cultures” through her personal experiences and this program provided her this opportunity. Another important goal for Lucy was learning about “American culture and other countries’ culture” which she linked with globalization and she shared that as a teacher her interest was broad. She said, “Because after my major Education, I have interest to know everything.” Overall, she had an outgoing personality and was open to learn and experience different cultures.

Relationships

Relationships were an important part of Lucy’s experience because relationships provided her emotional and academic support, facilitated her goal achievement for the program, and helped her make sense of her intercultural experiences.

Relationships with Mentors

Lucy had two mentors. One mentor was a senior faculty member and the director of the exchange program. Her other mentor was the administrator in the office of international education. She had known them before coming to the U. S., since both her mentors had travelled a few times to her university in China. She shared a good relationship with both of her mentors and met with them on a regular basis. She shared, “they gave me help.” She told her faculty mentor that “I am interested in how to train students to be become good teachers”, so the mentor arranged some activities for her and invited her to attend her class. Lucy attended her faculty mentor’s graduate level class about international comparative education to learn how American faculty prepare graduate students to teach. While sharing her learning experience, she reflected on her multiple identities, saying

For example, I went to Dr. Jane's class, I'm a student. I take part in reading materials, ask her question and with other classmates, talking, but in the same times, I'm a teacher. I will observation, how Dr. Jane teach us. I compare her teaching method with my method and other Chinese method. I'm thinking how different, what different, why different? And I, when I came into our classroom, maybe I will observation the class, the classroom, how to manage. For example, the desk, the chairs, and so on. I don't know.

These relationships not only helped her to learn about American education, but also reflect on her role in the process of learning and in making sense of her experience. Both her mentors were "helpful" for her in achieving her goals for the program by connecting her with different resources.

Her relationships with her group members were instrumental in her meaning making process because these relationships provided her emotional and academic support.

Relationships with Group Members

The Chinese visiting scholars experience was a group experience and Lucy was the faculty group leader. She did not know her group members before coming to the U. S., so she had some worries and apprehensions about students' behaviors. The group relationships evolved over time and she was able to build strong connections with her group members. Initially, all the group members spent a lot of time doing things together and with time they became more independent. The group relationships provided Lucy and other members support to navigate new academic and cultural challenges in the U. S. Lucy shared,

Sometimes I learn from them because they are young and sometimes, they learn from me. For example, in the classroom, they asked some question, maybe what can I say? Maybe I don't think of this question and when they ask the professor, professor answer them in the same

time, I get some information and know what they are thinking. And another example, when we go to, when we went to some school, they will ask us some questions and I know what they noticed, maybe I don't have noticed.

Lucy shared amicable relationships with her group members. They had an open-minded attitude to learn from each other, and this helped her gain confidence and engage in classes more actively. From Lucy's second month onwards, her participation in discussion increased from information seeking questions to critical questions, especially during the lecture titled "high stake testing" she seemed to be very engaged and presented the Chinese perspective on testing. Not only did she start using her phone dictionary frequently, but her group members also helped her in understanding new or difficult vocabulary and completing sentences. At times, it was a group effort to comprehend a difficult word or concept and the group members used to switch to Chinese while explaining complex ideas to each other. In another lecture about cultural differences, scholars shared their opinions and Lucy was actively engaged in the discussion about why Chinese students do/don't engage with American students. Another notable lecture was about transformative learning, where a faculty member discussed a movie about transformative learning and presented his work. This particular lecture generated active discussion and Lucy contributed with lots of in-depth responses. The ideas presented in this lecture were complex and the discourse was sophisticated, but Lucy and her group members contributed to the discussion by sharing their perspectives and experiences.

Although the group did many activities together, Lucy believed that everyone was very independent. She said, "They can do things by themselves." She believed, "This group cherished this study opportunity." The group members shared good relationships and supported each other

in their learning process. Also, the group relationships helped group members to build confidence and provided space to act on their goals independently.

Relationships with Local Teachers

Lucy shared her interest in attending an undergraduate-level class as an observer and visiting local schools to watch American teachers teach to her second mentor who was working as a program administrator. This mentor helped her join an undergraduate-level class and arranged several school visits for her. Lucy did not find the undergraduate class as challenging as her graduate class “because the class is for undergraduate students and knowledge not new.” However, she went to the class every week to observe teaching methods and students’ learning techniques. She said, “I follow them to study their class and watch how teachers teach and how students’ study.” She further shared her experience,

I enjoyed my class this semester because I find teachers, they often change their teaching methods. Sometimes two teachers cooperate to teach, and they mixed students from different classes. I found sometimes their activities very funny and very useful to develop students’ skills.

She shared she really liked how teachers taught students to work on research projects through experiential learning. These observations helped her connect with local teachers and learn about American education from her perspective. Apparently, she did not focus much on content, instead she was more interested in learning about behaviors and teaching techniques teachers used in their classes. She was participating in this experience as a teacher and looking at things from a teacher’s perspective and how she could use this information and knowledge in her work as a teacher.

Relationships with American & International Colleagues

Lucy was outgoing by nature and had a strong desire and goal to build relationships with American and international students and scholars. She had a desire to make friends and exchange information about their culture and her own culture. Lucy said, “For me, I want to make some good friends with American people or other countries’ scholars and then we can set our good relationship, maybe in the future we can cooperation more, more than this program.” She wanted to build lasting professional relationships for future collaborations. She was not only willing to learn from other countries but also wanted to share her culture with her international and American colleagues. “And I think we, we came here not to just learn from America, maybe we can introduce some information about China culture and China education to help other countries to understand our country culture, education.” She wanted to build these relationships on equal terms and was not a mere passive receiver or consumer of knowledge. She wanted to be an equal contributor in the process. “We often do some activities with Chinese friend. Maybe I want to have more chance to take part in some activities with American people or other countries’ people.” She shared her challenge of building relationships with Americans, “I try my best to make some American friends. I think it is more difficult than I thought.” She actively participated in social activities where she thought she might have a chance to make some relationships with Americans, but she was unable to make those lasting relationships regardless of her efforts. Most of her friends were Chinese who were studying at Midwestern Research University and lived near her apartment.

I try to understand more about American people, so I take part in some local people’s activities. For example, Christmas and my friends told me they will go to local people’s house to have party. They invite me, then I follow them. They are very kind.

She put in effort to the extent that she did not believe in Christianity, but still she attended a local church's services in the hope to make some American friends. "Sometimes I went to church. I'm not Christian. I just went to know something about church, about Christian culture. And I wanted to make friends with local people." She was not a passive participant in the experience, but regardless she was unable to connect with Americans and build lasting relationships. She considered cultural differences the reason behind her failure to connect with Americans, "Because I think there are some difference between our cultures." She explained how she perceived relationships in China. Overall, she tried to build relationships with different people both from academic and social spheres because these relationships helped her understand the socio-cultural and academic contexts and to make meaning of her experiences. These relationships also helped her to navigate her day to day life in the U. S. and achieve her goals. Although she faced some challenges in the relationship building process, still relationships remained one of the most important and meaningful aspects of her visiting scholar's experience at Midwestern Research University.

Language

English had played a significant role in Lucy's life in China and it became even more important to achieve her goals, communicate with others, express her opinions, and build relationships, during her time in the U. S. She belongs to the generation that witnessed China's shift from a focus on Russian language and education to growing interest in English language and American education. Lucy started learning English in middle school, but her English teacher was not expert in English because his major was Russian. She mentioned that in the past English teachers were not expert in English language and her Russian teacher had taught himself English. While growing up in China, she never needed to use English in her day-to-day life. Even as a

teacher, she used Chinese as her medium of instruction in her classes. The first time she actually felt the need to learn English for practical U. S. use was when later in her career an opportunity to lead a student group to study abroad in Canada came up. The prospect of visiting another country and leading a study group motivated her to learn English. She was required to pass TOEFL to participate in this study abroad program. She shared, “in China, before we come to another country, we must learn English.” She studied hard and passed the test, but unfortunately, she was not able to go to Canada because the program was cancelled. During the visiting scholars’ program at Midwestern Research University Lucy considered English as her biggest challenge. She explained:

In China, our government requires every student to study English so now from elementary, 3rd grade students begin to study English, but for me, I spend a long time to study English but, you know, in our daily life, we don’t need to speak English. So, before I come here, I think I just use English, reading or sometimes writing, fewer times. So, but before I come here, I went to a class to study English for long time and I passed exam. I got certificate about my English language. So, I think when I just come here, I find have some trouble, some difficulty. I think sometimes I want to speak something, but I don’t know English words.

She had studied English in her school for many years, passed the test of English proficiency, and had an English certification to validate her knowledge and proficiency in English language. However, when she arrived in the U. S., she found it difficult to communicate in English regardless of all her preparation and previous knowledge of the language. Her lack of English proficiency impacted her learning experiences and the ways she engaged in academic and social activities.

Lucy attended regular weekly lectures about the American education system. Often, she took notes and at times tried to participate in discussion. She was very passionate about learning different topics, but her limited ability to use English impacted her learning process. Initially, she was not able to choose the right English words to express her opinion during the discussion session. She said,

We have interest to know more information about American education. It's helpful for me, but I think sometimes by now, because all of us just come here, nearly one month, our English listening and speaking, there are some difficulties and if the teacher speaks so fast, sometimes we can't follow her or him. So, we have some difficulties.

She felt frustration over her inability to express herself eloquently during class discussions, saying "Because of my English, sometimes I cannot express in nice English words. I mean, when I went to classroom, I sit there." Lucy mentioned that even during school visits English hindered their interactions "because we are little afraid of our English." They were required to read about schools from a school website before their visit, but they often faced difficulties in comprehending information, especially at the start of their program.

Although English was difficult for her to understand, she tried hard to overcome this challenge with the help of her teachers and class fellows. She shared that for the first time a teacher required her to talk in the class during group discussion. She was asked to share her summer experiences in the U. S. One of her classmates wanted to talk about her plan, but she could not find an appropriate word to express herself well. The teacher told her that if you don't know any particular word, you can change, and use other ways to express your ideas. Lucy thought, "It's a very nice way" for her.

So, when I stay here, sometimes I can't understand, but I can try my best. I describe, or I transfer or change in other ways. So, I think they can understand me, what I want to talk about. So, I think I have some progress about my English, but I still learn because many, many new words and sometimes if they talk very fast, we can't follow.

With time, she made gradual progress and her English improved. She said,

Oh, I think this progress is gradually change. In the beginning, oh, maybe most the time, we can't follow, and we need to spend a long time before we went to class, I read article, or I thought, oh, if I go to the class, what question I want to ask. I need prepare. In the beginning, but gradually, I find sometimes I don't need thought and prepare. I can ask question when I want to ask.

Overall, English was a sense making tool for Lucy as she used it to understand American education and culture, communicate and build relationships, express her opinions in classrooms, read articles and access information. English was more than a language for her, it was her window not only to American culture, but also to the rest of the world. It was also her way to gain more freedom to choose things she wanted to do, live the life she desired and hoped to live, and achieve her goals.

Agency

Lucy's goals were deeply embedded in her institution's and society's expectations from her. The visiting scholars program had a certain structure and all the participants of the program were required to abide by the program rules and expectations and attended required academic and social activities on a regular basis. The program provided a good balance between structure and freedom of choice to build their own experiences based on their goals. Lucy came with set goals for the program and had a clear idea what she wanted to achieve by participating in this program, so

she chose specific activities and events to create learning opportunities for herself. She was able to create her own learning experiences both academic and non-academic. She approached her mentors and requested them to connect her with local schools and teachers to observe their classes. She said,

Last time I talked with Joni, I send my research plan to her and then she talked with me. I told her I highly interesting to know how American university teacher teach because my major is teacher education, so I want to have some opportunity, a chance to observe or take part in some teaching activities, to observe American teacher, and learn how to teach and so she said she would introduce some teachers to me.

So, based on her request, her mentors made sure that she had some opportunities to visit various local schools and observe different classes. She specifically focused on learning about American teaching and learning practices in the second half of her program when her group members had returned to China and she was free to utilize her time more freely.

Lucy was an inherently curious person who was interested in “multiculturalism.” Broadening her horizons was one of her goals for this program. “My interest is very wide, broad” and “I want to know America and other country’s culture.” As a teacher, she wanted to prepare herself to teach foreign students, so it was necessary for her to learn about other cultures. She believed reading books and watching movies and TV shows was not enough for her to learn about different cultures and it was important for her to learn through first-hand experience. So, she actively participated in a variety of social and cultural activities offered by the program and looked for opportunities to get more involved in the local community. She said,

In my spare time, I take part in some activities, visiting art museum and other museums. I have visited two museums in Midwestern Research University. I find many interesting things. And I also took part in some musical concert.

She was quite energetic and active, “In the group, I’m the oldest one, but I very like to take part in these activities and to make friends, to experience everything. Just now, I picked our tickets for summer Circle Theater.” She also liked sports,

I like to play badminton. I like to do some other sports and listen to music and so on. So, by now, I have gone to play badminton with other friends and last week, Kyle took me to Old Town to watch blue festival on Sunday and on Saturday, I went to park to row a dragon boat. I took part in dragon boat race.

Overall, she was able to balance the expectations from her home and host institutions and also satisfy her curiosity by engaging in activities of her personal interests. The flexible structure of the program and her self-awareness allowed her to move beyond institutional goals and expectations and create her own learning experiences and decide the ways and the extent that she wanted to engage with American culture through this program.

Reflection

Lucy used constant comparison between Chinese and American ways as a tool to make sense of her experience at Mid-Western Research University. Lucy discussed American teaching practices during our conversations and reflected on her past experiences of teaching and learning in China, and often compared American and Chinese teaching and learning practices as a lens to make sense of her international experiences. She thought there were several differences in Chinese and American classrooms. About her graduate and undergraduate class experience she said,

Midwestern Research University's teaching method is different. Many professors ask you to read some articles before the class. You have many times let us talk, ask questions, so I think it is very useful to develop the students' learning skills.

Since she had a chance to visit many local schools, she shared her observations about American K-12 classrooms and highlighted the differences between the Chinese and American classroom. "For example, in China, classroom size is very big and there are many students (up to 100-120) in one class, but American classrooms are smaller with about 20 students in class". American teachers spend a lot of time in planning and preparing different activities because the focus is on teaching through different activities, but in China teachers spend the most time in lecturing students and giving them instructions, so in a Chinese class the teacher talks and the student listens. Lucy also reflected rationally on the feasibility of using American teaching methods in the Chinese classroom. She said,

Although we have large classes, but still we can use some ways and give students some chance to try things by themselves. And now we have some small classes in China too. I went to visit some middle schools in Beijing. I found 20 students in a class. So, class size is different in different cities in China.

However, she also did not lose sight of the American education systems' weaknesses based on her Chinese experiences. She pointed out American teachers' "poor class management skills",

One time I watched class, oh, some students, they talk, and they never open the book. Never do anything. Yeah, they don't do anything. They played with smart phones, they played with other things, but teacher can't control them. Management is poor, I think. So, I find oh, maybe American teacher in one lesson gives less information to students, but in China,

one lesson may be many knowledge, many information we give to students. Students can get more information from classroom.

According to Lucy's perceptions and understanding Chinese teachers are provided with better and consistent professional development training throughout their careers as compared to American teachers. She said,

In China, we often train teachers, sometimes professor, university professor goes to schools. I often go to some class to observe it, to watch the teacher teaching. And then we talk about this class. What's problem you need to resolve? And sometimes, some teacher, they come to our university or other university. We give them some lecture and some activity, to help them grow.

She believed that Chinese and American teachers need to study each other's practices and learn from each other. She said, "Maybe American teachers can learn class management from us, and we can learn to give students some freedom in class."

Lucy tried to understand American relationships from her previous frames of reference and how relationships were perceived and enacted in China. She compared relationships in both cultures and according to her perceptions, she felt in China it was easier for her to talk to people and Chinese culture is more open about sharing information about one's personal life as compared to American culture.

In China, we easy talk with others. For example, if I meet a new man or a new person, maybe a woman, if we feel the person is nice, good, we will open my mind to talk about many things, but in America, maybe you dislike. Yeah. Maybe you're only, hi. Just, but American people, they like talk many things about family, about our interest, about our study, our work, our trade.

She concluded that that perhaps building lasting relationships in cross cultural settings is difficult due to different cultural values.

When Americans finish work, finish class, bye-bye. Everyone back home. So, in the beginning, we feel lonely. Yeah. And if you want to have a very deep relationship with other country person, maybe not easy because different culture and our lifestyle not same.

Also, she talked at length about her preconceived perceptions and notions about American culture and how she experienced different American culture as it was portrayed through films and TV. She assumed American families were not as close knit as Chinese families because in America parents expect their children to work after 18 years and be independent, but she saw many grandparents and families who come to campus to watch football and basketball games with their children and they seemed to be very involved in their children's lives. Also, she discussed how American movies present an exaggerated version of romantic love through showing close intimacy even at public places, but in reality, she never even saw American couples holding hands in public. Whereas in China it is quite common to see young couples walking hand in hand and at times kissing in public.

Overall, she used reflection and constant comparison of on her day to day life and experiences in the U. S. with her life in China. Constant comparison helped her analyze academic, social, and cultural aspects of both countries' cultures. This also helped her critically reflect on herself as a teacher and rethink her teaching practices. In the process of retrospection and comparison she also developed a certain level of appreciation for Chinese values and traditions. This helped her to understand how she wants to develop herself as a global teacher and citizen and what new things she can incorporate in her life to further improve herself.

Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program

Lucy finished her program at Midwestern Research University and went back to China by the end of summer 2017. She was excited and sad at the same time when she was returning to China. On her return, she continued working with her university in China as a lecturer. Also, she became an active member of international programs at her university and often hosted American and other international administrators, faculty, and students in her university. She remained in touch with her students and with American colleagues after her return to China. She did not mention any readjustment challenge on her return from America.

One year after her return from the U. S., she continued her previous teaching and research work, but she was more focused on comparative education research in the field of teacher education. In addition, she took on a new job as the head teacher of international students. She mentioned the significance of participating in the exchange program in the U. S. and how it helped her in her career development.

The experience of studying in the United States has enabled me to improve my English communication skills and provide me with a lot of experience in participating in international student management and mentoring. I have more opportunities to participate in some international exchange projects.

She was actively involved in international higher education work and in July and August of this year, as a team leader, she led a team of graduate students from the Faculty of Education to visit a university in New Zealand for three weeks.

Lucy shared her reflection paper after one year of her program and alluded to the impact of the international exchange program on her life. She clearly prioritized three significant points. The first point she mentioned was related to human relationships and self-development. She

mentioned that she has become “more confident and willing to express feelings and thoughts” and she feels “more respectful of others” and gets along with others better. She has developed deeper “understanding of multiculturalism” and now she can “get along with people from different cultural backgrounds.”

The second important impact she mentioned was related to her work as a teacher. She mentioned that she “often try to adopt some new methods” and tries to share the experience she gained in international exchanges with more people and shares her experience of Chinese education with international friends. This experience helped her grow professionally. Now she is “the head teacher of international students and have more opportunities to participate in other international exchange projects.” Since she has gained new competencies, she is doing some comparative education research in the field of teacher education. She shared that now she thinks “rationally about the similarities and differences between Chinese education and other countries' education and learn from each other's strengths.” This experience helped her achieve her career goals and expanded her opportunities and understanding of her role as a teacher in global context.

The third point was related to her outlook on life and relationship with others. She shared, Studying abroad has broadened my horizons. I have had some new pursuits in my life and found many valuable things. My attitude towards life has become more active and peaceful, and I have worked hard and enjoyed life. I cherish the time spent with my family. I also changed some way I get along with my family and friends.

Overall, Lucy perceived this experience as a career advancement opportunity. It was an opportunity where she could develop necessary skills to advance to her desired area of work and get a better position in her university.

However, she did not confine her development only to her professional life because she did not see the strong division between her professional and personal lives, and social development at large. “I think it’s very useful not only for my work, my job, and my life because in China I often train teachers who are my students. I want to help my students to become good teachers.” Even her ambition for future research was directed towards creating a better image of China and Chinese teaching practices. “Maybe I can do some research about China education and other country think China more nice.” Lucy developed a deeper appreciation of Chinese cultural values and teaching and learning practices as a result of participating in the international visiting scholars’ program. She made sense of her international visiting scholar’s experience from her understanding of multiple identities as a teacher, group leader, and learner. However, her identity as a teacher remained central to her sense making process. Due to her natural curiosity, she spent her time in relationship building and learning about the American education system and society. She did not confine her learning to the classroom and the prescribed program goals, rather she took control of her learning experiences and shaped them based on her understanding of herself and the future self she wanted to be. She liked certain American values and ways of living and was quick to switch to a comfortable dressing style and simpler food, but her core values as a Chinese teacher did not undergo tremendous transformation. However, her perspective is broader now, she is more aware of her choices and opportunities, and the experience helped her to continue her lifelong learning and self-development.

Wei Fei: An Aspiring Academic & A Traditional Chinese Man

The second story is of Wei Fei, a young aspiring academic who considers himself a traditional Chinese man, proud of his values and culture. He is a country man, raised by his grandparents in rural China and has dreams to become a successful international scholar and

assistant professor at a research university in China. At the beginning of his stay, Wei Fei was 28 years old, a third-year PhD scholar in a Vocational and Technical Education program in China. This was a crucial time in his life as it was his last year of his PhD (his PhD program is three years long). His area of research is evaluation and assessment of classroom teaching. Prior to this, he studied Educational Management and Economy for his master's degree and Chinese literature and language for his undergraduate degree in China. His participation in the international exchange program is a part of his journey to self-development to become the man he wants to be, and his society prescribes him to be. He sees no dichotomy between the two, as his relationships define his sense of self and who he wants to be in his future. Being a student all his life, he saw himself as a learner and student. He shaped his international visiting scholar experience and made meaning of these experiences while focusing on his identities as a student and a PhD scholar. However, he used his identity of a traditional Chinese man to shape social situations during his stay at Midwestern Research University.

Life before the Visiting Scholar Program

As a young man who was raised by his extended family in rural China, his sense of self is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture where relationships, respect for elders, and social responsibility were core values of his upbringing.

Sense of Self

Wei Fei's engagement in the program was deeply connected to his sense of self and how he wanted to further improve himself as a scholar and future faculty member in China.

A Typical Chinese Boy

Wei Fei was born in the countryside in central China, a less developed part of China as compared to well-developed and modern Shanghai or Chengdu in eastern China. "My hometown

is very, is minority people here. There are 56 races, different people in China. I'm Han people, but in my hometown, there are, there are also the minority people." He considered himself a "typical Chinese boy." His father is a teacher in an elementary school and his mother is a farmer and grows corn, rice, and Chinese tea. He has a younger sister who was 20 years of age during his visit to the US and who is eight years younger than he is and had just finished her undergraduate degree from a technical school in her hometown. He is immensely proud of his sister and expressed his deep love and connection with his family and country.

A Resilient Student

Wei Fei made sense of his visiting scholars' experience from a student perspective. His identity as a student was at the core of his experience and he narrated his experiences centering on his identity as a student. He considers himself a hardworking student who strives for excellence throughout his academic life. As a student, he was very focused on achieving good grades and maintaining a strong academic record and he worked hard for it. He talked at length about his educational challenges and experiences during our interviews and conversations. Regardless of his hard work, his educational experiences were difficult due to the extremely competitive Chinese education system. Since test scores were extremely important for his success as an effective member of Chinese society, he suffered many setbacks and had difficult experiences due to the rigor and competitive nature of the Chinese education system.

As a child from rural China, he had to stay away from his family to pursue his education. Wei Fei started school at the age of five. He went to compulsory school, which is the same as elementary school in the U. S., until the age of twelve and then went to junior high school. His school was far from his home, so he had to live in his school. During three years in junior high

school, he used to visit his home after a week or ten days. He mentioned that he had to work very hard to keep up his good grades.

I work very hard and my score is very high. All the time, I keep the number one in our grade. So, you know, in China, the junior high school and senior high school, the students all prepare for the college entrance examination.

He maintained a good academic record throughout his elementary, junior high, and senior school. He remained in a top position in his class during junior high school. He mentioned that he studied hard to score high in college entrance exams since his junior high years, but he struggled with English. He worked hard, but his English affected his scores in junior high school. Overall, his performance in junior high school remained good.

Test Scores and Sense of Self

Test scores and the number one position remained important for him throughout his academic life. He was able to recall exact positions and test scores from junior high and high school during our interviews since these test scores and exams defined his experiences as a student and shaped his sense of self as a competitive student. He shared,

So, the three years study in the junior high school, I go to the first position. We had seven courses. I remember as I got 631 scores, same course and I get the same, 600 scores and entrance to the best senior high school in my hometown.

Getting first position and a high score were the highlights of his junior high school experience, which helped him to get into a prestigious high school in his province. He was very proud of the fact that “My high school is best high school in the province and my class is top 18 class in the province.” He mentioned that he was the number one student in junior high school, but he ranked 15th in the class of 75 boys in his senior high school. During his high school years “We

studied more, spent more time on the examination. Each time, where we can, we have four times examination.” Examinations remained a significant part of his everyday school life. He recalled that in the last two years of his school, he had math and English exams every Tuesday. Wei Fei worked extremely hard to prove himself an excellent student through his extensive hard work, but English language proved a barrier to his success, not only during his junior and senior high school years, but also later in his life. He tried to get admission to Law School in Central China Normal University, but his scores were not good enough on the entrance exam which tested students in Chinese, Math, English, Social compulsory text, and technology. He told me,

But my test is very long. The full score is 300, but I got only 119. So, I failed the entrance exam for the law school in Central China Normal University. I come to Southern University and here I studied four years the Chinese language and literature.

His sense of self was deeply rooted in his identity as a student who had to work extremely hard to prove himself in the highly competitive education system in China. His academic experience until high school was totally focused on getting good grades in examinations and preparing to do well in the college entrance exam. It seems as if his self-worth is deeply associated with grades and on being number one or getting into the top institute in his province. The significance of grades and scores in exams remained so extremely important for him that he remembered all his grades.

During Wei Fei’s four years of undergraduate studies, he was involved in student lead political organization and participated in different political activities and by his third year, he became the chairman of the student organization. “I joined the school union and at first, I got, I just remember, the third year I become the chairman of the student union. So really, I do all the

activity, not studies.” His involvement in politics distracted him from his academic goals for a while, but he got back on track soon.

English and Sense of Self

English proved a hurdle in achieving his desired academic excellence regardless of all his effort and hard work. After finishing his undergraduate degree, he wanted to study public administration at Sichuan University, but due to his “poor English”, he failed to secure admission in his desired field, so he changed his plan and applied to the Educational Management and Economy program at Southern University. After finishing his master’s degree, he continued his studies in a PhD program with the same major at Southern University. His PhD program is three years long and he considered the five years of graduate school he had completed, “three years of masters and two years of PhD”, as the best years of his life. English remained a constant hurdle in achieving his academic goals and he had to constantly reroute his academic trajectory because of his poor English.

After finishing his PhD degree, he wanted to secure an associate professor position in China. In China, it is usual for PhD scholars to become lecturers and then associate professors, not assistant professors as in the United States. To become an associate professor in China, he had to fulfill certain requirements, which included two years of postdoc training, extensive publication in international journals, and fulfilling a requirement that initially called for 10 months of international experience, which later was changed into 12 months by his university in China. The dean of the college of education at his university in China, who was his advisor, advised him to go for a 10-month study abroad program to fulfil his study abroad requirement for newly hired faculty to better prepare for the job market. Although Wei Fei had published 20 papers in China, he had only a few publications in international journals because of his poor English. A few publications

in international journals were not enough to secure the position of associate professor in a Chinese research university, which was aiming to raise its rankings through internationalization. Wei Fei's Chinese advisor advised him to publish in English journals to expand the scope of his scholarship at the international level and to become an international scholar in order to find a job in his university. To achieve his career goals, a study abroad program was his next step. He wanted to study educational evaluation during his visiting scholar time in the U. S. The Midwestern Research University visiting scholar program was not his first choice. He said,

I had a research plan at the end of last year because at first, I want to apply for some, some other school that do educational evaluation. At first, I apply for Stanford and UCLA and Berkeley, but I failed, for my poor English. So, I applied this program.

He knew about Midwestern Research University's visiting scholars' program for many years because his professor was responsible for this program in China. Although this program was his last choice, his professor encouraged him to participate. So, based on his past experiences, he always had to settle for less due to his weak English skills. That is why one of his reasons to travel to participate in this program was to improve his English language skills. He considered due to his poor English he lost opportunities to succeed in China and participating in this program was his chance to access more resources and open new doors for his future success, not only in China, but abroad as well.

Globalization, Economy, and Sense of Self

Wei Fei's participation in the international exchange program was a part of self-growth focused particularly on professional development through expansion of his identity from a local sphere to the global level. He wanted to become an international researcher and scholar to find an academic position in China after finishing his PhD. Wei Fei framed his goals and expectations

based on his past experiences and future career goals. His goals were shaped by his past experiences in China and the increasing pressure of internationalization on Chinese universities to participate in the global economy. He was well aware of the role of globalization as a push factor for his participation in the exchange program. “In China, many universities want to send their students abroad to internationalize their campuses because it is part of their evaluation process. This is official and formal reason our university send us here.” According to him, the motivation for rapid globalization was economic development. He mentioned that, “teachers want us to learn from American academic ways because America is economic center of the world.” The pressure to globalize is strong in Chinese higher education since there is a lot of attention paid to global rankings. Wei Fei shared, “Our university ranks 30 in China, which is not enough.” So, there is a prevalent belief that rankings determine the quality of education and he considered because of low rankings and due to lack of research resources and databases his university “is not the best school and that is why our teachers want to send us to American to get data. Our teachers want us to find resources in Chinese.” His motivations to participate in the international visiting scholars’ program were part of the globalization and neo-liberal agenda of his institution and society.

Life during the Visiting Scholar Program

Wei Fei made meaning of his visiting scholars’ experience through the lens of his identity as a PhD student and shaped his experiences based on his identity and what he wanted to achieve to reach his aspired goal to be an assistant professor in China and become a respected and global scholar. He set foot on American soil with a solid research plan and well-defined goals. His two major goals for his international exchange program were learning research and English. These goals were deeply intertwined with each other and were both important for his future career success. Learning research skills was the most important goal for Wei Fei during his stay at

Midwestern Research University. He especially wanted to improve his qualitative research skills, such as interviewing and case study. During his graduate studies in China, he heavily focused on quantitative research methods and thought he needed to learn more about education research and, most importantly, improve his qualitative research skills. Wei Fei considered learning about American research practices was crucial for his success as a PhD student working on his dissertation and as an aspiring international scholar.

He came to Midwestern Research University with a well-prepared research agenda, including a research proposal and plan. He also hoped to finish his dissertation during his stay at Midwestern Research University. He wanted to work with his American faculty mentor to make considerable progress on his dissertation. He mentioned publishing pressure in Chinese academia is growing and to keep up with increasing demands of research and publication, it is important for him to learn new research methods and techniques. In our informal conversation, he mentioned the difference in Chinese and American research styles in the field of education. According to him, Chinese research in education is more focused on theoretical aspects, but American research is empirical in nature and is more data driven. He wanted to learn American research methods and combine them with the Chinese research approach.

Relationships

Relationships were important for Wei Fei to make sense of his visiting scholars' experiences. He built relationships based on his sense of identity and his goals. He came with specific goals and he felt that he had limited time to accomplish his goals, so he was very deliberate and purposeful in his relationship building in the U. S.

Relationships with Mentors

The American faculty mentor's role was crucial for Wei Fei because it provided him the chance to learn about American research techniques and methods. "I think the most valuable or helpful activities also talking with my faculty mentor because when I have some guidance when I lost my way, he can give me some advice." Wei Fei met regularly with his American faculty mentor during his first and second semester in the U.S., but somewhat infrequently during summer. These meetings lasted between 30 to 60 minutes biweekly. He considered these meetings very helpful in his learning process, since he received guidance from his American faculty mentor about his research work. However, he did not spend much time with his student mentor, since the student mentors helped visiting scholars with the social aspects of their lives at Midwestern Research University. He met with his student mentor only a few times during international breakfast. Although his poor English language abilities affected his relationships with both faculty and student mentors, he maintained a consistent connection with his faculty mentor.

Wei Fei had a female student mentor who was from South Korea, but it was difficult for him to connect with her due to his "poor English." He usually met her during international breakfast. He said, "We talk about research" because he was totally focused on research, but overall, he remained hesitant to meet her during his time at Midwestern Research University due to "language and lack of communication." Also, "as a PhD student I know each PhD student is too busy, too much work, so I do not want to disturb." He also considered himself self-sufficient and able to handle his life in the U. S. independently. "I'm not a shy boy. I think most problem, I can solve by myself." He was also not interested in developing social networks due to his single-minded focus on his research work. He did not spend much time with his student mentor.

Relationships with Group Members

Wei Fei shared a good relationship with his group. His relationships with his group members were deep and strong. The nature of his relationship with his group members was deeply embedded in his traditional Chinese values. He considered his group members as his family and being the only male in the group, he considered it his responsibility to take care of his group members. He described his relationship with the women, saying,

Oh, very good. Because I'm the only boy and I'm the older brother for the four girls, so I really help them a lot and I also take them as my own sister, like this way. And Ms. Lucy is my teacher and we are the same professor in China. She's my academic sister, older sister in China, so for this relationship, we also get a very good relationship.

Since all the female students were younger than he was, they referred to him as an "elder brother" because he always helped them academically and provided socio-emotional support during their stay at the Midwestern Research University.

Relationships with American and International Colleagues

As far as his relationships with Americans are concerned, he was not able to make many friends in the U. S. because socialization was not his goal. He usually spent most of his time in the library studying alone and at times on weekends, he liked to play basketball with his Chinese friends who were his neighbors. Another reason for not being able to make friends with Americans was difference of socio-cultural values. He had a strong Chinese identity and he believed in traditional Chinese values. He believed Chinese people take relationships seriously and they are polite, and respect elders and others, which is different from the American values of freedom he perceived.

He compared American and Chinese cultures in terms of making relationships,

I think Chinese people take relationship between people really serious way. Because I am a traditional Chinese man. So, sometimes I think serious relationship is not bad way. Depends on the context and the environment, so you know, all the Chinese are polite people and the Chinese country is a polite country, so I think we, we respect in the very formal and very serious way.

Although he appreciated American values of freedom and equality, he also thought Chinese ways were good too because in his opinion Chinese people show a lot of respect to people and are very polite. He said,

I think this is also a good way, compared to the American free and equal. The respect from others in formal and serious way while is not equal, I think also equal, but it's just a different way to __ it. Also, Chinese people want to be generous. Want to give all the good things to others, so I think this is very good to be generous man to others. I think this is Chinese do. A lot of Chinese, like me, want to do one thing in a perfect way.

Overall, relationships played an important role in Wei Fei's international visiting scholar experience. These relationships, although they were limited, helped him not only learn academic skills and have social insight into American culture, but also to reflect on his Chinese values and his sense of self.

Language

English language has played an important role in his life even before coming to the U. S. He considered his lack of English skills a hindrance in achieving his goals throughout his life. Regardless of his hard work, his English skills did not improve much over the time period.

Six years, I study hard and almost get up, 6:00 am and go back to sleep at 10:00 pm, study harder in Chinese, math, English, so my English is very poor. I studied English when I was

five years old. At that time, I offered not much attention to English. I can write some English or write some simple English, but my spoken English is very poor. Even some pronunciation is poor. Especially, I don't know how to choose perfect word, choose the right words to express my opinion.

So, when he came to the U. S., he considered it an excellent opportunity to overcome this limitation. Learning English was an important goal for Wei Fei for his international visiting scholars' program. Although there were no formal structured activities and training offered for improving English skills, he looked out for opportunities to improve his English. Due to his specific academic goals and limited time, he focused on learning academic English only. He initially joined an English learning group in a community center, but after a few classes, he figured out that the purpose of the group was to teach only everyday spoken English, which he thought was not helpful for him. His English teacher was a Chinese girl and the English class was free, but he gave up on learning spoken English and never went back. He had a very specific target of learning academic English so that he could read, write, and publish in English. Since he had competing goals and did not have enough time, he chose to just focus on his research and learn academic English on his own by reading journal articles and books in the library.

His international visiting scholar's experience was impacted by his lack of English proficiency. He experienced a lot of difficulty in reading articles in English which was often frustrating for him. He mentioned, "At first, I get, I think I guess the read English literature is very easy, but when I come here, I found it's very difficult. Not as easy as my guess." His poor English skills affected his research progress because English remained a constant challenge for him during his stay at Midwestern Research University. He shared that the biggest challenge for him was "the second language" for him, especially for his research work. He mentioned, "If I do

research in Chinese, it's very easy for me. And also, I maybe I have get too much, too many, information from the English literature, so now my mind is mess.” He had a problem in comprehension, and it was hard for him to form his own opinion. He was frustrated and said,

My mind so recently messed, I feel I can read Chinese literature and then get my own opinion, I can write down and for my own research and write my paper, but now, because I see so many information. At first, I read it, it's difficult for me and I cannot come to understand it, I cannot understand the content, so I think it can harm me.

English not only added to his academic challenge, but also caused him emotional distress. He was stressed because English proved a constant slowing factor in his academic and research work. Although socialization and making friends were not his primary goals, still English impacted his socialization in the U. S. He had difficulty communicating with his mentors, especially his student mentor. He also did not engage in social and cultural activities, which was also partly due to his poor language skills.

Agency

The visiting scholars' program was a well-structured program and required the scholars to participate in designed activities and programs. Although Wei Fei was constrained by program requirements and academic structures, he somewhat shaped his experiences by deciding how he wanted to spend his time based on his priorities and goals. During his stay, he participated in all activities required by the visiting scholars' program, but he focused on certain activities based on his goals. He had his priorities set and clear. Wei Fei said, “For me, I think a little about teaching or professional learning. I think more about my research for my PhD.” His focus was his PhD dissertation and he single mindedly directed all his energy in that direction. Although he liked travelling and various activities on campus and saw the benefit of participating in those activities,

the benefit did not outweigh working on his research. He considered participating in the visiting scholar program a short-term opportunity and the best use of this opportunity was to secure his future, not to indulge in social activities. He determined how he engaged in the program based on his role/identity as a PhD scholar.

Activities, yeah, to be honest, I think too much activity for PhD student. If I was the first-year student in my degree, I would join the activities but in third year of my PhD, I think maybe I will spend more time on my research and then learn from my mentor and study in the library.

He understood the rationale for imbedding multiple activities in the program for visiting scholars and had a desire to do different things. However, he was constrained by time and he had very specific academic goals to achieve, so he prioritized certain activities and avoided spending time in socialization activities.

I think a lot of the activities make sense for me because I had never been abroad. I want to see the schools and the preschool, the elementary school, the community school and all of the school here. And I want to visit the capitol. I want to visit New York. I want to visit all that.

All of this “is interesting for me, but I had to choose. I had to give up some activity, maybe you know, it’s interesting, but it’s not for my research”. He felt he had ample opportunities to socialize in China. He had his friends and family and he could engage in social activities on his return to his country, but for now, his research was the most important and immediate goal. He made these deliberate choices to achieve his goals. “I had to give up some activity, maybe you know, it’s interesting, but it’s not (helpful) for my research.” Rather, he preferred to spend time in the library and meet with his faculty mentor. Once, when we chatted during an international

breakfast, Wei Fei shared that international breakfast was the least helpful activity for him. When I asked the reason, he said, “This is my third year for my PhD study, so I want to finish my PhD thesis, so I want to spend more time on my research, not spend my time on continuing with daily life.”

Wei Fei was required to attend weekly lectures about the American education system. He thought these lectures were to some extent informative, but he was more interested in learning research methods than general information about the American education system. He considered the visiting scholars’ program as an opportunity to gain new skills and make up his deficiencies, such as learning qualitative research skills and English language skills to achieve his career goals.

You know, my bachelor’s degree was not in education. Also, my master’s degree is educational management and economy. I had never learned, even do not know some basic knowledge in education, to be honest, but I know the research methods. Even though I do not do the qualitative research, but I know quantitative and the SPSS, so I can write a paper and publish a paper. So here, the weekly lectures, professors give us information about the educational policy. That is interesting for me. Another professor gave us some literature about technology.

Although the purpose of the weekly lectures was not to teach research methods, learning research methods was an important goal for him, so he focused on specific parts of the lectures. During weekly lecture observations, I noticed Wei Fei’s varied levels of engagement in discussions. While attending these lectures, he was more focused on learning about American faculty’s research methods. “I think it’s helpful and especially teach me how to do the research in American way. In China, we do education research quite different from the America. And then,

somehow, they teach me how to do research.” During a lecture about high stake testing, many of his group members were taking notes and asked critical questions, but he was using his phone and at times he seemed disengaged from the discussion. However, during his faculty mentor’s lecture about Transformative Learning Theory, he was more involved and asked complex questions. During another weekly lecture session, when the international program director at Midwestern Research University lead the discussion about different parts of the program and gave a reflective activity about their experiences as visiting scholars, Wei Fei mentioned his research focus and how regular meetings with his faculty mentor were helping him to make progress on his research work. Afterward, I talked with Wei Fei about the session. He found the opportunity for self-reflection very useful because it helped him to understand his thinking process about his experience.

School visits were a required activity that Wei Fei considered less effective because the visits were not relevant to his research. His area of research was vocational education and most school visits were in primary and secondary schools in the local area. He also thought these few schools could not represent the American education system, since each school is different. During a school visit to Pine Elementary school, he, along with his fellow group members, barely interacted with students. All the questions were asked by one visiting scholar and the rest of the group just toured the school. During the same month, all the scholars visited a community college. Wei Fei was initially wandering aimlessly during the campus tour and mostly acted as a tourist, but later, when he found out about vocational education in the west part of campus, he seemed more engaged. After the visit, I asked him about the second half of the tour at west campus and if it was useful. He said it was very useful and would “lead to Chinese language article”.

By the end of the program, he was stressed out and tired. He was also not able to achieve his set targets for research. He said,

I come here, one most important aim is to get the experience of study abroad, so this can be accomplished very well, but the second, I want to finish my PhD thesis. I, in my regular plan, in my fifth month, I should finish the chapter four, but now I am still chapter two.

He had a “strong feeling of limited time.” Although he was spending a lot of time working on his research projects, he was very stressed by the end of his program. “When I was a graduate student in China, I never felt like this, but recently, I felt tired. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s, I find difficulty in my writing so now, I feel tired. Sometimes I want to sleep.” The reason behind his stress was overwork, constant demands of work from China, and pressure to participate in required activities in his program along with finishing his dissertation well in time.

Recently, in last two months, I not only do my PhD thesis, I do some other work, come from China. You know, end of year, in China, end of year is spring festival, not the New Year. So now at end of year, I had to write two research report, one for my professor about my research in China and it took me about 20 days to write the research report. And another thing is to write publication for the, for program, the five-year plan. You know, in China, we have a five-year plan.

After five months, when his group left for China, he no longer had to participate in the program activities and had time on his hands to work independently on his research. “I only study for myself, so after everyone leave is more productive.” Although he remained in contact with his group members through WeChat, he avoided participating in any social activities at Midwestern Research University during this time. The International Center at Midwestern Research University organized a weekly coffee hour to provide international students a chance to connect with each other, but he never attended it, regardless of the fact that he received weekly emails from the international office. Lack of socialization made his experience somewhat lonely and isolating. Wei

Fei spent a great deal of time in the library. He mentioned spending an average of 8-9 hours a day in the library, especially on days he did not have to attend weekly lecture or go for a school visit. He devoted the maximum amount of his time to finishing his research work and considered spending time in the library important for accessing research materials because he could not use library resources outside the library.

Reflection

Being a PhD scholar, Wei Fei noticed the life of PhD students in the U. S. and compared it with a PhD student's life in China. For him, the relationship between faculty and PhD students was very important, so he discussed the differences in faculty and PhD students' relationships in both cultures,

My finding of academic environment. Here, I found that, just told, I just say __ PhD students here work very hard and very busy. Also, the professors. Not only so much busy. I think they do things one, two, three, that's quite different from my professor in China. All the Chinese professors in China, they do not give this _ advice or they say this one. Okay or not okay. Even __ will not tell you why it's not okay. If they tell okay, you can go back and correct or redo it but here, I found that I learn from you and my professor, they do something too much carefully and this is why. And another thing, your time schedule.

Relationships were an important lens for Wei Fei to understand American culture, both social and academic. He specifically paid a lot of attention to academic relationships. He reflected and compared relationships in both cultures. As a student academic, he interacted with his faculty mentor frequently and at times with his student mentor. He said the U.S. is quite different from China. For instance, the relationship between professor and the students. "In China, teachers are

always difficult to find them, but here, we can find them much more easily. And they are like friends here not above” (not authority figure).

Chinese culture promotes and expects certain qualities, especially generosity and hard work were highlighted by Wei Fei, which he thought were different from American culture, based on his limited interaction with Americans and American culture.

Especially the people who learn Chinese language and Chinese culture, how to say, you know, US and China, some people ___ information and they can become ___ in China and that way ___ reading the books, doing research, the people so they want to keep themselves as very generous and working harder, like this way, but maybe it’s not true to themselves. Not true to themselves. Maybe sometimes it can ___ men do not want to be generous men, but for the culture, for the atmosphere in China, we have to be generous. So, I think this is maybe not true for here, but it’s helpful for society.

Wei Fei appreciated the freedom he experienced in America especially, his relationship with his faculty mentor was very meaningful for him due to the nature of interaction he had with his faculty mentor. However, he still held Chinese social norms and values close to his heart. Overall, reflections helped him understand his role as a visiting scholar and to make meaning of his experiences in the U. S.

Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program

Wei Fei returned home after spending one year at Midwestern Research University. On his return, he had to resume his research activities immediately. He did not face any social or cultural readjustment challenge on his return to China. He was happy to be back and focus on his dissertation. During his time in the U. S., he had to work with two faculty mentors, one from his country and one from Midwestern Research University. He had to navigate two different research

approaches while working with two different advisors and had to “manage both.” His initial idea was to mix American and Chinese research approaches to organize his dissertation, but when he returned to China, he had to change his dissertation style and cut chapter two based on his Chinese advisor’s suggestion. Now he had finished chapter three and was getting ready for interviews. He had already created an interview protocol and he seemed to be moving on a faster pace in terms of his research work. He was excited to start the interview process soon. “I learned skills how to interview from professor in America.” He planned to use the interview techniques used in America.

One year after returning to China, Wei Fei was able to finish his PhD thesis and received his degree in June. Also, he started a post-doctoral program at Eastern University in Shanghai. As a result of policy changes, he could not pursue his post-doctor program at Southern University in China, and he felt it was difficult to live in Beijing due to the high cost of living. So, he gave up his initial idea of continuing his education in Beijing and moved to Shanghai. He plans to stay in Shanghai for the next two or more years to conduct research about vocational students' learning assessment for his postdoc program.

In Wei Fei’s case, the sense making process was deeply rooted in his sense of self. His identities as a student and PhD scholar were particularly important in making sense of his international visiting scholar’s experience at Midwestern Research University. He perceived, understood, and even shaped his experiences based on his past life experiences as a student and his future career and life goals. Also, he used his identities of traditional, Chinese, man, family man, brother, and son to make sense of social interactions in the U. S. He used his agency while operating within the given structure to shape his experiences to achieve his desired goals for the program. He also constantly used comparison as a sense making tool to understand his

international experience. Overall, he considered this program a professional development opportunity and strictly focused on his academic goals during the program. This was more of a professional obligation than a transformative experience for him. As he shared in his reflection paper, “about my personality, attitudes, or behaviors that is probably the least significant impact. It may be that I am an adult, or that I am out of American context of life when I returned home.” However, he mentioned he experienced expansion of his perspective and now he uses “a way of comparison” to solve problems, especially research problems.

Emily: A Free-Spirited Explorer

“I don’t want to limit myself just in a small world or a life-long job.”

The third story is of Emily, a first-year master’s student at Southern University in China when she participated in the visiting scholars’ program in the year 2016-17. Her major was preschool education for her master’s program and she still had to find out what she wants to do with her life. Emily’s participation in the international visiting scholar program at Midwestern Research University was a journey of self-exploration and finding her place in this world. Emily, being a first-year master’s student, was the explorer who was still forming her identity and was exploring her future life directions. This program provided her an opportunity to explore her options and know what the world could offer and what she could become.

Life before the Visiting Scholar Program

Emily grew up in a small town in rural China. She was raised by her grandparents after finishing grade five, due to her parents’ jobs. Since her parents were very busy with their jobs, it was hard for them to take care of her during the week, “Because of work, my parents did not have time to take care of me.” She spent most of her childhood and teenage life with her aunt and grandparents.

Sense of Self

Emily's participation and engagement in the program was also deeply rooted in her sense of self and how she viewed herself. Her rural upbringing, relationship with her family, and her past academic experiences influenced her goals and motivations to participate in the program.

Obligation to Family and Sense of Self

The role of her extended family and separation from her parents at a young age had a profound impact on her upbringing and her sense of self as she grew up with a strong sense of responsibility to her extended family and relationships. She stayed in a small town with her grandparents until high school.

Later, she had to move out of her grandparents' town after she failed the college entrance exam, which was very unfortunate for her, since passing the college entrance exam was crucial for her future in China. She shared,

I failed the college entrance examination, and its big issue for every student, family in China. And very unfortunately, I failed it. So, I have to go to another place to continue my study in the university. The university I went [to] was not very good.

Failing entrance exam meant disappointing her family and she was not able to live up to their expectations. It also meant attending an institution she did not like at first. This also could mean relocation and additional cost for her family to support her college education.

Failure and Sense of Self

In a fiercely competitive society, which places a lot of stress on exam results, her poor performance in the entrance exam led her to a second-rate university which was a tormenting experience for her. She had a strong sense of duty and responsibility and believed that she needed to do better academically to not disappoint her family. During her undergraduate studies, she

worked very hard to improve her grades to move to a better university. “I was undergraduate, and I worked very hard in university because I failed the college entrance exam, so I can go to another better university.” In her undergrad years, her major was primary education. She participated in another entrance exam to get admission to graduate school and was able to secure admission at a better university with her hard work and resilience.

During her master’s study at Southern University, she learned about the visiting scholar program at Midwestern Research University in the U. S. She thought this was an opportunity to make up for her failure in the entrance exam.

I failed in the college entrance examination and I always worked and studied hard and I believed I can go to a good university. And the US, it’s most powerful and you know, the education is doing very well. And I believe I can learn a lot here, and it will be very helpful for me to find a job if I have international experiences.

She considered this experience an opportunity to make up for her past academic failures. She believed since she missed the chance to go to a good school in China, this experience would compensate for her past failure and would ensure her better job prospects and ultimately a better life in China.

Global Economy, English, and Sense of Self

After learning about this program, she started working as a volunteer in an international office at her university in China to improve her English skills and let the administrators know that she was interested in participating in this program. She considered working with foreign students the best way to practice English, since she believed good English skills and foreign experience were highly valued in the Chinese job market and these experiences would make her more employable. She considered English a ticket to better career opportunities in her future. She was

working towards her master's degree in pre-school education through Southern University in China during her time as a visiting scholar. Although her motivation to participate in this program was rooted in the idea of professional development to prepare for the market based global economy, as a person she was open minded and willing to explore and learn from other cultures. She came with an open mind to experience American culture and the academic system fully. She was ready and excited to learn and grow in ways she might have not realized herself at this point of the program. Emily actively participated in academic and social life during her stay at Midwestern Research University. She said, "I think every activity, I'd like to participate in because it's a different experience for me. And actually, I'm not a shy girl, so I love to participate in any activities." Her willingness and openness to learn and explore shaped her international experience and how she made sense of her experience.

Confident and Outgoing

My earliest recollections of Emily are of the welcome reception when she approached me and introduced herself. She seemed confident and spoke English with ease. We chatted about her trip from China to the U. S. during the reception and she asked me several questions about my experience as an international student in a PhD program in the U. S. I could see that she was excited to come to Midwestern Research University, as it was quite an achievement for her. She moved around during the reception and reached out to other people to introduce herself. Later, I noticed the same or an even higher level of curiosity, vigor, and confidence during her interactions with fellow students and faculty members. To me she seemed a young, inquisitive, and energetic soul who had the entire world in front of her and she was ready to explore.

Life during the Visiting Scholar Program

Emily came to the U. S. with clear goals and a proper plan. Her initial conversation reflected how social expectations in China had shaped her goal since she hoped she would be able to learn a lot from this experience and this international experience would help her to find a job on her return to China. She said,

Many people told me that if you have international experience, when you have an interview and if you told the interviewer, they will think your eyesight is more open and broad and, and your, your English may be better than others, because English is really important in China in the work, because of the global economy and even the global education.

She believed, “the US is the most powerful, and it is doing well in education”. Her motivations to participate in the program were driven by the forces of globalization and China’s active participation in the global economy. Learning English and broadening her horizons were important goals for her during her stay in the U. S. She talked at length about “broadening horizons” and what it meant for her during our many conversations. I noticed the way she used the term or the idea of “broadening horizons” gradually shifted from a market-oriented approach to a much broader and deeper understanding of her inner and outer world. She said,

I spend about more than 20 years just in one place, my hometown and have not seen all parts of China, I mean. Just small places. And now I have a chance to go abroad and it’s America, we all know America is very advancing. So, it’s really a big change and I can see different things. And it’s about my thinking and the way I can think my future. Not only study, but also my life.

In terms of her academic goals, she came with a research proposal from China, since it was required for all visiting scholars to come with a research proposal, they wanted to work on during

their time at Midwestern Research University. So, working on her research proposal for her master's thesis was one of her goals. She explained that her research is focused on "family related disadvantaged children" and she was aware of some very famous programs for such children in the U. S., so she wanted to learn about these programs. Her non-academic goals were to learn about a "different culture, different life in America, and make some friends."

Initially, she talked about a wide range of goals she wanted to achieve during her short time in the U. S., but later in the semester, she seemed to become more aware of the nature of her goals, since in her exit interview she carefully categorized her goals in two parts, "one about study and one about life." She also referred to her non-academic goals as "goal of life" or "life goals" by which she meant goals regarding learning about life beyond the classroom setting. As mentioned above, she was also exploring her future career options during this program. Later in the semester, during the focus group and exit interviews, she mentioned that one of her goals was to get some experience of American society, and then start a PhD degree in the U. S. In a way, this was her chance to learn how to be an international student in the U. S. and learn about PhD programs offered at American universities. So, she had ambitious and holistic goals for the short time of five months. Overall, she wanted to work on her research to finish her master's degree, explore future options for PhD studies in the U. S., learn English, broaden her horizon, learn about American and other cultures, make friends, and experience 'real America' through her personal experience.

Relationships

Relationship building was instrumental in her sense making process because these relationships helped her make meaning of academic and social practices in the U. S. and learn how to navigate a different culture. Regardless of various challenges, Emily received great support

from the relationships she built with her mentors and colleagues at Midwestern Research University. Building lasting relationships was important for Emily.

Relationships with Mentors

Emily developed a good relationship with her faculty mentor and student mentors. Her faculty mentor was a young, male, African American faculty member from the department of Teacher Education. She met with him quite often, since she was taking his class and the class met twice a week. He was very supportive of her learning process and told her she could visit him during his office hours if she needed any help. He also went out of his way to help with her final presentation. She described his help, saying

And before we do the presentation, I went to see my faculty mentor and I said I'm very nervous because I should do the presentation using the totally different language and he said, oh, you can come to my office and I can help you, so I took my computer to visit him and he saw my PowerPoint one piece by one piece and helped me to correct the mistakes, yes, and asked me some questions and I think it was very helpful.

She and her faculty mentor both worked hard to make her experience effective while working within their limitations of different research interests, languages, cultures, and limited time. The support provided by her mentors, both faculty and students, was completely voluntary and was not compensated by their department or college.

She shared that "I really appreciate the friendships I made here." By friends, she meant her student mentors and some people who worked in the Confucius center. Emily's student mentors were both female doctoral students and she knew them before coming to the U. S. because her student mentors had participated in an exchange program in China and Emily was their student buddy at Southern University. She stayed in touch with her student mentors via WeChat even after

their return to the U. S. When she came to the U. S., they helped her in adjusting to everyday life and took her to different social and cultural activities such as a football game and a blues festival. Also, at times they used to have lunch or dinner together or meet at college events. For the most part, the student mentors extended help in the area of social and cultural adjustment because that was the expectation for their role from the administrators. Emily reported,

I do not talk too much of studies with them. We talk about the life here. They ask me if you need some help and I ask them some questions. For example, I wanted to buy a bike here and I asked Shivani where can I buy a second-hand bike? And she told me, and I got one.

Perhaps due to these support structures and her independent nature, Emily did not have any major adjustment issues on her arrival at Midwestern Research University. She shared, “I can easily find the way to home and I adapt to life here.” Overall, her mentors helped her not only navigate her academic and social life, but also make sense of her international experiences because they provided her the communication tools and answers to many of her questions to understand new social, cultural, and academic environments.

Relationships with Group Members

Emily developed a great relationship with her fellow group mates, especially with the other three Chinese visiting scholars who were also master’s students in Southern University. Although she barely knew them before embarking on this international journey together, their bond became stronger during this program at Midwestern Research University. Emily not only lived with other female master’s students in the same apartment, but also attended academic and social activities with them. She said, “For many times, I didn’t go out alone. I mean, one of or all of my roommates go out together because we do not like to go out alone.” She and her other group members bought

bikes and they used to ride bikes around the campus, also all four girls planned a trip and travelled together to some states in the U. S.

Emily's views on learning were defined by who she was as a person and it reflected in her approach and the way she chose to engage in this program. She said,

I think for me, it's because I'm very outgoing. I like to make friends from different places.

I like to talk to them, and I like visiting different places. So, if I have more chance to involve two different activities, I will be very happy.

Relationships with American and International Colleagues

During her five-month stay at Midwestern Research University, she joined several activities, both academic and non-academic. Some of these activities were mandatory and others she participated in on her own, based on her interest. Some of the social and cultural activities helped her to make friends. She participated in a dragon boat festival organized by the Confucius institute and made friends with Chinese students and teachers who were either working in the Confucius institute or had visited China for an exchange program. Emily said, "Sometimes they will invite us to watch movie or the American football and some party." Although some of the social activities helped her make friends, not all activities were useful for her. She did not like the international breakfast and professional development meeting group of teachers. She explained,

Because it's required activity. We have to attend. I like this kind of meeting or party, but every time I just talk to people who I already know. So sometimes, I will feel it's boring because I already know them and sometimes, I have nothing to share with them. And it was kind of waste of time probably.

She found these social interactions confusing and difficult.

Because the people invited us, they said you can meet new friend. You can talk to them, but I think it's hard to talk to strangers and I don't know if they want to talk to me or I don't know what topic I should talk. It's difficult.

She explained why she found some interactions more difficult than others,

Because I make friends with some of my, with my peer mentor and some other students because I spent a lot of time with them or I already know them before. And in the international breakfast, some people, I just see them one, once, one time or twice.

She was required to attend both these events once a month. It was clear from her description of them that not all relationship building was easy for her. At times, it was an emotionally and psychologically draining experience, as she explained that talking to strangers was difficult, especially in a different culture where the language and context were both new for her. I often went to the international breakfast and always saw the group of Chinese visiting scholars clumped together. Often, they shared a table and talked to the people they knew from the program or just talked with each other. I also noticed our conversations did not last long. They were often superficial and basic such as, how is their experience going? What was the most recent thing they did? Etc. The language barrier was one obvious reason for such superficial interactions. To continue the conversation was often a laborious effort because even if the choice of words was correct and the sentences reasonably coherent, pronunciation and accent still made it difficult to move to deeper conversation. Also, the American culture of small talk with strangers is not very convenient for foreign students, especially in an academic setting when people are self-conscious about their image and abilities. In non-academic or informal settings, I noticed their communication style was more relaxed and conversations were somewhat deeper.

Language

For Emily, a “big challenge” was “language” which impacted her experience in the U. S. She said,

The teacher and students speak very fast. It’s difficult for me to understand all they said, so maybe I can only understand 50 to 60% and I have to learn the papers, the professor gives to me, for a long time. Yes. So, the biggest challenge is language.

Language remained a continuous challenge for her during her stay in the U. S. She was frustrated that she was not able “to understand all the things” her faculty mentor said in the class and this made her feel that she “is not very good.” She further shared her stress about language,

This class is based on the communication, so there’s a lot of chance, the students can talk to each other and say their opinions. Sometimes I cannot understand them, and I really want to share opinions, my opinions, but I was afraid my English is not very good. If I cannot express myself very good, what should I do?

Although language was a major challenge for Emily, she was willing to work on it. She also needed to learn how to be a student in an American classroom, since the class was not only linguistically different, but also culturally different. Emily used “wait” as her technique to learn how to be a student in an American classroom. She explained this technique,

Because I don’t know what I should do. For example, when I was having class with undergraduate students and I don’t know how to talk because of the language. I cannot understand totally, so I just wait and watch others, watch how they talk, how they communicate with each other, and how they ask questions and answer questions. Yeah, I think this is the most way I used.

Overall, she used language as a meaning making tool to understand social and academic cultures in a new environment. At times, she felt challenged and frustrated, but she continued her efforts to improve her language skills so she could understand the demands and requirements of new academic and social environments to achieve her goals.

Agency

Emily defined learning in a broad sense and shaped her learning experiences based on her understanding of learning. She participated in academic and non-academic activities with the same enthusiasm and openness to learn. Also, she created opportunities for herself to achieve her goals. Her idea of learning was not confined to a certain major or any particular program. Her approach towards learning was open as she shared,

I think my major is preschool education, but it doesn't mean I don't want to learn things... how I say? Except preschool education. Every, everything, the new things, I love to learn and these, the weekly lecture can open my eyesight. I think it's helpful.

Soon after her arrival, she realized the college of education did not offer pre-school education as major or even as a minor. She already knew this, but she still chose to participate in this program.

I think although there's no preschool education, but I think it's, well, but there still something I need to learn. Because totally different, the different education system or the way teaching and, you know, although there's no, the major match my major, but the Head Start program is run in this State. I think I can find the way to help my research plan.

Apparently, this was a roadblock for her formal learning and her goal for working on her research plan, but she did not consider it a hurdle. Rather, she took control of her learning. "I think it's a challenge for me, but it's important. I have to learn." She contacted a PhD student at

Midwestern Research University and asked him to connect her with faculty who had any interest in preschool education. She was able to find a faculty member who was working in the area of early childhood education. She further looked at details on the university website and through her web search, she found two more professors who were working in this area. She sent them messages and introduced herself. Those faculty members shared some journals and different articles about early childhood education with her. She struggled with her research topic and finding resources and direction because her major was not available at Midwestern Research University and her faculty mentor had a different area of expertise than hers, but she kept trying. She shared her experience:

I find something match my research interest, but, but actually, I still need some information, another chance to, to continue the program, like Watchdog and early children program in this university is named Great Start and there's one thing. One day we visited education department and I get an email of one of their officers and I sent email to her. She was nice. I wanted to meet one of the people who worked in the Great Start office, but I did not get the reply.

She was really interested in learning about this particular program about early childhood education, but she did not get a response from the respective department. Also, she wanted to interview some teachers from a local pre-school, but it took her a long time to plan those interviews and her time at Midwestern Research University was short, so she was not able to finish the interviews.

Emily had a deep desire to experience “real America” through first-hand knowledge, which she expressed several times during our conversations. She considered visiting different schools and travelling were the most valuable activities during her stay in the U. S.

Because for many times, we just know, learn about the American education from the books or somebody talk about it, but we have a chance to see what the American school looks like and how the teachers work and we can engage into the class and see how the students do in class.

During regular school visits, she had a chance to engage with students and teachers and participated in different class activities and she really valued their experiential learning opportunities. While talking about learning, Emily considered travelling an important learning experience. She said, “It is not study, it’s about life.” She planned an extensive trip to travel to different states in America during winter break. Although the structure of the program did not facilitate travelling, it was an important part of her experience in the U. S., she did it regardless of the challenges and restrictions and she was immensely proud of herself for planning and executing the trip. She explained,

Because when we start the semester and we cannot leave too far because the program director said we should stay in school from Monday to Friday. So, we do not have enough time to travel. When it’s winter break, we excited to plan to travel. And we four girls, we do all the things by ourselves. So, we, I think I am proud of us because, you know, it’s totally different country and we can only speak English. And I think it’s a challenge for us, but we made it.

Emily had some international travelling experience prior to coming to the U. S., but still she was a bit anxious regarding safety issues,

America is a totally different country and my parents, and I worry about my safety. As I know sometimes, it’s not safe, but not always and the foreigner here and we should protect our self and, you know, because the culture is different, so we need to be careful to, not to make anyone else uncomfortable.

She was free spirited and enjoyed travelling. Freedom was an important value for her, which she referred to and practiced through her actions and choices she made during the program at Midwestern Research University.

Prior to coming to the U. S., Emily had travelled to Thailand twice. The first time, she travelled with her mother through a travel group, and the second time she planned the trip on her own and visited Thailand with her friend. She mentioned that the first trip made her uncomfortable because she travelled with a group and it was a restricting experience. She did not feel free and could not do things she wanted to do. So, the second time she planned the trip according to her wishes and had more freedom in creating her own experience of travel abroad. She mentioned her second experience was completely different from the first one because she could do whatever she wanted to do and go wherever she wanted to go. She was free and felt more comfortable making her own decisions. Her family also had some experience of travelling abroad as they had also visited Thailand for recreation purposes in the past. This exposure and experience reflect that she was willing to take risks, valued freedom, and liked to create her own experience, which she continued during her time in the U. S.

Reflection

“It’s different from China”. She constantly compared her life in the U. S. to China to make sense of her new experiences. She focused mostly on differences, as she said herself, “Maybe I always keep my eye to find the difference, so I forgot to find the same, similar thing.” As a keen observer, Emily quickly noticed the differences between the American and Chinese academic systems and this transition not only to a different academic, but also to a different socio-cultural environment brought her new challenges. But her response to those challenges was that of a resilient learner as she said, “Different teaching style, the different relationship between teachers

and students and I think its important experience for me.” Her earliest impressions of America and American people were very positive. “They are very nice and kind, friendly. And I want to say one thing. It’s different. It’s different from China, about the time. The American are always on time.” While talking about America and her experience in America, she compared it with China, since her life in China was her point of reference to make sense of her experiences in a different country. She paid attention to people, their behaviors, work culture, and even the landscape and how it differed from China. “I like the life here because the area is so huge and there’s no tall buildings. In China, there’s always tall buildings, tall buildings. Sometimes it’s, it will give me some pressure, but here, it’s different.” She shared her feelings about her life in the U. S.

I feel comfortable. The work time is different from China. People only work in the time they have to, but after that, they just relax and live their life. It’s different from China. I have to, not have to, I need to study even on weekend in China. It is really busy, and I need to help so, professor even on weekend.

Even when she participated in social and cultural activities, she paid close attention to American people’s behaviors and how they acted in certain social situations.

It’s different from China. We have these activities (festivals and cultural events), but you know, a few people will participate in the activity, but many of them won’t perform like Americans. There won’t be lot of people who would dance. I think it’s different.

Emily attended her mentor’s undergraduate class titled “Human diversity, power and opportunity in social institution” twice a week. She struggled with the context at times,

It’s, that class talk about, as you know, human diversity or the race problem in America and it’s totally different from China. We do not have this class in China, so it’s new for me, but sometimes they talk about the history of the US or the news about US, but many

times, I don't know this history or the news, so sometimes I, I do not know what they say. I have to search it online.

Overall, comparing American academic and social practices provided her a chance to see things from new perspective and make sense of her experiences in a new context. She used China as her default frame of reference and tried to understand American practices using that default framework throughout her program. Although she focused on differences more than similarities, this framework helped her navigate the new context and learn how to interact and behave in new situations.

Back to China and Life after the Visiting Scholar Program

Emily's journey back to China was emotional, since she had built relationships with not only her group members, but also with her friends and colleagues at Midwestern Research University. While leaving for China, during their farewell reception, she seemed sad and excited at the same time. She was sad because she had to leave her friends here, but she was excited to see her family and friends in China. These five months were the longest she had ever spent away from her family. She did not mention experiencing any major reverse culture shock or adjustment issues, especially in her social life. However, she experienced challenges in her academic life due to her participation in this program. The main reason for these challenges was her research topic

Because the interest, research interest I focused on when I was in American, it's about the children from the, like divorced family... And, but after I came back, I find it's difficult for me to continue to focus on this part of my research. So, after I talk to my advisor, I changed my research topic.

Also, she had to catch up on all the missed work she was supposed to finish before graduating. Although she still had a year to graduate, she was “a little bit nervous” because she would graduate next year and had a lot left “to prepare dissertation.”

In my third round of interviews, five months after her return to China, when I asked Emily if she had been able to accomplish her goals, she explained in detail that her first goal was about research, so she planned her research and interviewed some people in America and learned a lot of things about her topic and research process, but when she came back to China after finishing the program she changed her research topic. She said,

Probably the goal is not achieved, but I think experience ...the thing I have done is helpful because you know, it's the first time I interview someone in English. Also, I am having class in the real situation, in the real America and I know how to teacher and how the students' behavior, how they do in the class....and what's the relationship between the teacher and students. I think the goal is reached and we visited a lot of schools, and library and other institutions. They are all helpful. This is to open my eyes, yes, and about social, before I went to America, I really want to make some friends with American students and we still keep in touch with Elise and my peer mentor. They are really nice. And this goal is reached.

One year after her return to China, she was able to graduate and find a job in a primary school as a Chinese language teacher in her hometown. She was working in an international school, which was managed in collaboration with France. She mentioned that her exchange experience in the U. S. was instrumental in her success in finding a job in an international school. She said, “When I got the interview, I told them the experience I spend in the U.S., I think it's an important thing that I got that job”. In future, she hopes to get a job as a Chinese teacher internationally and

she believes this experience will help her to achieve her career goal. During her stay at Midwestern Research University, she learned about the Chinese teachers' program and she hopes that one day she will be able to get that job.

Overall, Emily considered this experience an opportunity for professional development and self-growth, a way to find new opportunities and develop relationships. She was exploring the world and her place in the world. She had a desire to know more about the world.

I want to see more about the different world, chat with people who got the different religious belief, spend the daily life in some other cities, etc. Maybe it's a path I got the strong desire to see more, spend more.

In terms of personal growth, she mentioned, "I got the confidence I can handle the new unknown things" However, she did not consider this an entirely transformative experience. "To be honest, I am not very sure if this exchange experience impacts my life through some ways, but I want to say I still remind those unforgettable memories usually." She wanted to continue her explorations and learning and did not want to limit herself in "a small world or lifelong job."

CHAPTER 6: CROSS CASE SYNTHESIS

In the previous chapter, I illustrated the experiences of three Chinese visiting scholars by describing who they were before entering the program and after finishing the program and described their detailed experiences at Midwestern Research University. I included their histories to more fully convey their experiences as visiting scholars. Mezirow (2000) argued,

Our identity is formed in webs of affiliation within a shared life world. Human reality is intersubjective; our life histories and language are bound up with those of others. It is within the context of these relationships, governed by existing and changing cultural paradigms, that we become the persons we are. (p.27)

Only by acquainting ourselves with a person's history can we understand their experience during a brief period of their lives. I narrated the stories of the visiting scholars to situate them in social and cultural contexts and to develop better understanding of the complexities of their experiences. This meant looking closely at their lives before entering the program, learning about their goals, expectations, and activities during the program, and finding out about their life after returning to their home country.

The fundamental inquiry was how Chinese visiting scholars made meaning of their experiences at Midwestern Research University and how this experience influenced their perspectives, behaviors, values, and worldviews. I used Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory to understand what meaning perspectives visiting scholars used to make sense of their experiences and how these meaning perspectives changed during and after their international exchange experience. In this chapter, I present the cross-case analysis of Chinese visiting scholars' meaning-making process during their international exchange experience at Midwestern Research

University. I explain how they perceived and made sense of their experiences in an international context. I describe their meaning-making tools and process and how this process influenced their perspectives, behaviors, values, and worldviews.

Making Meaning of International Visiting Scholars

The visiting scholars in my study were different individuals, each one of them unique, with different life experiences, goals, and future aspirations. Although they participated in the same program at Midwestern Research University, they experienced it in different ways depending on their identities, academic, social, cultural backgrounds, and future plans. Each one of them hoped to become a somewhat different person than who he/she was at the beginning of the program. They approached their participation in this program from a development perspective, which meant becoming a better version of themselves as a person, teacher, scholar, and researcher.

Self at the Core

‘Self’ emerged as one of the central themes in this study. Chinese visiting scholars situated their ‘self’ at the center of their international experience and made meaning of their experiences based on their self-concept.

Self-Concept

Although Mezirow’s (1991, 2000) Transformative Learning Theory is not clear about the role of self-concept in the transformative learning process, in my study, I found visiting scholars used self-concept to understand and shape their experiences during the international exchange program. Self-concept is a term used in psychology interchangeably with self-identity, self-perspective, or self-structure and is a collection of beliefs about one’s self. “Self-concept is made up of one’s self-schemas, and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. It includes the past, present, and future selves, where future selves (or possible

selves) represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming. Possible selves may function as incentives for certain behavior” (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Myers, 2009).

Different Levels of Self-Awareness

The Chinese visiting scholars’ self-concept was complex and multi-faceted. The Chinese visiting scholars talked about their multiple identities. For instance, Lucy considered herself a group leader, a teacher, a learner, and a Chinese woman. Wei Fei referred to himself as a PhD scholar, a traditional Chinese man, a family man, a learner, and a communist. Emily considered herself a learner and a Chinese girl. They not only mentioned who they thought they were, but also mentioned who they were not. For example, Wei Fei said, “I am not a shy boy.” Similarly, Lucy and Emily talked about themselves as outgoing and “not shy.” All the Chinese visiting scholars were at different stages of their understanding of self-awareness and self-development. For example, Lucy, as a mature middle-aged faculty member, was more self-aware than Emily, a master’s student, who was still exploring her identity.

During their time at Midwestern Research University, all the Chinese visiting scholars were constantly handling their multiple identities of student, teacher, learner, scholar, male, female, Chinese, communist, and group leader. They were constantly negotiating with their understanding of who they were and developing new understanding of how others perceived them in this new context. They were seeing themselves through multiple mirrors and constructing and reconstructing their ‘self’ throughout this experience.

Past, Present and Future Self

The Chinese visiting scholars’ understanding of their international experiences was based on how they viewed themselves in relation to their societal expectations and other perceptions. The

Chinese visiting scholars' sense of self was developed by their past experiences and future goals which shaped their experience at Midwestern Research University. Multiple factors from their past lives in China and their future aspirations shaped their sense of self. Their past academic experiences, intense competition, the rigorous examination system, changing economic conditions, the pressure of globalization, and a strong sense of obligation to family and society shaped their sense of self and who they wanted to become in the future.

Deficit Sense of Self to Ideal Self

All the Chinese visiting scholars had an image of their ideal self and they considered this program an opportunity to achieve their ideal self. The Chinese visiting scholars perceived this experience as an opportunity to overcome certain limitations and improve certain skills to form their desired self. Learning English, research skills, and teaching and learning techniques, developing global perspectives, becoming more confident, being able to communicate well with different people, and "broadening their horizons" were common goals they shared throughout the program. However, each one of them prioritized his/her area of growth depending on his/her future career goals.

For example, Emily's sense of self was also imbedded in a deep sense of obligation to her family and the economic pressures she faced while growing up in rural China. She believed this program was an opportunity for future career success in China. In her entry interview, Emily reflected on her past experiences in China and said, "Because I failed the college entrance examination and I always worked, studied hard and I believe I can go to a good university in the US, it's most powerful, the education is doing very well in the U. S. And I believe I can learn a lot here and it will be very helpful for me to find a job if I have the international experiences." Emily

believed that her participation in this program would prepare her for her future career and become the person she wants to be.

Lucy's sense of self was deeply ingrained in her role as a teacher and she wanted to become a globally aware and more effective teacher who could teach international students and prepare Chinese students for study abroad. She mentioned the pressure of globalization and the expectations of her institution, government, and society to keep up with fast paced global higher education as a faculty member in a public university. Since she wanted to improve her English skills, learn about American teaching and learning practices, and learn about different cultures, during the program she focused on activities that helped her work on her deficiencies and become her ideal self as a successful teacher and global educator.

Similarly, Wei Fei's sense of self was deeply ingrained in his identity as a student, a PhD scholar, and a traditional Chinese man who had to struggle throughout his life in an extremely competitive environment to be considered successful in China. English has been always a major hurdle in his life in achieving his career goals since he aspired to be an international scholar and assistant professor in China to reach his ideal self. He considered this exchange experience just the beginning of a better future for him with more opportunities to land a stable academic job in China, and later travel and study abroad through his faculty position. During his program he wanted to learn academic English, improve his research skills, and publish in international journals to achieve his goals to become his ideal self. His immediate goal of getting a job and achieving economic prosperity was instrumental to achieving his larger goal of achieving his ideal self and living a successful life.

Overall, the Chinese visiting scholars considered participating in the international visiting scholars program an opportunity to overcome their self-deficiencies to achieve their ideal self to live their desired lives.

Holistic Sense of Self

The Chinese visiting scholars' sense of self expanded to their society and the world at large. They considered this experience an opportunity for self-development for personal, social, and global good. There was no dichotomy of personal and social good, soul, body, and mind. For example, "Broaden my horizon" and "open my eyes" were common expressions used by the Chinese visiting scholars in this study. All Chinese visiting scholars mentioned that they wanted to broaden their perspective, but what they meant by broadening their horizons was close to professional development through self-development by learning about the rest of the world and improving or acquiring new language, skills, and social networks. For example, Emily specifically mentioned in all her interviews "broadening horizons" and "opening my eyes" as her main goal to participate in an international exchange program, but she framed the idea in different ways in different interviews. It seems with time her understanding of the idea of "broadening horizons" and "opening eyes" evolved from a merely neoliberal perspective (which considers higher education a market and students as customers) to a complex notion of self-knowledge and socio-cultural understanding in a different cultural setting. In her very first interview, Emily discussed "broadening horizons" in more of a professional development context and as a way to prepare for the neoliberal global economy. For her, "Broadening horizons" meant developing skills that would help her to find a job in China. "Broadening horizons" also meant access to opportunities in the future, which she had missed in the past due to a lack of certain skills and knowledge.

In the mid- semester focus group interview, she stressed, “The most important goal for me is open the eyesight.” She approached the idea of broadening horizons from gaining a global perspective by learning new skills and accessing academic resources. She further explained, “I studied more than 20 years in China. So, I think it’s time for me to go outside and see the different world... American education is different from Chinese, and I think it will give me more new ideas and critical thinking, so I think it’s the most important thing for me.” This is a more complex goal than her initial goal to improve her educational prospects.

By the end of the semester, Emily’s focus shifted to cognitive development. In her exit interview, she talked about broadening horizons and said, “The most helpful part is about open my eyes and I can see something in different ways. Yeah. It is about my thought.” The idea of broadening horizons came up in our last interview from China as well, as it was a recurring and consistent theme in all Emily’s interviews. I asked her if she could give me few examples of what she meant by broadening her horizons. She said,

So, I mean, in the past time, I have no idea about these things and after I’ve been through in the class, I know there are many people, they come from different culture, and they have their own beliefs. So sometimes, we need to respect each other, and we have the different opinions or these I do not agree with their thoughts or something like that, but with, I need to listen to, we need to listen to each other and don’t judge a person. There’s a word, don’t judge a book by its cover.

This example of complex understanding of different cultural values, belief systems, and developing tolerance as a desired outcome of her international experience reflects not only her desire for self-development, but also the actual self-development of her thought process about her “self” and the larger world. There was deep desire to learn and experience the world outside China.

Similarly, Lucy wanted to work in the area of international education and develop skills to communicate better with her international peers and foreign students in her university, so she thought this experience would prepare her for her future career goals. During a focus group, she talked about her goals in terms of priority. She said, “First to know about American education. Second, enlarge our eyesight and knowledge. We can learn new ideas from American teacher education. So, we can learn many new things and maybe we can change our thinking ways and habits.” Learning about American culture and broadening horizons remained an important goal for Lucy throughout the program, but she hinted towards globalization as one of the reasons behind her motivation to learn from American teachers and people from other countries. She said, “We can learn from Americans and other countries new good culture. Good qualities and now globalization.” The Chinese visiting scholars’ sense of self expanded to society and the world at large. Similarly, Wei Fei also used the phrase “broaden my horizon” in both professional and personal development contexts.

Sense of Self and Professional, Personal, and Social Development

All the Chinese visiting scholars, regardless of their academic or career level, considered their participation in the exchange program to the U.S. an important and valuable experience in terms of their career and self-development. They thought this experience provided them a chance not only for personal growth, but also to contribute into social and economic development in China. Their sense of self was expanded to their society and they considered professional development a part of self and social development. They did not view their development from an individualistic perspective. Rather, they considered it part of a development of their country’s social economic growth. Emily explained,

I think it is important for me I became more confident than before. Maybe I am outgoing girl, but I am shy girl too. Although my English is not that good, but I can speak in public confidently. I want to share similarities and differences in study and life between China and America with my friends and make them aware that we need to do better in certain aspects.

Similarly, Lucy's desire was not limited to only learning and self-development. She had planned for institutional reform on her return to her country. She mentioned that she wanted "to learn how American teachers design different teaching and learning activities, how they manage a classroom, how they retrain their teachers and training undergraduate students to be a teacher." She elaborated on her goal of learning about teaching and reforming the system of teacher training and preparation in China. "I think teacher quality, teacher skill is very important, so I want to test, I want to try to do some "reform". This is my first aim I have." The Chinese visiting scholars hoped that their experience would provide them an opportunity to reflect on their past experiences, learn new skills and knowledge, and prepare them to be productive members of their society as competent and well-informed individuals.

Similar to Lucy, Wei Fei considered his personal development a part of his institutional and social development. He mentioned "our university ranks 30" and "our teachers want us to find resources from the U. S." for research to improve the university's global rankings. He further mentioned, "In China many universities send their students abroad to internationalize their campuses because it is part of their evaluation process." Also, he believed by becoming an educated and economically stable individual he was contributing to the development of his family and society.

Sense of Self and the World

The Chinese visiting scholars had a strong desire to know the world around themselves and find their place in the larger world. Their sense of self was deeply connected with the larger world. To make meaning of their lives, they felt that they needed to learn about the world around them. They all expressed the desire to learn about other cultures and people from their own experience. They especially wanted to learn about “real America” and “real Americans”. It was important for the Chinese visiting scholars to make sense of the world from their own experiences. They often shared their mistrust regarding sources of information such as media and books. They wanted to create their own perceptions and beliefs based on their personal experiences. Their desire to learn about “real” America and “real” people through personal experience reflects their search for their place in the world and the goal of becoming well informed global citizens.

Quick access to first-hand unadulterated information was important for them as learners and scholars to develop their own perceptions and understanding of the world. Learning English was one of the important goals of all the visiting scholars because they could access first-hand information and knowledge only through English. While talking about accessing American research in Chinese translation, Emily said, “The people who translate the research, she or he might be, might add some his or her thoughts, probably it will not be useful for me.” She further explained, “though I will have different opinions about the same research, so the better way is to get the, to read, to read the research in English, so firsthand resources.” Similarly, Lucy also wanted to have first-hand information about America through her personal experience. She talked about her experience and said she had a

Valuable time because from our learning [experiences], we study many new things. Yeah, also before I came here, I know something about America from books or TV, films, online,

but when I came here, I experienced it by myself. So, I think I find some new things and something I experienced, I got wider and deep understanding, broaden perspective.

Lucy was also eager to have first-hand knowledge of American culture and society. Her interest was not confined to classroom learning. She had a much broader vision and she was interested in lifelong intercultural learning. In her first interview she said,

I have many goals, but the most important maybe I want to understand about American education by my experience. Because before I came here, I know something about American education by learning books and look for some information online, so I come here, I can understand American education by myself experience. And deeper and more wide. more wide. And second, because there are many students and the scholars come from other countries to America to study, so I want to understand more about multicultural.

Wei Fei mentioned the pressure of globalization and a desire to develop himself as an international scholar. As compared to Lucy and Emily, he was more focused on his professional development through learning about English, research, and American academic practices and culture. He was less interested in developing socio-cultural understanding of the world around him. It is important to note that he mentioned lack of time as one of his reasons to totally focus on the academic aspects of his development.

Overall, all the Chinese visiting scholars wanted to develop and expand their identities from local to global learners, teachers, students, and researchers who were aware and fully engaged at the global level.

Self-Development and Change

The Chinese visiting scholars expressed the desire to learn about other cultures and develop themselves at personal, professional, social, and global levels. They were open and willing

to learn about the world and learn new skills, but as far as change is considered, they deliberately focused on certain identities. They considered some identities fluid and transient but left certain identities intact. For example, their identities as teachers, researchers, and scholars were subject to change and they were very intentional about this change process. However, their identities as Chinese men or women were not under any deliberate change process. For example, Wei Fei, a PhD student, was very keen to develop himself as an international researcher and scholar by learning American ways of research, but he did not want to change his other identities such as “traditional”, “communist”, “Chinese”, and “man”. He believed, “values don’t change” and by values he meant his Chinese traditional values, which to a great extent constituted his sense of self. He neither actively socialized nor showed any interest in American cultural and social values beyond the academic sphere. Similarly, Lucy focused on developing professional identities such as “teacher”, “group leader”, “student”, and “learner”, but her identity as a “woman” or “Chinese” were not subject to change. Both women, Lucy and Emily, were more open than Wei Fei was to socialization and learning about the social and cultural values of American society. They appreciated the values of American society and were considerably impressed with the “freedom” that American society offered to them, but neither of them tried to change their non-professional identities.

Lucy’s engagement in the program was based on her perceptions about herself. She mentioned at the end of the program that she has become “more confident and willing to express her feelings and thoughts”, “more respectful to others” and now gets along with people from different backgrounds more easily.

The Chinese visiting scholars centered their sense of self in the meaning making process of their international visiting scholars’ experience. All the Chinese visiting scholars perceived their

participation in the international visiting scholars' program from a self-growth perspective and considered it a self-development opportunity. They considered self-development from a holistic perspective and perceived their self-development as an opportunity for contributing to China's development and for creating global harmony. However, they specifically focused on certain aspects of their self-development based on their goals to achieve their ideal self and to live their desired life.

Relationships

Relationships were another important theme in this study, since Chinese visiting scholars discussed the role of relationships in their international experience extensively for their self-development and for making meaning of their experiences.

Intentional and Goal Oriented Relationship Building

It was an important goal for the Chinese visiting scholars to build relationships with their faculty and student mentors, colleagues, and local community. However, their relationship development was deeply connected with their goals. All the visiting scholars were intentional in relationship building since it was a time-consuming activity and required extra effort and time and they were in the US for only a short period with specific goals to achieve. For example, Wei Fei, being strictly focused on academics, considered spending time with his faculty advisor useful and did not put any effort in developing social relationships. However, Emily and Lucy both tried their best to develop social relationships by participating in a variety of activities throughout their program because they wanted to learn about American culture and other cultures along with working on academic goals.

Relationships and Learning about Academic and Social Cultures

The Chinese visiting scholars learned about American academic and social cultures through relationships. For all the Chinese visiting scholars, relationships with their faculty mentors were “the most meaningful” part of their experience. This relationship was important for them not only to learn about differences between American and Chinese academic culture, but also to learn new perspectives and techniques of teaching and learning which played a crucial role in developing their sense of ‘self’ as students, teachers, and scholars. Their interactions with their faculty mentors shaped and reshaped their concepts of research, teaching, learning, and the role of a teacher, since interacting with American faculty was a new experience for them and they had to make sense of the ambiguous power dynamics between teacher and student in American culture. They were intrigued by the informal nature of American faculty and often liked it. The process of navigating this relationship was complex, since it required effort to move beyond their existing frame of reference regarding the role of faculty and learning while trying to manage the expectations and research requirements from their Chinese and American faculty mentors.

Relationship building with the student mentors varied among all three visiting scholars based on their goals. Emily and Lucy, who were deeply interested in the social and cultural aspects of their experiences, paid a lot of attention to developing relationships with their student mentors. On the contrary, Wei Fei, who was extremely academically focused, did not spend much time with his student mentors. Emily had known her student mentors before coming to the U. S. She stayed in touch with them and leaned on them for building further social networks and to learn about American culture. They provided her a window into American culture and eased her transition into a new society.

Relationships not only helped the scholars to learn about American culture, but also helped them learn and develop new skills such as research, teaching, and learning English. These

relationships also helped them to navigate daily life and make sense of socio-cultural norms in the US. They learned about themselves and Chinese culture through their interactions with their peers.

Relationship Building Expectations and Behaviors

The Chinese visiting scholars' desire to learn about others was not limited to just gathering information. They wanted to make friends with Americans and people from other countries, and scholars from different backgrounds for future collaborations. They were hoping to create long lasting relationships during this program. They were also interested in information exchange and teaching others about Chinese culture, education, and values so they could understand them and their country too. They were interested in equal exchange of cultures and values, instead of just being at the receiving end. They knew they and their culture had a lot to offer to Americans and others could learn from them as well. Lucy's personal goals for this program were to "enlarge her eyesight," "change her some thoughts," and "make friends from different cultures." She had a positive learning attitude and openness towards other ways of knowing and she was aware of globalization as a force pushing her to learn about others around her. She said, "We can learn from Americans and other countries new good culture, good qualities, and now globalization." Lucy and Emily prioritized relationship building with American colleagues during their stay at Midwestern Research University. They actively joined several activities, both academic and non-academic. They participated in a dragon boat festival organized by the Confucius institute and made friends with Chinese students and teachers who were working in the Confucius institute. However, regardless of their outgoing nature and deep desire to make American friends, they struggled in building relationships and making friends with Americans.

Challenges in Relationship Building

The Chinese visiting scholars expected to develop deep and lasting relationships with their American and international colleagues, but it was difficult for all three Chinese visiting scholars. They mentioned the following reasons for the difficulties in relationship building. Lucy shared her frustrations regarding connecting with her American colleagues. She said, “When Americans finish work, finish class, bye-bye. Everyone back home. So, in the beginning, we feel lonely.” She talked about the difficulties and challenges of building “deep relationships with other country person” as she considered it “maybe not easy because different culture and our lifestyle not same.” Similarly, Emily who actively participated in several social activities in the hope to develop lasting and deep relationships with American peers and colleagues had difficulty building relationships. She did not like the superficial nature of her social interactions during the international breakfast and professional development meeting group of teachers. She explained, “Because it’s required activity. We have to attend. I like this kind of meeting or party, but every time I just talk to people who I already know. So sometimes, I will feel it’s boring because I already know them and sometimes, I have nothing to share with them. And it was kind of waste of time probably.” She found these social interactions confusing and difficult. “Because the people invited us, they said you can meet new friend. You can talk to them, but I think it’s hard to talk to strangers and I don’t know if they want to talk to me or I don’t know what topic I should talk. It’s difficult.” She explained why she found some interactions more difficult than others, saying “because I make friends with some of my, with my peer mentor and some other students because I spent a lot of time with them or I already know them before. And in the international breakfast, some people, I just see them one, once, one time or twice.” At times, it was an

emotionally and psychologically draining experience as she explained that talking to strangers was difficult, especially in a different culture where the language and context were both new for her.

Although Wei Fei considered relationships important, he did not focus on building relationships with American colleagues for socialization purposes. He spent most of his time in the library studying alone and at times, on weekends he liked to play basketball with his Chinese friends who were his neighbors. He considered the differences between Chinese and American values around relationships a hurdle in developing relationships with American colleagues. He appreciated the American cultural values of freedom and equality, however, he believed Chinese ways were good too because Chinese show a lot of respect to different people and are very polite. Wei Fei had difficulty building a relationship with his student mentors because of his poor English and his values around cross gender communication and his masculinity. He had a female student mentor who was from South Korea, but it was difficult for him to connect with her due to his “poor English.” He usually met her during international breakfast. He said, “We talk about research” because he was totally focused on research, but overall, he remained hesitant to meet her during his time at Midwestern Research University due to “language and lack of communication.” In addition, “as a PhD student, I know each PhD student is too busy, too much work, so I do not want to disturb.” He also considered himself self-sufficient and able to handle his life in the U. S. independently. “I’m not a shy boy. I think most problem, I can solve by myself.” For him, being a male meant dealing with his own issues independently and he found it hard to ask a female mentor for help. Both women who were equally independent and outgoing did not find it hard to rely on their mentors for socio-cultural support, but Wei Fei had trouble in building relationships with his student mentors.

Regardless of the challenges of language, cultural values and expectations, time, and cross-cultural communication, the Chinese visiting scholars learned how to interact with American faculty mentors, student mentors, and colleagues, and navigate a variety of social and academic settings, albeit with a bit of difficulty and hesitation. Also, during the process they were able to recognize the fact that their expectations and values about human relationships were embedded in their cultural norms that were different from other cultures. This realization deepened their understanding of their ‘selves’, their society, and other cultures.

All the Chinese visiting scholars developed a strong group bond with their group members over their stay. Emily shared an apartment with three other Chinese visiting scholars who were also master’s students in Southern University. They did not know each other before coming to the U. S. However, they showed a great sense of responsibility and affection towards each other. Their relationships evolved with time, since they spent a great deal of time together in doing the same activities. They shared a family-like sentiment towards each other. Wei Fei was the only male in the group and all the female students were younger than he was and referred to him as an “elder brother” who was very helpful in the academic and social transition. He described his relationship with the women in the group,

Oh, very good. Because I’m the only boy and I’m the older brother for the four girls, so I really help them a lot and I also take them as my own sister, like this way. And Ms. Lucy is my teacher and we are the same professor in China. She’s my academic sister, older sister in China, so for this relationship, we also get a very good relationship.

Wei Fei’s quote shows the significance of familial relationships in Chinese culture. Even the professional relationships are seen as extended family. Wei Fei “being the only boy” considered the girls as his “own sisters” and Lucy as an “academic sister, older sister” and

felt that he had a responsibility to “help them” and “take them as his own sisters.” This gives us a glimpse of how relationships are framed in Chinese society and how their values around relationships will shape their expectations for future relationship building. Prof. Lucy as a group leader was a mother figure for her group and she shared an amicable relationship with her group members. Their relationship was based on mutual respect and care. Lucy said, “We study together, visit to places together and sometimes I help them and sometimes they help me.” Although in Chinese society, the hierarchy of relationships is considered important, in a new environment, the balance of power between teacher and students shifted and resulted in relationships that are more equal. As Lucy explained, “Sometimes I learn from them because they are young and sometimes, they learn from me.” This shift could be the result of encountering a new situation, observing American academic culture, or may be due to Prof. Lucy’s open heartedness. Since they were learning as a group, their relationships with each other helped them grow together.

Emily not only lived with other female master’s students in the same apartment, but also attended academic and social activities with them. She said, “For many times, I didn’t go out alone. I mean, one of or all of my roommates go out together because we do not like to go out alone.” She and her other group members bought bikes and they used to ride bikes around the campus, also all four girls planned a trip and travelled together to some states in the U. S. These relationships provided them support and comfort to do things and achieve their goals. Although all of them were striving for more agency and independence, at the same time, the group bond helped them to achieve this control, especially in Emily’s case, since all four girls travelled in several states in America as a group.

Overall, relationships helped the Chinese scholars develop their epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological perspectives. They learned about themselves and their values as people and how

their cultural norms had influenced their behaviors. They also learned and experienced different approaches to human relationships, which helped them to develop nuanced and complex perspectives. Also, there was a difference in how they interacted and built relationships with their Chinese colleagues and their American colleagues.

English Language

“The limits of my language are the limits of my universe”

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Language was another major theme that emerged from the data. The Chinese visiting scholars used English language as an important tool to make meaning of their experiences, learn academic and social culture, and develop relationships.

All the visiting scholars came to the program with varied levels of English proficiency. Emily came to the U. S. with fairly good skills of spoken and written English, which was quite evident from her participation in lectures and class discussions. Lucy’s language skills were not as strong as Emily’s were, but were far better than those of Wei Fei, who had an almost unintelligible level of English. Although all of them wanted to improve their English skills, their motivations and methods to improve their language skills varied. Emily and Lucy had more of a holistic approach and were interested in developing academic and social communication skills. However, Wei Fei was specifically interested in learning academic English because of his very specific career goals.

All the Chinese visiting scholars discussed the role of English in their lives in China, how it has shaped their academic trajectory, and how significant it was for their future career success in China. Hence, learning English was one of the main goals for all the Chinese visiting scholars

during their stay in the U. S. because they considered it an important tool to make up for lost opportunities in the past, access resources during the program, and achieve their future goals.

Overcoming Deficit-Self

Learning English meant overcoming the deficit self and moving towards a more confident and empowered self. English had played an important role in the lives of all the visiting scholars even before coming to the U. S. English has been a limitation for them, a barrier in accessing academic and career opportunities in the past. Wei Fei's academic trajectory was especially affected by his "poor English" even as early as junior high school. His grades were affected, and he was not able to perform well in entrance exams and get admission to his desired major and college. When he was applying for visiting scholars' programs, he wanted to go to Stanford or UCLA, but he had to come to Midwestern Research University. "I failed, for my poor English. So, I applied this program." He constantly had to settle for less due to his poor English.

Emily shared a similar impact of English on her life. Emily was learning English since her primary school because in China it was important to learn English. She said,

I failed the college entrance examination due to poor English and its big issue for every student, family in China. And very unfortunately, I failed it. So, I have to go to another place to continue my study in the university. The university I went was not very good.

English was a hurdle or barrier for Wei Fei and Emily and had deeply impacted their academic trajectory. Similarly, Lucy was also impacted by English in her career and considered it a hurdle to achieve her career goals. She learned English in her junior high school from a Russian teacher who taught himself English. Because of her teacher's lack of expertise in English, her English learning experience at school was not very robust. Since she was interested in international education and she wanted to lead an exchange program to Canada, she had to learn English again.

She was required to score a certain level of English proficiency to pass the TOFEL to go to Canada.

All the Chinese visiting scholars wanted to learn English to overcome their communication deficiencies and to achieve their career and life goals to live their desired lives.

English and Ideal-Self

English not only played a significant role in the lives of the Chinese visiting scholars before coming to the US, but it was also important for their future career success. After graduation, Wei Fei wanted to become an associate professor in China and to get that job it was required for him to publish in international journals and have a good command of English to become an international scholar. Similarly, Emily was learning English because many people in China had told her if she wants to get a job in China, she needed to improve her English skills. “If you told the interviewer that you have international experience, they will think your eyesight is more open and broad and, and your English may be better than others.” As a teacher, Lucy considered learning English important for her career development since she wanted to work in the area of international education and as a teacher, she has to teach a growing number of international students in her classes. So, learning English was an important goal for all the Chinese visiting scholars.

English was important for the scholars’ social and global self-development, especially in the context of this program. As Emily shared, “English not only benefit my academics, but also communication with other people and travelling.” She was not talking about only one on one in person communication, but also online global communication, “there are many applications in China. We use applications to contact people from all over the world. Actually, I made some new

friends by these applications and I can chat with them in English. If I don't know English at all, there is no way." Lucy also talked about English as a way to create global harmony. She said,

Our government think because of globalization border is very small so different country people need to talk to each other. Now English is the most important language in the world and our government pays a lot of attention to it and requires students to study it. Because we study at Midwestern Research University, we communicate with people from other countries, we also need to read articles, read books, and sometimes communicate with local people. We take part in some local activities. We need to understand English and then we can join them. We can share. We enjoy more. Happy. And I think English language is not only a language but is a culture. I mean under the language is another important thing, is culture.

Lucy hinted at several important points here, the role of English in Chinese society and today's world as "the most important language" and her reference to "our government" and the "need to understand English" show a top down agenda of the Chinese government to participate in the world. At the same time, she mentioned the need for learning English, since she was studying at a foreign campus. It is interesting how she used words such as "share", "enjoy", and "happy" not only to refer to herself, but the collective "we", meaning society or the world. This perception reflects Confucius' goal of achieving universal harmony through learning and travelling. Lucy's understanding of language is deep, since she did not merely think of language as a mode of communication, but as a "culture" and there is a desire "to join them", and "share" with them. So overall, according to her, the role of English is not only important for her personal development and growth, but it is also crucial for the development of her country and for global peace and harmony. As an individual, she is ready to participate in her government's plan and work for global

harmony. Lucy said, “Globalization is a very trend in China”. Emily also shared, “Your English must be good because of global economy and even the global education.” Lucy mentioned the Chinese government’s focus on English, “In China, our government require every student to study English”. Since China is pushing to participate in the global economy, there is a lot of pressure on educational institutions to internationalize. Now Lucy has many international students coming from all over the world in her class and she needs to prepare Chinese students to study abroad because many Chinese students are going abroad to study, especially in English speaking countries such as America, Canada, Australia, and the UK. Lucy said, “In the past, all our students were from China. Now our department needs teachers to improve their English to teach foreigners”. There was a sense of obligation and pressure in the scholars’ undertones when they talked about English. They used phrases like “your English must be good” (Emily), “You need to learn English” (Lucy), “I need to improve my English language” (Lucy). Since the Chinese visiting scholars’ sense of self was connected with their society and the larger world, they considered English an important tool for self-development.

Challenges

During the program, all the visiting scholars struggled with English and it was an emotionally difficult and taxing experience for all of them at different levels. When they talked about English, they often used words like “challenge”, “difficulty”, “trouble”, “worry”, “fear”, and “afraid.” They often said sorry profusely and were constantly apologizing for their “poor English” during conversations. Maybe they were trying to be polite, but it also shows they felt it was their fault they were unable to communicate in English or that they should know the language. At the start of the program, their participation in weekly lectures was limited and they often resorted to silence due to language difficulties. Their lack of English proficiency seemed

like a hindrance, which affected their ability to express themselves fully and freely and this had a profound effect on their sense of self, since it made them feel as if they were not good- enough students, learners, and scholars.

Emily shared her feelings, “I went to my mentor’s class, and I cannot understand all the things he talked about. So, I feel I am not very good.” The lack of linguistic skills affected her self-image and her self-confidence, and she started feeling that she was not a good-enough student. Since her sense of self was deeply rooted in her role as a student, especially in this particular case, to prove herself a good student she needed to master the language fast. Emily further talked about her experience, “the class is based on communication, and there are a lot of chances to share opinions in the class. Sometimes I cannot understand them and really want to share my opinions, but I am afraid that my English is not good, and I cannot express myself very well.” This shows it was a deeply emotional experience for her. She was not a passive student and it was important for her to share her opinions with others.

Similarly, Lucy, despite being a faculty member and a very outgoing personality, felt, “I have trouble, some difficulty. I think I want to speak, but I don’t know English words.” Lucy shared, “For me, the most difficulty is language.” She mentioned it was hard for her to follow lectures because American teachers speak fast, and sometimes she cannot keep up with native speakers’ speaking speed and style. She also had difficulties in reading because of difficult vocabulary and the different writing style of American articles as compared to Chinese writing style. Emily shared a similar challenge;

The big challenge is language. In my mentor’s class, teacher and students speak very fast. It is difficult for me to understand all they said, so maybe I can only understand 50-60% and I have to learn the papers, the professor gave me, and it takes long time.

This inability to understand the content and class discussions was frustrating for all the scholars. Wei Fei had the hardest time with English, especially spoken English. He shared, “my difficulty is I cannot use the words. I can read. I know what it means, but I cannot speak.” Although he mentioned that he could read, reading English articles took a longer time and at times comprehending and making arguments in English was difficult for Wei Fei. As he said, “I think reading English literature is easy when I came here, but I found it very difficult.” Although they faced several challenges because of their “poor English,” especially at the start and during the program they learned ways and techniques to overcome their linguistic limitations.

Overcoming Challenges

Each scholar focused on different areas of language and figured out different ways to improve his or her English skills. Wei Fei spent a great deal of time in the library reading articles. Although he joined a spoken English class, he gave up soon, since he only wanted to learn academic English. Due to his very specific goals concerning his research and limited time, he decided just to focus on spending time on learning academic English. He was not interested in the socio-cultural aspect of the program, so he did not invest time and energy in acquiring spoken English skills during his time at Midwestern Research University. However, Lucy and Emily put intentional effort in improving their language skills, especially for communication purposes and learned ways to improve their language skills gradually. Lucy mentioned that she learned in her class that “when you don’t know a word you can change it and find other ways to express yourself.” She learned to use alternative words when she did not know the exact English word to express herself. She mentioned that she has made “some progress” in her English skills over the time, but she still keeps learning because there are still many words she needs to learn. Both Lucy and Emily actively participated in social and cultural activities, which helped them improve their

English language proficiency. Participating in classes and lectures helped them improve their reading and comprehension skills as well. Emily shared, “After five months I can read, it is easier for me to look for the research papers in English, and I can read the papers quickly and find what I need.” She felt that as a graduate student it was very important for her to learn about American research, so she can use it in her work and apply the relevant research in the Chinese context. She believed that her ability to read English gave her more freedom to access information directly instead of relying on other sources for translations. She also felt that she now had more autonomy as a learner and researcher to make meaning of English text on her own.

By the end of their program, the visiting scholars were able to achieve their career goals due to their improved language skills. Lucy shared that “The experience of studying in the United States has enabled me to improve my English communication skills and provide me with a lot of experience in participating in international student management and mentoring. I have more opportunities to participate in some international exchange projects”. Wei Fei and Emily were both able to secure new jobs and both reported that their English skills helped them in their career growth on the return to China. Lucy and Emily also mentioned an increased level of confidence because of better language skills.

Overall, the Chinese visiting scholars used English as an important meaning making tool to make sense of their academic and social experiences in the U. S. They specifically focused on certain aspects of language development based on their career and life goals. They created different opportunities and participated in different types of activities to learn English. Initially, they faced several challenges due to their lack of English skills, but eventually they were able to considerably improve their language skills, which helped them in their career growth on their return to China.

Reflection

Reflection was another important theme, since the Chinese visiting scholars constantly reflected on their experiences and compared them with their life in China. The Chinese visiting scholars used reflection as a tool to make sense of their experiences.

Focus on Differences

The Chinese visiting scholars focused more on differences than similarities between China and America to make sense of their experiences in the U.S. All of them mentioned that experiencing a different culture and way of life could help them learn new skills and develop as a person. Emily used the word “different” the most among the three participants while sharing her experiences. When talking about her experience she said, “It’s a different experience for me,” because “America is totally a different country”, “the culture is different”, “different teaching, different relationship between teacher and student and I think it is an important experience for me.” She further shared, “I need to learn because totally different education system.” She considered difference an opportunity to learn new things. Similarly, Lucy focused on differences and mentioned phrases like “different culture”, “America is different from China”, and “different country.” Wei Fei also highlighted differences such as “different research”, “different relationships” and “China and U.S. are different.” It is interesting to note that in comparison they hardly mentioned similarities. Even Emily once realized that she focused on difference rather than similarities between China and the U.S.

Self and Reflection

The scholars were keen observers and noticed academic, social, and physical environments in the U.S. and constantly compared them with China, which was a way to learn about themselves, their culture, how to behave in the new environment, and at times, rethink their

values, meaning perspectives, and behaviors. Often, their observations were related to their identities such as teacher, PhD scholar, and student. They paid attention to things that were important for them. For example, Emily noticed differences between Chinese and American academic culture and practices. She shared her experience of a class she attended from a student perspective and compared the life of a student in China vs the U.S. She found it very different from China,

It is different to be a student in China and the U.S. In the U.S., because I just am getting to the, just one class and it is designed for the graduate student, they are young. They are very young and, but I can still feel they are very active and free in class. But in China, you know, we, we must careful about our behaviors and no talking in class and not too many students asking questions. I think it's the most different part between China and America.

Being a PhD scholar, Wei Fei paid a lot of attention to research culture and practices in the US and constantly compared it with American research culture. He mentioned, "In China, we do education research quite different from the America." He also noticed the life of PhD students in the U.S. and compared it with a PhD student's life in China. "PhD students here work very hard and very busy." He also compared Chinese and American professors. For him, the relationship between faculty and PhD students was very important, so he discussed the differences in faculty and PhD students' relationships in both cultures,

Different from Chinese. For instance, the relationship between professor and the students. In China, teachers are always busy and for students it's difficult to find them but here, we can find them much more easily.

He mentioned that in the U.S. his mentors were friendlier as compared to his Chinese mentor back home.

Lucy, as a professor, constantly compared American teaching and learning practices and student teacher behaviors. On her arrival, she was a strong proponent of learning from the U.S. and reforming Chinese teaching and learning practices. In her conversations, she always compared American teachers' behaviors with Chinese teachers.

Different, I think, several expect, several things are not the same. For example, maybe in China, our classroom size, very big. Many students in the class. So here, fewer. Just more than 20, so I think this is one thing. And another, I think very important different, American teacher, I find their design, teaching design, they focus on students' learning activities. Maybe in this lesson, teacher didn't spend many times talk about knowledge, but many times requires students you do this, you do that. So many activities. But in China, maybe most of time teacher talk, students listen.

Academic Cultures

While the scholars admired many aspects of American education, they also learned that not everything is perfect in America. They realized they were doing certain things better in China and perhaps America could learn from them. Lucy mentioned that, "In China, we're often training teachers, but maybe American, fewer chance to training teachers." Although Lucy admired the freedom and relaxed behavior of students in American classrooms, at the same time, she noticed behavior problems in classrooms due to lack of discipline. She considered this lack of discipline a waste of time. By the end of the program, she was convinced that "China cannot totally learn from American and American cannot totally learn from China" because both countries have very different cultures and systems of education. If Chinese teachers follow American ways,

Chinese students won't be able to pass an entrance exam for college, which is crucial for their academic success in China. However, there were a few things teachers from both countries could learn from each other, such as American teachers could learn class management techniques from Chinese teachers and Chinese teachers could learn to be a little relaxed with their students.

Wei Fei highly appreciated his American faculty mentor and his mentoring and teaching style. He said, when he came to the U.S., he learned he can try and fail from his American faculty mentor who allowed him to make mistakes and learn from them, but in China, his teachers always ordered him just to finish the task because of "pressure for the publication." He explained, "We don't want to go the wrong way. Just in three days, you should find the answer. In two weeks, you should finish the paper and publish it." During our last informal meeting before his departure, he reflected on his overall experience and considered his interactions with his faculty mentor the most valuable part of his learning at Midwestern Research University. Regardless of his great appreciation for his faculty mentor's teaching style, he wanted to stick to the idea of the Chinese authoritative approach to teaching because he believed it was more productive and appropriate for the Chinese context. Reflecting on teaching and learning practices and academic culture provided the Chinese visiting scholars a chance to learn about different perspectives and decide for themselves who they wanted to be as students, scholars, and teachers. They had an opportunity to know more than one way of doing things and choose depending on their circumstances.

Social Cultures

The Chinese visiting scholars noticed American people's social behaviors in everyday life and often compared their behaviors with Chinese behaviors. Similar to academic culture, they focused on differences in social culture as well. Emily mentioned "it's just small things" that are

different, but there are “many small things.” She noticed more differences in social cultures than academic cultures between both countries.

Not about academic because, because the way we communicate with American people, it’s different. It’s different feelings when we talk to Chinese people.....in American, it’s different.

The communication difference was significant for her as she mentioned that she felt more comfortable and freer sharing her feelings with Chinese people back home “because of language” and she felt comfortable sharing her personal life with people she cared about, but in the U.S. she felt it was different. “I think these people may feel they want to protect their personal things. They won’t talk too much about their personal life with someone they just know a few days or not too long. And sometimes if I ask, I think it’s, it’s impolite, but it’s different in China.” However, she appreciated American social behaviors about self-expression and kindness.

Wei Fei reflected and compared American and Chinese cultures in terms of making relationships,

I think Chinese people take relationship between people really serious way. Because I am a traditional Chinese man. So, sometimes I think serious relationship is not bad way. Depends on the context and the environment, so you know, all the Chinese are polite people and the Chinese country is a polite country, so I think we, we respect in the very formal and very serious way.

He believed there are some good elements in American relationship culture, such as freedom and equality. However, he believed Chinese ways are more serious or formal, but they were good too. He mentioned in China, generosity is valued, and Chinese want to do things in a

“perfect way” and “maybe sometimes men do not want to be generous, but for the culture, for the atmosphere in China, we have to be generous. So, I think this is maybe not true for here, but it’s helpful for society.” Wei Fei compared both cultures and their values and decided that Chinese values are also important and are good for society. This reflection expanded his perspectives although it did not impact his values or behaviors.

The scholars admired American friendliness and timeliness. “They are very nice and kind, friendly. And I want to say one thing. It’s different, it’s different from China, the, about the time. American are always on time.” Emily liked the fact that Americans enjoy life and participate in local music and dance festivals, “And it’s different from China. We have these activities, but you know, people, many of they won’t performers like Americans.”

Physical Environments

The Chinese visiting scholars noticed the physical environment in the U.S. and how it was different from China. They not only admired the “fresh air” and “green campus”, but also learned the concept of space in American society and how it was different from China. Emily talked about landscape and how it affected her feelings, “I like the life here because the area is so huge and there’s no tall buildings. In China, there’s always tall buildings. Sometimes it gives me some pressure, but here, it’s different.” Lucy also talked about the physical environment and how it shaped behaviors of people in two different countries. “Many, many people live together and close our house, market, restaurant, similar, very noisy. But here, separate. American people, they live separate. Many houses separate.” She not only observed the physical space, but also tried to relate to people’s social behaviors in both cultures.

Overall, reflection was a constant part of the Chinese visiting scholars’ meaning making process at Midwestern Research University. It provided them a chance to learn about American

social and academic culture and about Chinese culture, which resulted in expansion of their perspectives.

Freedom and Agency

Freedom remained a central theme in the experience of Chinese visiting scholars at Midwestern Research University. They used their agency to make meaning of their international visiting scholars' experiences. They not only greatly admired the American culture of freedom, but also were constantly working and aspiring to gain more control of their lives by learning English, new skills, and American ways. During a focus group, Chinese visiting scholars suggested that since all of them had different research interests, they should not be required to attend the same activities and lectures because for some of them this may not be relevant. They should be given multiple options, so they can choose different activities based on their goals and interests. As Emily said, "If you give us more freedom to choose what we want to join in, it will be better." Overall, they were trying to gain more control of their engagement in the program while exercising agency at different levels to even further gain more control of their lives. The program also inadvertently provided them the opportunity to exercise their agency and make autonomous decisions.

The Chinese visiting scholars exercised their agency not only to participate in the program, but also to shape their experiences based on their own goals. The visiting scholars' program at Midwestern Research University offered multiple opportunities through structured and unstructured activities to support the Chinese visiting scholars' learning process. These activities included both academic and non-academic components. The Chinese visiting scholars were required to attend these activities including weekly group lectures, college-wide lectures, school visits, and social and cultural events on campus and off campus. However, the Chinese visiting

scholars exercised their agency and carved their own learning experiences to achieve their specific goals by focusing on certain activities, and even by creating new opportunities for themselves to accelerate their learning process and to fill the void of their desired experiences that were missing from the structured program.

Emily was self-driven and found ways to achieve her learning goals. She participated in all kinds of activities like weekly lectures, school visits, social and cultural events. Early on, she took control of her learning and shaped her visiting scholar's experience to achieve her goals. Her area of research was pre-school education and she found that the College of Education at Midwestern Research University did not offer courses on preschool education and the faculty did not have expertise in this particular area of knowledge. At the start of her program, she had trouble finding proper guidance to work on her research project and was worried about finishing her masters' thesis in a timely manner. She spent an extensive amount of time in the library to search for relevant materials and books for her research project. Also, she looked for PhD students and faculty members who had similar areas of research. Eventually, she was able to find two professors in the college who were interested in preschool education. She contacted them and requested help. Both professors helped her find relevant resources for her research.

Like Emily, Wei Fei exercised his agency in shaping his experience at Midwestern Research University. As a PhD scholar, his learning goals were academically focused, and he wanted to develop research skills and finish his dissertation during his time at Midwestern Research University. His learning process was of a more solitary nature because he was single mindedly focused on his research work and writing his dissertation. He was not very interested in socialization or cultural exploration of American society. He spent a year at Midwestern Research University. The first half of his time, he participated in group activities designed for all visiting

scholars, but he often felt that these social activities and school visits were not relevant to his research area and he had limited time to work on his research project.

Wei Fei prioritized his goals very thoughtfully and he made decisions rationally while keeping in mind his long-term goals. He told me that he loved travelling and had travelled extensively in China and had been to 34 provinces in China. Regardless of the fact that he liked travelling a lot, he opted not to travel at all during his yearlong stay in the U. S. because he considered spending time on his research far more important than travelling. He also thought that his time in the U.S. was short and his goal was to finish his dissertation and secure an academic position back in China. He believed as an academic he will have ample opportunities to travel in the future, but for now, his sole goal was to work on his dissertation to finish his degree well in time. Although it was his first time abroad and he wanted to visit some places, he mentioned that he had to choose between his research and travelling, so he decided to spend more time on his research than participating in social activities and travelling. For Wei Fei, research work took precedence over social engagements and he intentionally shaped his experience into an independent and regimented learning process which was quite different than the experiences of his program fellows, even the faculty member and group leader, Prof. Lucy.

Prof. Lucy had well-rounded goals for the program. She wanted to learn about the “American education system”, “enlarge her eyesight”, and “learn new ideas from American teacher education” to improve her personal teaching and learning practices and reform teacher education in China. She was interested in learning about students’ learning process in American classrooms in a variety of settings, in different subject areas, and at different grade levels. She wanted to observe American classrooms even beyond school visits and spend extensive time in different American schools. She discussed her interest with her mentors, they introduced

her to different local schoolteachers, and she spent summer and fall semester observing different classes in local schools. Also, she attended her faculty mentor's graduate level class as an active student and an undergraduate-level class as an observer to learn about American teaching and learning techniques.

Lucy was very curious and wanted to learn about American and other cultures during her stay at Midwestern Research University. She created her own network of friends and started participating in social activities outside the program. She was interested in learning about a wide range of topics such as the American market economy, the bus system, western musical instruments, and aids for people with disability. She participated in all the program activities and several activities outside the program. She talked about how she liked to spend her time during the program, "In my spare time, I take part in some activities, visiting art museum and other museum. I have visited two museums in Midwestern Research University. I find many interesting things. And I also took part in some musical concert." She mentioned although she is the eldest in the group, she likes to participate in these activities to make friends and to experience everything. She played badminton with her friends, went to watch a blues festival, did rowing, and participated in a dragon boat race.

Overall, the Chinese visiting scholars used their agency to shape their experiences while remaining within the structural limits of the program. They were active participants who were constantly negotiating with their personal goals and aspirations, and the goals and requirements of their home and host institutions.

Conclusion

The Chinese visiting scholars perceived their experience as a self-development opportunity. They made meaning of their experiences through their self-concept, relationships,

language, reflection, and agency. In terms of the transformative nature of this experience, the change in their meaning frames, perspectives, and behaviors was complex and non-linear. All the visiting scholars experienced the program differently and their transformation varied from each other since they were at different stages of their lives and had different goals and purposes. They did not show any “dramatic shift” in their thinking or behavior. Their process of change was of a developmental nature and to some extent consciously directed. Their transformation was directly associated with their idea of self and what type of ideal self they wanted to create. So, the assumption that after experiencing “a disorienting dilemma” learners “transform” and become completely different individuals did not prove true in this study. The change in meaning frames and behaviors of the Chinese visiting scholars was a gradual process where they carefully chose the aspects of their self they wanted to improve. Often literature presents international students and scholars as individuals, as empty vessels completely devoid of any agency. On the contrary, this study shows the opposite. The Chinese visiting scholars wanted to learn from another culture, but they also wanted to teach others about their culture. They experienced American culture, but they also realized the significance of Chinese culture, traditions, and values. The Chinese visiting scholars directed the change they wished to see in themselves since they were the ones who were constantly picking and choosing what to incorporate in their lives and what to ignore from this new experience. They constantly compared their experiences in the U.S. with their life in China, which resulted in expansion of their perspective. Overall, they learned new skills and knowledge which expanded their perspectives and worldview, but there was no dramatic shift in their behaviors and values, rather they reaffirmed their Chinese traditional values and behaviors to validate their sense of self.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I presented key findings, which described the process of meaning making of Chinese visiting scholars at Midwestern Research University. I used Transformative Learning Theory as an overarching framework to help explain their meaning making process. I found that Chinese visiting scholars considered their participation in the international exchange program an important opportunity for holistic self-development. They considered self-development a way to become better people to contribute to their society and the world at large. They made meaning through their self-concept and agency and used relationships and language as tools to expand their meaning frames by constant reflection on their social and academic experiences. However, they did not show a dramatic shift in their thinking and behavior, as might be suggested by transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Their process of change in meaning frames, perspectives, and behaviors was of a more developmental nature and to some extent, consciously directed to gain certain skills to achieve their future goals and to become the people they wanted to be.

This chapter extends my analytical interpretation of the findings through expanding the Transformative Learning Theory framework and synthesizing perspectives and shifts in our understanding of visiting scholars' experiences during international exchange programs. I analyze the meaning making process of Chinese scholars during their international visiting scholars' program. First, I discuss their meaning making process including how they perceived their experiences and what factors influenced and shaped their learning and meaning making process. Second, I present their meaning making tools such as self-concept, agency, relationships, language, and reflection and discuss them from economic, social-cultural, and transformative

learning theory perspectives. Finally, I conclude the chapter with recommendations for practice and future research.

Meaning Making of Chinese Visiting Scholars' Experiences as Self-Development

The fundamental question of this study was how the Chinese visiting scholars perceived and made meaning of their international visiting scholars' experiences. They perceived their experiences as a "self-development" opportunity to achieve their "ideal self" and gain more freedom to make choices to lead their desired lives.

The growth in numbers of Chinese students at American campuses is associated with globalization and internationalization of higher education systems and increasing demands of a knowledge-based global economy (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Most of the studies on Chinese students in America (Ebersole, 1999; Trice, 2001; Knight, 2004; Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Ku et al., 2008) considered these visits to reflect a desire to participate in the global economy. Most of these researchers highlighted several benefits of international education experiences for the world economy and sharing cross-cultural perspectives (O'Hara, 2009; Saxenian, 2005). However, I found that globalization and internationalization of higher education systems encourage international mobility, but this is not the sole lens through which my participants perceived their experiences. Although global and neoliberal forces remained an undeniably important factor in shaping these experiences, this framework does not fully explain the experiences of my participants in the international exchange program. The Chinese visiting scholars perceived their participation in this international exchange program from a development perspective and considered it a self-development journey from local to global. Holistic self-development meant knowing about self and the world around, developing academic, professional and communication skills, and creating academic and social networks to contribute to their society and claiming their

space on the world stage. This holistic self-development process included constructing and reconstructing their self to know themselves better in relation to the larger world and to gain access to more resources and gain more freedom to make autonomous choices to control their lives.

The Chinese visiting scholars focused on their sense of self to make meaning of their experiences. Each individual had a different level of understanding of his or her self and their self-concept was deeply shaped by their past experiences. The term self-concept means one's beliefs about oneself and who a person thinks he/she/they are. "It includes the past, present, and future selves, where future selves (or possible selves) represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming" (Myers, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986). According to psychologist (Rogers, 1959), people strive to reach their ideal self. He argued that psychologically healthy people actively want to move away from others' expectations and try to look within themselves for validation (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2007).

All the Chinese visiting scholars considered participating in the international visiting scholars' program a self-development opportunity. Marginson (2012), in his study about international students' experiences abroad, argued participating in international education was a way of self-formation for these students and he mentioned agency and identity as important tools for the self-formation process. He argued that international students centered their self to make sense of their experiences.

The centering self arbitrates tensions and conflicts between roles, between sites and between the expectations of different groups. It propels the student into active social encounters with diverse others, makes hard choices and changes course where needed. The centering self is not a whole bounded individual in itself: identity with a capital "I." It is

a broadcasting and switching station not an operating system. It is only one part of the self (Marginson, 2013, p. 16).

Marginson (2013) also presented the concept of plural identities and used the terms multiplicity and hybridity to explain these identities. He believes that international students are well aware of their multiple identities and the many possibilities they offer. In this case study, the Chinese visiting scholars were trying to reach an ideal self, but it was not devoid of social and cultural expectations. They deliberately focused on certain aspects of their identity development, considering some aspects fluid and transient, but leaving certain identities intact. For example, their identity as a teacher, researcher, and scholar was subject to change and they were intentional about this change process. However, their identity as a Chinese man or woman was not under any deliberate change process. They separated certain identities from each other and deliberately decided to change at times and at other times resisted change. This leads us to two important points, the role of agency in self-development and the cultural construction of 'self'. According to Mezirow (1991), past experiences are important for the meaning making process. In the Chinese visiting scholars' case, their past experiences not only created their meaning frames, but also shaped their sense of self. The Chinese visiting scholars had an image of their 'ideal self', which they were trying to achieve by participating in this program. Their notions of self and how they wanted to shape and develop themselves were influenced by economic, social, and cultural factors. Based on the findings of my study, the Chinese visiting scholars' meaning making process can be understood from three perspectives, economic, socio-cultural, and transformative learning theory.

Meaning Making from a Socio-Economic Perspective

The efforts of the Chinese visiting scholars to develop a holistic self were partly motivated by globalization and neoliberal forces, in line with the argument by many researchers that international mobility is a response to meet the growing demands of the global economy (Knight, 2004; Ku et al., 2008; Trice, 2001; Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Ebersole, 1999). Globalization and increasing demand to internationalize Chinese universities were strong push factors for the Chinese visiting scholars to participate in this international exchange program, regardless of their degree, career stage, or position. This was especially the case of Wei Fei and Lucy who were required by their universities in China to participate in a yearlong international program to move upwards in their career trajectory. They wanted to learn English and improve their teaching and research skills as part of their self-development. All the visiting scholars mentioned “globalization” repeatedly as a factor or a phenomenon that shaped not only their goals and expectations, but also their institutions and societies’ goals and what was expected of them as members of the institution and the society. It is safe to say what they wanted to achieve from this particular experience was not only dictated by their personal goals and aspirations but was also highly influenced by institutional and national goals. They were not isolated individuals. They were part of a certain society and the world. They considered their self-development part of social development. However, their experience was not a mere compliant response to the forces of the neoliberal global market. They participated in this experience as active agents who were constantly negotiating between their goals and others’ goals to gain “greater control over their lives as socially responsible, clear thinking decision makers” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8).

In education literature (Knight, 2004; Ku et al., 2008; Trice, 2001; Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Ebersole, 1999), international mobility and the efforts at internationalization of education

systems is presented as a way to create human capital, which means by learning and skill development people become much more productive over time and contribute to the process of economic expansion. However, Sen (1999) raised questions about the relationship between incomes and achievements, between commodities and capabilities, between economic wealth and the ability of human beings as they would like to live in his book, *Freedom as Development*, and suggested that “without ignoring the importance of economic growth, we must look beyond” (p.14). Sen (1999) discussed the difference between human capital and human capability and their relation to freedom and social development. Sen (1999) argued that although both ideas center on humanity, “human capital tends to concentrate on the agency of human beings in augmenting production possibilities” (p. 293). However, the perspective of human capability focuses on “the ability of people to lead the lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have” (p. 293). According to Sen (1999),

Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with and influencing the world in which we live (p.15)

The findings of this study show that all the Chinese visiting scholars were committed to holistic personal development. Although they considered the economic benefits of participating in this program important and hoped to have better career prospects on return to their home country, mere economic development was not their ultimate goal, rather it was a means to an end. This view of development aligns with Sen’s idea of development. As Sen (1999) quoted from Aristotle in his book, *Freedom as Development*, “Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it merely is useful and for the sake of something else” (p. 15). Sen (1999) further explained, “This

is not because income and wealth are desirable for their own sake, but because, typically they are admirable general-purpose means for having more freedom to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value” (p.14). All the visiting scholars were trying to enhance their capability through professional development to be able to choose or create the lives they wanted to live.

Sen (1999) wrote that the capability perspective involves, to some extent, a return to an integrated approach to an economic and social development presented by Adam Smith in his books, *Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiment*, where he emphasized the role of education on learning and skill formation for the development of human capability in leading a worthwhile and more free life. Sen (1999) argues that we need to see the role of human beings as an instrument of social change beyond just economic production. He links freedom of choice with individual and social development, for example, better economic conditions allow individuals to expand their freedom to choose better lives, which can also improve the quality of public debate, which can lead to democratic and tolerant societies. Sen (1999) argues that the lens of human capital is very limiting since it considers human beings “merely means of production” (p. 296). He believes that we need to see human beings in a broader perspective and acknowledge other deeper aspects of human capabilities and needs. Likewise, when the Chinese visiting scholars discussed what it meant to be a visiting scholar for them, they approached the experience from personal growth and professional development perspectives simultaneously and hoped to be part of social change and contribute to global peace and harmony as well-informed global citizens.

Language

English was an important context for the Chinese visiting scholars’ meaning making process since English had played a significant role in their lives in China and the U. S. Often, studies about international students consider English as a challenge while they navigate their

academic programs in foreign countries and do not pay attention to the role of English in their societies and how it has shaped their sense of self. English was an important reality of the Chinese visiting scholars' lives in China. According to Yajun (2003), "China boasts the largest English-learning population in the world" (p.3). "Over 200 million children and about 20% of the total world population in the world are learning English in schools and about 13 million young people at university" (Yajun, 2003, p. 4). This number most likely has increased since 2013. Yajun (2003) argued that the Chinese government is persuading its people to learn English to support China's modernization plans. The ministry of Education in China has asked public universities to use foreign, mainly English, textbooks and to conduct lectures in English (Yajun, 2003). According to Yajun (2003), the ministry aimed that 5-10% of university courses would be taught in English in next few years. The Chinese government's policy and focus on English had direct impact on their lives as students and teachers. This policy resulted in increased efforts to learn English by students and teachers. English skills now have direct impact on the prospects of finding jobs, getting promotions, and salary raises not only for teachers and professors, but also for employees in a variety of different fields.

Historically, English has played an important role in China, which has shaped the meaning frames of Chinese visiting scholars and how they viewed themselves as students, teachers, and professionals in China as well as in global context. According to Bolton and Graddol (2012), English has had "A lengthy, complicated, and often forgotten history" in China since the 18th Century (p.4). Between 1911 and 1949, English was widely learned and used in missionary schools in China. China's own initiative in teaching English began in 1862 with the start of an interpreters' college, the *Tongwen Guan* in Peking (Lam, 2002; Adamson, 2002). A similar type of school was created in different cities of China, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou (Bolton &

Graddol, 2012). During 1903, three core subjects were taught in schools. These were Chinese, mathematics, and foreign languages. However, in 1927, the political climate of China changed, and a more nationalist approach was adopted towards missionary schools and foreign languages (Ross, 1993; Adamson, 2002).

According to Bolton and Graddol (2012), Chinese education went through rapid changes from the 1950s to the 1990s. From 1950 to 1954, the Russian language was vigorously promoted in schools, but things changed when the Ministry of Education permitted teaching of English or Russian in junior secondary schools. Since there were not enough English teachers available, the Russian language teachers were retrained as English teachers from 1961 to 1966 (Lam, 2002; Bolton & Graddol, 2012). This really speaks to Lucy's situation, who mentioned that her teacher was in fact a Russian language teacher who learned English on his own. Her teacher's lack of English proficiency affected her learning of English in school.

Between 1966 and 1976, in the prime decade of the Cultural Revolution in China, English learning was outlawed in many parts of the country (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, when the Cultural Revolution ended, Deng Xiaoping came into power in 1978 and China adopted an 'Open Door Policy', which revived the teaching of foreign languages in China (Adamson, 2002). Bolton and Graddol (2012) argued that throughout the 1980s and 1990s English became very popular in China. The main reason behind China's focus on English was its "aspiration to gain international stature" by participating in the Olympic Games in 2008 and joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 (Lam, 2002 as cited in Bolton & Graddol, 2012, p. 5). According to Bolton and Graddol (2012), "the push for English has been realized by measures to lower the age at which English is taught, and to ensure the importance of the subject through key examination in the education system" (p.5). For Wei Fei and Emily, who grew up in these

decades from 1980 to now and went through this intense pressure of learning English to succeed in their academic career, English had shaped their sense of self. All the Chinese visiting scholars had this image of themselves as deficit-self due to lack of English skills.

English not only impacted the Chinese visiting scholars' past academic experiences and sense of self, but was also crucial for their future success as students, teachers, and professionals. In today's China, English is an integral part of its education system, as it is an important part of the entrance exam for universities. This has given rise to an English teaching and learning industry in China at both the state and private level. English is not only needed to enter university, but "all students at university in China, irrespective of their major area of study, are required to study the language, not only to enter university but also to graduate" (Bolton & Graddol, 2012, p. 5). More and more, students are learning English so they can get admission in practical subjects, such as business and economics, but many are also going abroad to get master's degrees and PhDs from foreign universities. According to Bolton and Graddol (2012), Chinese universities are also rapidly moving towards internationalization by establishing a number of English programs to attract international students. Bolton and Graddol (2012), mentioned a report (China Daily, 2010) that describes how, as a part of the 2020 economic development plan, China is hoping to attract 500,000 self-funded international students. This overview of the background and significance of English in China explains the anxiety and fear the Chinese visiting scholars expressed associated with English. It also explains the growing competition and social and economic pressures in Chinese societies and how English is considered a ticket to success. The conflicting status of English in Chinese society affected the previous generation's English skills and the Chinese government's current focus on English has exponentially increased pressure to learn English for the current generation. So, keeping up with fast-paced social and economic changes was challenging for all

the Chinese visiting scholars. All of them considered participating in the international visiting scholars' program would help them overcome these challenges and hurdles to achieve their goals and become effective citizens by contributing to the Chinese government's modernization plan.

For the Chinese visiting scholars, English was not a temporary survival tactic in American society during their short stay, but was a part of the self-development process, which could help them in accessing better career opportunities back home and also in the rest of the world. English language had played a significant role in visiting scholars' lives even before coming to the U. S. because of China's efforts to participate in the global economy. All the visiting scholars considered English an important tool for their self-development. All of them determined their own goals regarding which area of language to focus on and used their own strategies to improve their skills in English. All of them faced challenges and emotional stress during this process because of their limited English skills, but all of them made gradual progress towards their language goals. Both women reported an improved sense of confidence because of their improved language proficiency.

Meaning Making from Socio-Cultural Perspectives

According to Yang, Zheng, and Li (2006) educational philosophy and teaching and learning practices are both influenced by social and cultural factors. The Chinese visiting scholars' meaning making process of their international visiting scholar's experience was deeply influenced by social, economic, and cultural conditions and the traditional Chinese belief system. According to Yang, Zheng, and Li (2006), "China should be understood as conflicts and convergences of three ideologies and cultural values—Confucianism, socialism, and capitalism. Nevertheless, Confucianism represents that traditional culture and has the most enduring impacts among these three value systems" (p. 1214). It is important to note that the Confucian learning tradition is the

dominant learning tradition throughout Chinese history. Even today, it has a strong impact on Chinese culture and especially on education and is considered “the center of Chinese culture” (Li, 2012, p. 36).

According to Confucius’ teachings, the purpose of learning is self-cultivation. The ultimate goal of learning is existing within the larger world with harmony by cultivating one’s self. According to Yang, Zheng, and Li (2006), “Chinese culture views harmony as the ultimate goal of humankind (i.e., “Tian Ren He Yi,” or “The great harmony between human and the nature.)” (p. 1215). Order and harmony were the central features of ancient Chinese philosophy and learning. Keeping the balance through harmony was the way of leading a fulfilled life (Li, 2012). According to Confucian teachings, “the most important purpose of human life is to self-perfect or self-cultivate socially and morally” (Li, 2012, p. 37). The self is considered a project that a person needs to work on and perfect throughout his/her/their life. Education was central to Confucius’ teachings, since he considered education extremely important for transforming individuals and societies. Education and critical learning were crucial to the path to self-cultivation. Self-cultivation meant crafting one’s life to become morally alive and to learn how to behave in any situation and to think for yourself. *Ren* means human heartedness or human goodness. Confucius believed every human being is capable of *Ren*, which means every person can respond to the outer world with empathy. Learning does not mean learning mere knowledge and skills only. Rather, it means to become a better person. So, the main purpose of learning was to build human character. *Ren* continues for life, and it is a never-ending process and no matter what, the struggle to be fully human continues. Confucius presented an eight-step process for self-cultivation to connect to the promise of community harmony and even peace

among communities or among nations. Confucius also believed that self-cultivation is life long, and one needs to keep working on his or her self-cultivation. The Eight Steps are as follows.

1. Recognize (or investigate) things and affairs
2. Extend one's knowing
3. Make one's intentions sincere
4. Rectify one's mind
5. Cultivate the person
6. Regulate the family
7. Order the state
8. Bring peace to all (Li, 2012, p. 41)

In Confucius' self-cultivation concept, the first five points focus on individual self-cultivation and the remaining three points focus on social and global harmony. "Thus, learning in Confucian tradition is not just for personal fulfillment, self-actualization, or personal gain, in a practical sense rather-and more importantly-it moves from an individual starting point and expands gradually to the large spheres of human life as a whole" (Li, 2012, p. 46).

Relationships

Mezirow's (1991) meaning making process is individual and internal. The role of morals is not the central tenant of Mezirow's concept of learning as it is in the Chinese learning concept. However, the Chinese visiting scholars' meaning making process was both internal and external at the same time. We can consider these expectations as meaning frames or habits of mind because when Chinese visiting scholars interacted with American teachers, colleagues, and friends their behaviors and expectations were based on their cultural values. The Chinese visiting scholars' learning experience was relational. They were intentional and active in relationship building. They

considered relationships crucial for learning new knowledge and skills and for making sense of their self and their experience in a new culture. The Chinese visiting scholars talked at length about relationships with their mentors, colleagues, group, and general social interactions. At times, they went out of their way to build social and academic relationships with their American peers and colleagues.

This strong focus on relationship building by Chinese visiting scholars is in contrast to previous findings in several studies about Chinese students in foreign countries. In the literature, Chinese learners are often presented as passive learners with intercultural communication issues (Zhu, 2016). There have been lasting claims about Chinese students that they avoid making social relationships with non-Chinese students at foreign campuses and stay together as groups (Klein et al., 1971; Turner, 2006). Apparently, Chinese students' intercultural communication with peers is insufficient and their social interactions with non-Chinese were identified as problematic (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). However, in my study, I found that Chinese visiting scholars were not passive learners, nor did they avoid relationship building, rather relationships were deeply important for their learning and meaning making process. However, they mentioned that their expectations and values around those relationships varied from American culture, which caused frustration and difficulty for them to navigate academic and social relationships in the U.S. This led me to the quest to understand Chinese traditional beliefs and teachings about relationships.

First, I found that at the core of the Confucian concept of self-cultivation are relationships because self is understood in relation to society and the world. In Chinese culture, "A person is not just Jenny or David, but much more importantly a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, an aunt, a teacher, and a colleague so forth" (Li, 2012, p. 37). Confucius presented five cardinal human relationships:

1. Parent-child relationship
2. Sibling relationship
3. Husband-wife relationship
4. Basic economic relationships (employer-employee, supervisor-subordinate)
5. Friendship (Li,2012)

According to Li (2012), familial relationships are at the heart of Confucius' thought and for this reason the first three relationships are considered the most essential. After achieving harmony with familial relationships, social relationships were considered important for personal and social development. This shows a detailed and well-organized thinking process with a clear set of expectations and hierarchy attached to relationships in Chinese culture. How Chinese visiting scholars approached relationships with their teachers, fellow Chinese students, American colleagues, and their families reflect this hierarchical framework of relationships.

Second, the Chinese concept of self-cultivation is deeply rooted in morality. I argue that it is important to understand the moral grounding of relationships in Chinese culture. This significance of relationships and emphasis on morals set expectations for social interactions in the new culture. According to Li (2012), Confucius taught five virtues to correspond to these relationships. The first is filial piety and unconditional love as a mutual, lifelong obligation for parents and children to nurture and take care of each other. Filial piety is the very core of human morality, since the basic idea is if a person cannot care for his parents or children, he cannot care for society. Respect is considered an essential virtue for husband-wife relationships. For sibling relationships, the virtue is love and responsibility and for employer and employee relationships, loyalty is considered the important virtue. Finally, for friendship, the virtue is trust, which means friendship should stand the test of times both good and bad. "Trust is ideally not conditioned on

actual time spent together, physical proximity, oscillating emotions, and changing circumstances” (Li, 2012, p. 39). Other than these five virtues, Confucius taught four more moral principles that are important for social relationships which are propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame (Li, 2012).

Third, since the self-cultivation process is morality based, learning is also grounded in certain moral values. An important part and a misunderstood characteristic of traditional “Confucian learning is the notion of learning virtues, which is personal agency for Confucian learners” (Li, 2012, p. 49). Li (2012) mentioned the following seven core learning virtues:

1. Sincerity
2. Diligence
3. Endurance of hardship
4. Perseverance
5. Concentration
6. Respect for teachers
7. Humility

These virtues are highly desirable in learners in Chinese culture. The role of the learner is not merely to gain knowledge for material gains, but for self-cultivation. To cultivate one’s self, the learner is expected to show these moral values during the learning process. Sincerity alludes to the self-chosen nature of a person’s decision to pursue *Ren*. It is an honest and real commitment to the learning process. Diligence means frequent and constant studious behavior. Endurance of hardship refers to overcoming difficulties (intellectual & economic) and lack of resources during the learning process. Perseverance means lasting strength for learning from beginning to the end. Concentration pertains to complete focus and attention to thorough learning with patience. Respect

for teachers, the sixth virtue, is highly valued in Chinese society. However, this obedience is deeply misunderstood by western researchers as docility, and lack of critical thinking skills. Chinese visiting scholars shared multiple times on how they viewed themselves as learners and these values often came under discussion, especially in Wei Fei and Emily's cases, endurance of hardship, perseverance, and respect for teachers were evident values they talked about and their stories highlighted these values.

In Chinese culture, the role of teacher is not merely content transfer, but the teacher is seen as a moral role model, guide, and mentor. Also, it is considered important for learners to put their ego aside to accept the higher intellectual abilities of their teacher to learn from them. In Chinese culture, the student-teacher relationship is similar to the parent-child relationship. Teachers not only impart knowledge, but also care for students' well-being as they would for their own children. Humility directs one to regard oneself as always in need of self-improvement, no matter how much one has achieved in life. Humility is considered a character strength in Chinese culture because "humble individuals are willing to self-examine, admit their inadequacies, and self-improve" (Li, 2012, p. 52).

Li (2012) argued that East Asian students are considered quiet in Western classrooms and western teachers and researchers perceive their quietness negatively as disengagement in learning or lack of interest. However, in Confucian tradition "the exemplary person wants to be slow to speak and yet quick to act" (p. 53). Since the focus of Confucian learning is on moral training of character, actions are focused on more than words, and excessive speaking can cause different liabilities for a person, it is advised to speak carefully. Li (2012) mentioned another reason that speaking is easier than actions, it is considered that "talkers do not understand" (p. 53). There is little verbal exchange between traditional Chinese teachers and students, and it is expected that a

learner practice patience and try to engage in deep learning. So, there is a likelihood that Chinese visiting scholars were influenced by Chinese traditional values and traditions. At times, they might not be consciously aware of their pre-existing meaning frames and how these frames were shaped, but their social and academic behaviors and interactions reflected traditional Chinese values. Their conceptualization of meaning of life, purpose of life and learning, the role of individuals in society and the world at large were affected by Chinese traditional thought. However, it is important to remember that due to technology and the socio-economic development of China, this generation of learners has had more exposure to the rest of the world than past generations (Zhu, 2016). Chinese students are increasingly active and aggressive in class, ask deeper questions, and engage in active conversation (Chan, 2010). I argue it is important to consider social values and belief systems, and socio-economic conditions of societies to understand the meaning making process of individuals in cross-cultural context because these are the driving forces of their behaviors.

The Confucian view of the human relationship with the natural world is quite contrary to Western thought. Western culture emphasizes individual rights and freedom and views fully developed individuals as the ultimate goal. Chinese traditional culture places the harmony among human beings and nature as the ultimate goal. Thus, a harmonized society is viewed as much more important than an individual's right or growth in Chinese society. Western culture seeks fully developed human potential with an active, individualistic approach. (Yang, Zheng, & Li, 2006, p. 1215).

In terms of material aspects of life and learning, "Confucius was very clear that personal gain either for wealth or fame was not part of self-cultivation" although he "acknowledged the material need for human survival" (Li, 2012, p. 45). Some of his students wanted to serve the king and achieve higher ranks in court, but their role was more of taking the moral responsibility to

uphold the moral principles and stand as a teacher or advisor against social injustice and abuse of power by higher authorities (Li, 2012). According to Confucian teachings, the ultimate goal of learning is self-perfection and contributing to the society to attain harmony with society and the universe instead of seeking material gains. Li (2012) argued that although these lofty ideals of learning may seem unrealistic in today's modern world, they still apply to Chinese society. "Thus, for Chinese people as a whole learning to self-cultivate and learning to receive everything good in life joined forces and is passed down through history as one and a same path" (Li, 2012, p. 48). Overall, this holistic conceptualization of self and learning in relation to the world shows that Chinese thought did not suffer from duality of soul and body, personal and social good, contrary to Western thought. This conceptualization of learning was evident from Chinese visiting scholars' conversations and behaviors during their program. They considered their self-development was not confined to only their individual self but expanded to their society and the world at large. So, although globalization and economic development have influenced modern day China greatly and might have impact on Chinese values and traditions, these values and cultural notions about self, learning, society, and the world most likely shaped the expectations and core beliefs of Chinese visiting scholars and might have shaped their behaviors and the ways they engaged in the program.

Meaning Making and Transformative Learning Theory

The Chinese visiting scholars used reflection as meaning making tool. The Chinese visiting scholars reflected on different aspects of their lives such as academic, social, cultural, and even physical environment to make meaning of their new experiences. They rationally analyzed and compared the differences and similarities between Chinese culture and values and American culture and values in relation to their lives. This internal and cognitive aspect of meaning making can be illuminated through Mezirow's (1991). Transformative Learning. Also, Transformative

Learning not only provides a framework to understand the meaning making process, but also to determine the transformative nature of human experience.

Reflection

Mezirow (1991) considered critical reflection an important tool for meaning making. According to Mezirow (1991), “Reflection is not the same as retrospection” and “all reflection involves a critique” (p.15). Mezirow (1991) believed that transformative learning is a result of critical analysis based on rational thinking. “Reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions. Reflective learning becomes transformative, whenever assumptions or premises are found to be disorienting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid. Transformative learning results in new transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives” (p.6). Mezirow (2000) argued that “Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” and “a frame of reference encompasses cognitive, and emotional components” (p. 5). Mezirow (2000) argued, “frames of reference are primarily the result of cultural assimilation and the idiosyncratic influences of primary caregivers” (p. 5). He presented two dimensions of frames of reference: habits of mind and a point of view. Habits of mind are broad and abstract ways of thinking and feeling and are of a habitual nature, usually influenced by socio-cultural, educational economic, political, or psychological assumptions. Points of view are more subject to continuing change as compared to habits of mind. It is relatively easier to change points of view than habits of mind, since habits of mind are much deeper and operate at an unconscious level. The Chinese visiting scholars reflected on their academic and social experiences frequently. The Chinese visiting scholars were reflective learners and this study and interview process helped them to reflect on their learning experiences quite often. They used constant comparison to make meaning of their experiences. However, they focused on differences

rather than similarities. In the cross-cultural context, their previously held beliefs about learning, the role of teacher and student, social communication, and behaviors were often challenged. To make meaning of new academic and social context, they constantly compared new knowledge, events, or situations with their past experiences in China. This helped them become aware of their identities and their meaning frames.

To understand the potential transformative nature of learning, Mezirow (2000) presented four processes of learning. The first one is “To elaborate an existing point of view” (p.7). This means people in a new situation try to find more evidence to reaffirm their previously held beliefs regarding a group or situation. The second way to learn is by establishing a new point of view in which when people come into contact with a new group, they “create new negative meaning schemes for them by focusing on their perceived shortcomings, as dictated by our propensity for ethnocentricity” (p. 7). The third way of learning is transforming a point of view based on new experiences in a new culture by critically reflecting on our misconceptions about this group. The last way of learning is transforming “our ethnocentric habits of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups other than our own” (p. 7). Mezirow (2000) argued, “Such epochal transformations are less common and more difficult” (p. 7). He believed that “We do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference” (p.7).

In the case of the Chinese visiting scholars, their reflections were based on their self-concept and things that were important to them. They compared relationships, values, teaching, learning, and research practices. They also noticed and compared the social behaviors and physical environment between the U.S. and China. The nature of comparison is based on their meaning making process where they centered their “sense of self” in relation to the larger world. The goal

was not merely developing autonomous thinking, but to develop themselves as whole people and to gain more freedom to achieve their career and life goals. Although they rationally analyzed their behaviors, values, and beliefs, they reaffirmed their traditional Chinese beliefs and values around teaching and learning, and social and cultural behaviors. They learned about different ways of being, new possibilities for their future, and were exposed to a different worldview, which expanded their perspective, or as the Chinese visiting scholars said, “broadened their horizons” rather than changing their meaning frames. Overall, the outcome of their international visiting scholars’ experience was more of a perspective expansion than a meaning frame transformation. Meaning frame transformation means change in existing meaning frames and this change should reflect in permanently changed values and behaviors. In the case of the Chinese visiting scholars, their perspectives expanded, but there was no deeper meaning frame transformation since their academic and social values and behaviors did not change deeply as a result of their international visiting scholars’ experience after their return to China.

Agency

According to Mezirow (1978, 1991), agency is an important outcome of transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) explained that the goal of transformative learning is to support learner’s real interest to have “more knowledge, greater freedom, and less distorted meaning perspectives” (p.226). This assumption is based on a Western conceptualization of learning. According to Wang and Li (2003), Western culture emphasizes individual rights and freedom and views fully developed individuals as the ultimate goal. Also, in traditional western theories about self, “Self is conceptualized as a cognitive construction evolving towards increasing autonomy, complexity, and abstraction” (Damon & Hart, 1988, 1992; Harter, 1998; Selman, 1980; as cited in Wang & Li, 2003, p. 85). Wang and Li (2003) argued that various cultural theories and different research

studies have shown opposite views and understanding of self in different cultures. Often, there is an independent and individualistic self mostly associated with Western cultures and an interdependent or collectivist self mostly referred to by Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, and at times Southern Europeans. As a result, non-westerners “Either make no distinctions between personal and collective goals, or if they do make such distinctions, they subordinate their personal goals to the collective goals” (Triandis, 1989, p. 509). Wang and Li (2003) pointed out that often the Chinese self is presented as lacking ‘individuality’ and has “no room for private self” (p. 86). They argued that within a certain culture, people can have a tendency to show contrasting orientations. They explained that traditional Chinese teaching emphasizes both relatedness and autonomy.

The Confucian concepts of “self-cultivation” (ziwo xiuyang), “self-perfection” (ziwo wanshan), “self-reflection” (ziwo fanxing), and “individual prudence” (shendu), although born millennia ago, are still an important part of the Chinese self-system (Li as cited in Wang & Li, 2003, p. 87). Wang and Li (2003) argued that Confucianism “provides space for individual functioning and development” (p.88). They believed that throughout history, people have been encouraged to find their purpose and seek their own self-cultivation in Chinese society. They argued, “Regardless of the social purposes of Chinese lives, the seeking of self-cultivation and self-perfection is an individual responsibility and process” (p.87). Taoism also has significant influence in Chinese society and Taoism recognizes an individual’s personal relationship with the universe and “acknowledges individual’s power and free spirit” (Lau, 1996, as cited in Wang & Li, 2003, p. 87). Wang and Li (2003) reviewed several studies and concluded that the Chinese self has both elements of relatedness and autonomy due to traditional and religious teachings because the Chinese not only encourage social connections, but also teach them “to perfect themselves both

morally and intellectually through intrinsic drives and desires” (p.87). This co-existence of collectivism and individualism helps the Chinese self to cultivate and fulfill social responsibility. According to Li (2012), *Junzi* (a noble man) in pursuit of self-cultivation must assume moral responsibility, become an independent thinker and freely voice his opinion when kings seek his advice or guidance.

In my study, I found that Chinese visiting scholars used their agency to create and shape their own experiences to gain further control of their lives. Although they were operating in a structured program with social and cultural constraints, they were autonomous individuals who were constantly negotiating their purpose with societal demands with very strong emphasis on relationships. This conceptualization of self-development and agency aligns well with Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen. Sen (1999) argued that “the gap between the two perspectives (between the exclusive focus on economic wealth and a broader focus on lives we can lead) is a major issue in conceptualizing development” (p.14). Sen (1999) re-conceptualized the notion of development as freedom, which is much broader and more robust than understanding development as a mere economic outcome. As Sen argued,

Economic well-being is an insufficient foundation for liberty. Agency freedom moves beyond an economic calculus to include status, dignity, family, friends, making things, satisfying work, and the scope to realize forms of life. Shared collective goods matter, as well as individual goods. Self-forming human agents chose their agendas from the menus of possible (as cited in Marginson, 2013, p. 11).

Mezirow (1991) believed that ability to make rational independent decisions was the outcome of transformative learning, but in the Chinese visiting scholars’ case, they were already exercising their agency to make their choice and construct their experiences based on their own

goals and future plans. So, agency was not the outcome of their transformative learning experiences. Rather, they were already making choices and decisions to shape their experiences to achieve their goals while operating within the structure of the program and managing institutional requirements. They learned English and social and academic skills to gain more freedom to achieve their goals, express themselves, and travel independently. Also, they reported increased confidence, which helped them exercise and gain more freedom in their lives during and after the program.

Conclusion

In a cross-cultural context, meaning making is a complex process. Although my study was guided by transformative learning theory, the findings of the study suggested that the meaning making process of the Chinese visiting scholars could not be fully explained through one theory. The Chinese visiting scholars made meaning of their experiences from economic, social, and cultural frameworks. They considered their international visiting scholars' experience as an opportunity for self-development. Their sense of self and the notion of self-development were deeply rooted in Confucius' teachings, Chinese social and cultural conditions, and a neo-liberal economy. They used relationships, language, agency, and reflection to make meaning of their experiences. Their conceptualization of learning was relational and social, based on moral values that were influenced by traditional Chinese values and Confucius' teachings. They used language as a context, a tool for self-development and meaning making in their international learning experience. The Chinese visiting scholars used agency throughout their experience to shape their experiences, to create their desired experiences, and to achieve their goals. The notion of agency was complex and influenced by neoliberal forces and Confucian teachings. The Chinese visiting scholars' use of reflection can be explained through Transformative Learning Theory, since the

theory helped to understand the cognitive process of meaning making. Because the Chinese visiting scholars considered this experience a self-development opportunity, it is safe to say that this experience helped them expand their meaning perspectives. However, it is difficult to claim this experience as transformative since the Chinese visiting scholars did not report any disorienting dilemma or change in meaning frames. Rather, they reaffirmed their fundamental beliefs and became more aware of their “self” and personal and cultural beliefs. It was a way for them to reinstate their identity as a Chinese teacher, man, or student, but at the same time, their international experience expanded their understanding of the possibilities for self-development.

Implications for Practice

It is time we move away from fragmented understanding of experiences of Chinese students and international students and scholars at foreign campuses. For a long time, these experiences have been studied under a deficit paradigm where adjustment and neoliberal ideologies have been used to explain these experiences. Most of the literature used only western ideas to explain these experiences and did not consider a deeper cultural underpinning of these experiences. So, it is important to see these experiences from a holistic perspective and remove the dichotomy of personal and social, autonomy and relatedness, especially in the case of Chinese visiting scholars. Also, it is important to take into account the socio-cultural and economic situations of their home country while designing these programs.

It is important to see these individuals as self-directed like local students, or even more so because they took the chance to embark on an unknown journey and managed their challenges in a different cultural setting. Their desire to gain more control of their experiences without interrupting harmony leads us to rethink these programs as a space to provide more chances for creating autonomous experiences, expanding the space in which these students and scholars are

able to freely create their desired experiences. However, we should not create a completely free experience, since the scholars in my study found mentors' help and guidance very important for their learning.

This study also leads us to rethink how we understand learning in international programs in cross-cultural settings. We need to consider learning beyond academic goals and classroom experiences, since it was much more for the participants of this study. For pedagogical approaches, instructors need to incorporate elements in their teaching and learning practices that promote holistic self-development. They also need to allow these students and scholars to choose the materials, topics, activities, and methods to learn new concepts.

The role of English as it is seen in literature on international scholarship is problematic. We need to move beyond a narrow understanding of learning a second language as merely a challenge and cause of stress. Rather, the role of language is much deeper as a tool for self-development. Learning a new language is like constructing a new identity and getting a new worldview, so educators need to view language from a self-development perspective. Also, it is important to keep in mind the role of English in incoming students' home countries and how it has shaped their self-concept.

Reflection remained a very effective technique for visiting scholars to review their experiences and help them realize how they were making sense of their experiences. Teachers should create opportunities for reflection in their teaching and learning experiences to facilitate their self-development process.

Relationships, both academic and social, remained an integral part of the Chinese visiting scholars' experience, so it is important to create deliberate opportunities for these students and scholars to build social and academic relationships. Although this program had embedded

opportunities for social networking, Chinese students and scholars still faced difficulty building lasting social and academic relationships. So, it is important to orient these students to American cultural values about relationships and educating their mentors and American counterparts about the Chinese culture and its norms and traditions can be helpful in bridging this expectation gap. Also, teaching both sides the techniques to navigate cross-cultural relationships in an orientation session can be helpful at the start of a program.

Implications for Scholarship

Often, international educational experiences are presented as transformative learning experiences, but my study does not prove this claim in the Chinese visiting scholars' case. At the most, it was a self-development experience rather than a transformational experience. So, for future research, it is important to explore the notion of transformation and what constitutes transformation in cross-cultural experiences. How is transformation defined and measured? I think researchers need to push back against the idea of international educational experiences as transformative. Rather, they should explore these experiences from a self-development perspective because the notion of transformation implies that previous frames of meaning are limited and there is need for transformation. This is especially true when adult learners are coming from a variety of different cultures and hold different worldviews. The concept of transformation has an underlying notion of power that needs further investigation. The assumption of humans as rational beings who have the freedom to choose may not be shared by different cultures, so it is important to explore how different cultures make meaning in global context and negotiate their values and beliefs to be part of the global fabric.

In most studies, international and cross-cultural learning experiences are studied as one event without contextualizing it into the past lives and future aspirations of participants. I believe

this understanding of human experiences is limiting and develops flawed and incomplete understanding of these experiences. Future studies should consider underlying frames of reference and worldviews of participants during international and cross-cultural experiences. Researchers should explore international and cross-cultural experiences as holistic and contextualized in both cultures, sending and receiving.

Mezirow (1978, 1991) presented different steps of the transformative learning process. Disorienting dilemma and disorientation are a significant part of transformative learning experiences according to Mezirow (1991), but my participants did not consider their interaction with a new culture as culture shock or a disorienting dilemma. They understood it as a challenge that could be solved, and they were able to learn and navigate new academic and social culture in a short period of time. So, there is a need to further explore the notion of disorienting dilemma in international and cross-cultural learning experiences, especially in relation to social media and technological advancements. Some major themes emerged from this study, which were deeply intertwined with each other and reflect the complexity of human experience in a cross-cultural context. Themes such as self-concept, relationships, language, agency, and reflection need further exploration, especially in international learning experiences. Self-directed learning is a central tenant of adult learning, so it is important to understand the role of agency and transformative experiences. Relationships as meaning making tools and exploration of meaning making as social and cognitive processes needs further attention. Also, this study shows how the self was viewed in connection with past, present, and future, so meaning making within the concept of time needs further exploration. Overall, there is a need for a perspective change to study these experiences as holistic experiences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

A Case Study of an International Exchange Program for Chinese Visiting Scholars

一项关于中国研究生在密歇根州立大学参加国际教育交流的研究

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

知情同意书

STUDENTS

学生参与者

1. EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH AND WHAT YOU WILL DO: 本研究项目有关信息

- You are being asked to participate in a research study to understand how students and faculty think of, perceive, and experience their participation in the SW University exchange program with the College of Education. 您将被邀请参加一项实验研究，这项研究的目的是了解西南大学访问学者在密歇根州立大学教育学院访学经历的感受。
- Participants will be asked to participate in at least two interviews that will be recorded. In addition, participants may be asked to provide documents and may be observed in classes and presentations. 研究参与者将需要参加至少两项访问，研究者可能会要求您提供您在访学期间的一些学习资料，也有可能随您观察您在课堂的参与表现。
- You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research. 您必须年满18周岁。

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW:

- Participation in this research project is voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your grade or evaluation.

本项研究属于自愿参加，您可以选择不参加本项研究，或者在任何时候通知研究者要求退出研究，您的数据将不纳入研究结果，您的分数和学业评价不会因此而受到影响。

3. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:

- There are no costs involved in participating in this study. 参与本项研究不会给产生额外费用。
- Participants will not receive credit or other compensation for participating in this study. 您参与本项研究不会有物质和补偿回报。

4. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS: 本项研究联系人

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher: 如果您有与本研究有关的问题, 或您在研究过程中发生了任何不适与损伤, 您可以联系本研究的课题负责人:

Dr. John M. Dirkx

PI and Professor
Erickson Hall
620 Farm Land, Room 419
517-353-8927
dirkx@msu.edu

Sara Bano

209 W Brody Rd.
Bryan Hall
C110B
517-884-0534
banosara@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

您可随时了解与本研究有关的信息资料和研究进展, 如果您有与本研究有关的问题, 或您在研究过程中发生了任何不适与损伤, 或有关于本项研究参加者权益方面的问题您可以通过以下方式联系密歇根州立大学的研究课题人员保护项目组: 联系电话517-355-2180, 传真517-432-4503, 或者电邮联系 irb@msu.edu, 或者邮件联系207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

5. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT:

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. 如果您自愿参加本项研究, 请在下方签名并把本同意书交回给研究人员。

您的签名表明您参加本项研究是自愿的。

Signature 签名

Date 日期

APPENDIX B: Entry Interview Protocol for Chinese Visiting Scholars

ENTRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Estimated time: 45-60 minutes

Instructions

I would like to know how you are thinking and feeling about your time at Midwestern Research University as a visiting scholar. I would like to know about you and your motivations to join this program. I will also ask some questions about your goals, objectives, and expectations for this program. I would like you to be able to say whatever you feel you would like to share with me, or that would be important for me to know about your experiences here. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be used in any way with the information you tell me here today. You have the right to not answer any question if you don't want to. You also have the right to stop the interview at any time, or to ask me to turn off the recorder, if you want.

Introduction & Background

- Tell me a little about yourself
 - What is your educational background? What were your fields of study?
 - What kinds of work experiences have you had?
 - What kinds of international experiences have you had before this planned trip?
 - Have you traveled to other countries?
 - Have you studied a foreign language?
 - Have you been roommates with students from other countries?
 - Have members of your immediate family traveled to or lived in different countries?

Expectations, Goals, Preparation

- What interested you in or attracted you to this experience?
- How have you prepared for this experience?
- What are some of your expectations and goals you have for this study abroad experience?
 - What do you hope to learn from this experience?
 - How do you see this experience relating to your goals for graduate education? Your career goals?
 - What sorts of activities or experiences do you hope to have while in the US?

Questions about Program and overall Experience

- What about this experience concerns you at the moment?
 - What are some of your fears and anxieties for this study abroad program?
 - Please discuss what components of the program are/are not working for you.
- What are your impressions of the US? What are your impressions of people from the US?
 - In what ways are you similar?

- In what ways are you different?
- Is there anything else about your upcoming experience that you would like to tell me that I haven't asked you about?

Thank you for your time and agreeing to talk with me.

APPENDIX C: Departure Interview Protocol for Chinese Visiting Scholars

DEPARTURE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Estimated time: 60-90 minutes

Instructions

I would like to know how you are thinking and feeling about your time at Midwestern research University as a visiting scholar. I would like to know about you and your learning experience here from different activities and how these learning experiences are influencing/impacting/changing you. I will also ask some questions about your goals, objectives, and expectations for this program. I would like you to be able to say whatever you feel you would like to share with me, or that would be important for me to know about your experiences here. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be used in any way with the information you tell me here today. You have the right to not answer any question if you don't want to. You also have the right to stop the interview at any time, or to ask me to turn off the recorder, if you want.

Warm up Questions

- How are you doing today?
- How was your spring break?
- Did you visit some places during Spring break?
- How was your trip?
- What were the exciting things you experienced or learned about US during your travels?
- How is your semester going?

Learning Experiences from various activities

- Please share your best memories or experiences in class, school trips, or travelling in US so far.
- Would you like to share any new things you learned so far about US culture and education system from your weekly lectures, travelling, and other activities here?
- What are your feelings about teaching styles in US classrooms? (Prompts: Hard, easy, confusing, boring, challenging)
- You have visited many schools so far, so what are your impressions? What did you learn about American schools?
- You recently worked a lot on your research presentation, how was your experience researching and presenting? What was different or similar with Chinese research practices and academic presentation style?
- What are the new or different values you learnt in the U. S. and would like to carry to China?
- How do you like your weekly lectures? Do you find them relevant? (Easy, difficult, challenging) If you found them challenging, what are the challenges you face in following the given readings, or during the lectures?
- What are some interesting things you learned from weekly lectures about the US education system? Would you like to implement any idea when you go back home in your teaching or school?

Change in terms of thinking, values, and goals

- Do you think your study abroad experience has changed you as a person? If yes, how? If no, why do you think there is no change?
- What did you learn about yourself that you did not know when you came in September?
- In what ways did this experience influence the way you are thinking about your career or your professional goals?

Relationships with Peers, Mentors, and Faculty

- What is your experience in making friends in the US?
- Tell me about your friends in detail.
- How do you spend your time after lectures and school activities?
- What do you think about your mentors and buddies? Do you think they were able to support you and help you navigate through the system?
- You conducted/participated in/ organized a Chinese cultural show for the New Year, how was your experience working with your buddies and faculty mentors? (Were they helpful or hard to communicate to? What were the challenges to organize such an event?)
- How did you find Americans as friends and how much you were able to interact with your American friends, mentors, and faculty members?

Overall Experience and Impressions about the Program

- Would you like to come back to the U. S. or consider living here in future? If yes, why? If no, why?
- If given the chance what would you like to contribute or improve in US culture?
- Given the chance, what would you like to change about your experience in terms of social, economic, and educational aspects of your life?
- What were major challenges of adjustment for you academically and socially?
- Do you think you were able to overcome those challenges and if yes, what were the factors that helped you to succeed and perform well academically and socially in a new culture?
- Since you all attended same lectures and same activities, do you think staying within your group was helpful or hindered your social interactions with Americans?
- Given the chance, what would you like to change about this program, and why?
- Are you ready to go back to China? What do you think would be challenging in readjusting to Chinese culture and school life? How you think you will overcome those challenges?

APPENDIX D: Online Interview Protocol after returning to China

ONLINE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Estimated time: 45-60 minutes

Instructions

I would like to know how you are thinking and feeling after returning to China about your time at Midwestern Research University as a visiting scholar. I would like to know how your experience was on returning home and how your overseas experience has influenced your life back in China. I will also ask some questions about how you are able to use your overseas learning experiences in your life back home. I would like you to be able to say whatever you feel you would like to share with me, or that would be important for me to know about your experiences here. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be used in any way with the information you tell me here today. You have the right to not answer any question if you don't want to. You also have the right to stop the interview at any time, or to ask me to turn off the recorder, if you want.

Introductory Questions

- Thank you for agreeing to take the time to talk with us today. How are you doing?
- What is it like being back home? Where there changes in your area, your community, or your institution that surprised you?

On Return Feelings and Readjustment Experiences

Family Life and Values

- Tell me a little bit about your return trip home in April.
 - What was it like getting ready to leave?
 - Tell me about when you arrived back home.
- What were your feelings and experiences with your family and friends when you returned from the U. S.?
 - As you think about what it was like coming back home, what stands out for you? What was most memorable about your returning home?
- What sorts of challenges did you have to deal with after coming back from the U. S.?
 - Personally
 - Academically
 - Socially
- What are the new or different values you learned in the U. S. and are using in China?
- In what ways has your study abroad experience changed or affected you as a person?
 - Your family
 - Your life overall

Academics

- What did you learn from your experience in the U.S. that is relevant to your academic life in China?
 - Knowledge?

- Skills or abilities?
 - Values, beliefs, or dispositions?
- What support and resources did you receive from your home university and Midwestern Research University for readjusting back in your home university?

Reflection

- Thinking back on your time at Midwestern University, to what extent did your experiences meet your needs and expectations?
 - What did you hope to get out of the experience when you first came?
 - To what extent did your experiences fulfill these hopes and goals?
- What would you say are one or two most important outcomes for you from your experiences in the U.S. and Midwestern Research University?
 - What parts of the program most contributed to these outcomes?
- What, if any, impact or effect has your participation in this program had on your institution or its staff?
 - What parts of the program most contributed to these impacts or effects?
- If given the chance for the same or similar opportunity in the future, how would you respond?
- Reflecting back on your experience with Midwestern Research University and your visit to the U.S., what would you like to see changed?
 - What of the experience would you like to be different?

Recommendations for Future

- Having completed the program and returned to China, what specific changes in the program would you recommend?

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Ackers, J. (1997). Evaluating UK courses: The perspective of the overseas student. In R. Harris & D. McNamara (Eds.), *Overseas Students in Higher Education: Issues in Teaching and Learning* (pp. 199-212). London, UK: Routledge.
- Adamson, B. (2002). Barbarian as a foreign language: English in China's Schools. *World Englishes*, 21(2), 231-243. doi:10.1111/1467-971X.00244
- Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2015). Chinese Students in America: 300,000 and Counting. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/16/china-us-colleges-education-chinese-students-university/>
- Altbach, P. G. (2002). Farewell to the common good: Knowledge and education as international commodities. *International Educator*, 11, 13-17.
- Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the University: Myths and Realities in an Unequal World. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 10(1), 3-25. doi:10.1023/B:TEAM.0000012239.55136.4b
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. doi:10.1177/1028315307303542
- Altbach, P. G., & Teichler, U. (2001). Internationalization and Exchanges in a Globalized University. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 5(1), 5-25. doi:10.1177/102831530151002
- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Student Persistence: Integration or Cultural Integrity? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 57-81. doi:10.2190/9MY5-256H-VFVA-8R8P
- Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. M. (2007). Social Perception: How We Come to Understand Other People *Social Psychology* (6th ed., pp. 90-123). Princeton, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Association of American Universities. (1998). *Association of American Universities Committee on Graduate Education: Report and Recommendations*. Retrieved from <https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Graduate%20Education/Committee-on-Graduate-Education-Report.pdf>

- Bevis, T. B. (2014). *A History of Higher Education Exchange: China and America* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bevis, T. B., & Lucas, C. J. (2007). *International Students in American Colleges and Universities: A History*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bolton, K., & Graddol, D. (2012). English in China today: The current popularity of English in China is unprecedented, and has been fuelled by the recent political and social development of Chinese society. *English Today*, 28(3), 3-9.
doi:10.1017/S0266078412000223
- Butler, S. (1996). Child protection or professional self-preservation by the baby nurses? Public health nurses and child protection in Ireland. *Social Science & Medicine*, 43(3), 303-314.
doi:10.1016/0277-9536(95)00378-9
- Chan, C. K. K. (2010). Classroom Innovation for the Chinese Learner: Transcending Dichotomies and Transforming Pedagogy. In C. K. K. Chan & N. Rao (Eds.), *Revisiting The Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (pp. 169-210). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer
- Cheney, R. S. (2010, September). *Empirical Measurement of Perspective Transformation, 1999-2009*. Paper presented at the 29th Annual Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference In Adult, Continuing, Community and Extension Education, East Lansing, Michigan.
- Coles, R., & Swami, V. (2012). The sociocultural adjustment trajectory of international university students and the role of university structures: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 11(1), 87-100.
doi:10.1177/1475240911435867
- Conrad, C., Haworth, J. G., & Lattuca, L. R. (Eds.). (2001). *Qualitative research in higher education: Expanding perspectives* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Pub.
- Constantine, M. G., Okazaki, S., & Utsey, S. O. (2004). Self-Concealment, Social Self-Efficacy, Acculturative Stress, and Depression in African, Asian, and Latin American International College Students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74(3), 230-241.
doi:10.1037/0002-9432.74.3.230
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. (2017, February 23). *Visiting Scholars Program*. Retrieved from <http://drclas.harvard.edu/visiting-scholars>
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research : theories and issues* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Ebersole, J. F. (1999). The Challenge and the Promise of International Education. *Continuing Higher Education Review*, 63, 98-106.
- Edwards, R. (1998). A critical examination of the use of interpreters in the qualitative research process. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24(1), 197-208.
doi:10.1080/1369183X.1998.9976626
- Esterberg, K. G. (2002). *Qualitative methods in social research*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Gill, B., & Huang, Y. (2006). Sources and limits of Chinese 'soft power'. *Survival*, 48(2), 17-36.
doi:10.1080/00396330600765377
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers : an introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers : an introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Greenbank, P. (2003). The role of values in educational research: the case for reflexivity. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(6), 791-801. doi:10.1080/0141192032000137303
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. (pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Hamilton, L., & Corbett-Whittier, C. (2013). *Using Case Study in Education Research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Howe, J. M. (2008). A journey of a thousand miles. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2008(143), 73-79. doi:10.1002/he.315
- Huang, F. (2003). Policy and Practice of the Internationalization of Higher Education in China. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(3), 225-240.
doi:10.1177/1028315303254430

- Huang, J. (1997). *Chinese Students and Scholars in American Higher Education* (1st ed.). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Huang, J., & Klinger, D. (2006). Chinese Graduate Students at North American Universities: Learning Challenges and Coping Strategies. *Comparative and International Education / Éducation Comparée et Internationale*, 35(2), 48-61.
- Huang, Y. (2012). Transitioning Challenges Faced by Chinese Graduate Students. *Adult Learning*, 23(3), 138-147. doi:10.1177/1045159512452861
- Institute of International Education. (2015). *Open doors 2015 "Fast Facts": International Students in the U. S.* Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts>
- Jandt, F. E. (2017). *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community* (9th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. B. (2008). *Educational Research : Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Klein, M. H., Alexander, A. A., Tseng, K.-H., Miller, M. H., Keh, E.-K., Chu, H.-M., & Workneh, F. (1971). The Foreign Student Adaptation Program: Social Experiences of Asian Atudents in the U. S. *International Educational and Cultural Exchange* (Vol. 6, pp. 77-90). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5-31. doi:10.1177/1028315303260832
- Ku, H.-Y., Lahman, M. K. E., Yeh, H.-T., & Cheng, Y.-C. (2008). Into the academy: Preparing and mentoring international doctoral students. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 56(3), 365-377. doi:10.1007/s11423-007-9083-0
- Lam, A. (2002). English in education in China: policy changes and learners' experiences. *World Englishes*, 21(2), 245-256. doi:10.1111/1467-971X.00245
- Lambert, S. D., & Loiselle, C. G. (2007). Health Information—Seeking Behavior. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(8), 1006-1019. doi:10.1177/1049732307305199
- Lewthwaite, M. (1996). A study of international students' perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 19(2), 167-185. doi:10.1007/BF00114787

- Li, C. (Ed.) (2005). *Bridging Minds Across the Pacific : U.S.-China Educational Exchanges, 1978-2003*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Li, H. (2007). *U.S.- China Educational Exchange: State, Society, and Intercultural Relations, 1905-1950*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Li, J. (2012). *Cultural Foundations of Learning: East and West* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, K. (2014). *Identity Development of International Chinese Graduate Students: Growing and Developing in New Academic, Social and Cultural Contexts*. Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Marginson, S. (2012). *International education as self-formation: Morphing a profit-making business into an intercultural experience. Lecture delivered at the University of Wollongong, 21 February 2012.*
- Marginson, S. (2013). Student Self-Formation in International Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18(1), 6-22. doi:10.1177/1028315313513036
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education: Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education* (2nd Revised & Expanded ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education*, 28(2), 100-110. doi:10.1177/074171367802800202
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding Transformation Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(4), 222-232. doi:10.1177/074171369404400403

- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Myers, D. (2009). *Social Psychology* (10th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Myles, J., & Cheng, L. (2003). The social and cultural life of non-native English speaking international graduate students at a Canadian university. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(3), 247-263. doi:10.1016/S1475-1585(03)00028-6
- O'Hara, S. (2009). Internationalizing the Academy: The Impact of Scholar Mobility. In R. Bhandari, S. Laughlin, & Institute of International Education (Eds.), *Higher Education on the Move: New Developments in Global Mobility*. New York, NY: Institute of International Education.
- Olssen, M., & Peters, M. A. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), 313-345. doi:10.1080/02680930500108718
- Orleans, L. A. (1988). *Chinese Students in America: Policies, Issues, and Numbers*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Rogers, C. R. (1959). A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships: As Developed in the Client-Centered Framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A Study of a Science Study I. Conceptual and Systematic Volume 3: Formulations of the Person and the Social Context* (pp. 184-256). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.
- Ross, H. A. (1993). *China Learns English: Language Teaching and Social Change in the People's Republic*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Roulston, K., deMarrais, K., & Lewis, J. B. (2003). Learning to Interview in the Social Sciences. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(4), 643-668. doi:10.1177/1077800403252736
- Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., & Ramia, G. (2007). Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 148-180. doi:10.1177/1028315307299699

- Saxenian, A. (2005). From Brain Drain to Brain Circulation: Transnational Communities and Regional Upgrading in India and China. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 40(2), 35-61. doi:10.1007/BF02686293
- Scholz, R., & Tietje, O. (2002). *Embedded Case Study Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf.
- Shimmi, Y. (2014). *Experiences of Japanese Visiting Scholars in the United States: An Exploration of Transition*. [Doctoral dissertation]. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3616035)
- Sim, J. (1998). Collecting and analysing qualitative data: issues raised by the focus group. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(2), 345-352. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1998.00692.x
- Spencer-Oatey, H., & Xiong, Z. (2006). Chinese Students' Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustments to Britain: An Empirical Study. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 37-53. doi:10.1080/07908310608668753
- Squires, A. (2009). Methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research: A research review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46(2), 277-287. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2008.08.006
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Stake, R. E. (2005a). *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (1st ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2005b). Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Stanford University. (2017, September 17). *10.5 Visiting Scholars*. Retrieved from <https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook/non-faculty-research-appointments/visiting-scholars>

- Stenhouse, L. (1978). Case Study and Case Records: Towards a contemporary history of education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 4(2), 21-39. doi:10.1080/0141192780040202
- Stenhouse, L. (1979). Case Study in Comparative Education: Particularity and generalisation. *Comparative Education*, 15(1), 5-10. doi:10.1080/0305006790150102
- Sun, W., & Chen, G.-M. (1997). *Dimensions of Difficulties Mainland Chinese Students Encounter in the United States*. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference on Cross Cultural Communication. , Tempe, AZ. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED408635>
- Taylor, E. W. (2007). An Update of Transformative Learning Theory: A Critical Review of the Empirical Research (1999-2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), 173-191. doi:10.1080/02601370701219475
- The UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2006). *GLOBAL EDUCATION DIGEST 2006: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/global-education-digest-2006-comparing-education-statistics-across-the-world-en_0.pdf
- The University of Texas Austin Office of the Vice President for Research. (2017, March 14). *Visiting Researchers and Scholars*. Retrieved from <https://research.utexas.edu/resources/visiting-researchers-and-scholars/>
- The University of Utah. (2017, January 24). *Policy 6-317 Academic Visitors (Visiting Scholars, Visiting Postdoctoral Scholars, and Visiting Graduate Students)*. Retrieved from <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-317.php>
- Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. 96(3), 506-520. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.96.3.506
- Trice, A. G. (2001). *Faculty Perceptions of Graduate International Students: The Benefits and Challenges*. Paper presented at the 26th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education Richmond, VA. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED457816.pdf>
- Turner, Y. (2006). Chinese Students in a UK Business School: Hearing the Student Voice in Reflective Teaching and Learning Practice. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60(1), 27-51. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2273.2006.00306.x
- UC San Diego Office of Postdoctoral & Research Scholar Affairs. (2017, May 6). *Visiting Scholars*. Retrieved from <https://postdoc.ucsd.edu/visiting-scholars/index.html>

- Wang, Q., & Li, J. (2003). Chinese children's self-concepts in the domains of learning and social relations. *Psychology in the Schools*, 40(1), 85-101. doi:10.1002/pits.10071
- Wang, Z. (1999). U.S.-China Scientific Exchange: A Case Study of State-Sponsored Scientific Internationalism during the Cold War and Beyond. *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences*, 30(1), 249-277. doi:10.2307/27757826
- Xue, M., Chao, X., & Kuntz, A. M. (2015). Chinese visiting scholars' academic socialization in US institutions of higher education: a qualitative study. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 35(2), 290-307.
- Yajun, J. (2003). English as a Chinese language. *English Today*, 19(2), 3-8. doi:10.1017/S0266078403002013
- Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2011). Chinese international students in the United States: demographic trends, motivations, acculturation features and adjustment challenges. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 12(2), 173-184. doi:10.1007/s12564-010-9117-x
- Yang, B., Zheng, W., & Li, M. (2006). Confucian View of Learning and Implications for Developing Human Resources. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 8(3), 346-354. doi:10.1177/1523422306288427
- Yazan, B. (2015). Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 134-152. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12>
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (1st ed.). Beverly Hills, CA SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2006). Case Study Methods. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research* (pp. 111-122). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Zhao, R. (2008). *Factors promoting or hindering the academic adjustment of Chinese visiting scholars in an American university* [Doctoral dissertation]. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3327119)
- Zhou, Y., & Todman, J. (2008). Patterns of Adaptation of Chinese Postgraduate Students in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 467-486.
doi:10.1177/1028315308317937
- Zhu, J. (2016). *Chinese Overseas Students and Intercultural Learning Environments: Academic Adjustment, Adaptation and Experience* (1st ed.). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.