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Publication Date

2013

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Academic and Social Integration of
Chinese Doctoral Students into U.S. Universities and
The Role of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

By

Xiaoan Li

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Academic and Social Integration of
Chinese Doctoral Students into U.S. Universities and
The Role of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA)

by

Xiaoan Li

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Robert Rhoads, Co-Chair

Professor Walter Allen, Co-Chair

Using Tinto's retention model while being critical, in this qualitative study, the researcher examined the experience of Chinese doctoral students by conducting continuous formative and summative research in Chinese doctoral students' needs, adjustment problems, academic study, and living experiences in two geographically different U.S. universities, UCLA and Indiana University (IU). In the form of two case studies (Yin, 2003), 15 doctoral students, 5 Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) organizers, and university administrators at each site have been structurally interviewed. Three other types of data have also been collected, ethnographical observation notes, CSSA website and mailing information analyses, and university documents regarding international students. Using inductive methods, the researcher employed Atlas-ti, a qualitative coding program to analyze the data. As a conclusion, as Hofstede and Bond (1999) stated, American and Chinese cultures represent two extremes of the cultural continuum, with respect to the particular dimensions of culture, such as individualism

versus collectivism. Due to considerable cultural differences, the transition from studying in a Chinese academic setting to an American one may suggest great difficulties for Chinese students. This study intends to address policy implications in improving international students' wellbeing in their foreign sojourn by highlighting, for example, how a campus can promote student organizations as a socialization agent for international students regardless of their country of origin.

The dissertation of Xiaoan Li is approved.

Lynne Zucker

Richard Wagoner

Robert Rhoads, Committee Co-Chair

Walter Allen, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

To my father, for the perseverance he demonstrated in his amazing life long journey;
and my mother, for her unconditional love and care.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere appreciation is expressed to my advisor, Professor Rob Rhoads, not only for his guidance and encouragement in my study and the process of completing this dissertation, but also for everything else I observed through the interactions and conversations we have had for the past several years: patience, honesty, rightness, vision and more.

My special thanks are extended to Co-Chair, Professor Walter Allen for his trust in me. I shall also thank my two other committee members, Professors Lynne Zucker and Richard Wagoner for their helpful comments and suggestions.

And my loving wife, Lin Lin, has endured all the hardships and responsibilities in taking care of my two lovely children, David and Clare, but she has never complained. Her support and encouragement made the writing of this dissertation enjoyable.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

I. Personal Reflection

Time flies, and I have been here in the United States for nine years. But I have always remembered the very first night I arrived in Indianapolis, Indiana. That was 11:30 p.m. (Eastern Time), July 27, 2002. After 24 hours of flying, surprisingly I was not tired at all, but rather I was very excited and moved when I saw a young Chinese male, appearing to be similar in age to myself, approaching me and asking, “Are you Li, Xiaolan?” “How do you know who I am?” I was shocked. “I am here on behalf of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) to welcome you to the United States. We got your flight information from your department and program.” He also told me why he was so sure of my name was because I was the only Chinese-looking man in the baggage claim area. Then, he, acting as a tour guide, described with great patience all the beautiful buildings and scenes on the way to the International House (I-House) of Indiana University. When he made sure I was settled down, he gave me his number and informed me of the upcoming welcome party of CSSA before he left. It was already 1:30 a.m. To this day, I have always kept wondering how things might have been different without his great help on that very first night. I simply can’t imagine.

Nine years later, sitting in the quiet Teaching Assistant (TA) office of the department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and listening to the chimes of the classic campus bell on top of Powell Library, I began to write this proposal, on something closely related to what I have been personally

experiencing and deeply involved with. Recalling all aspects of my life as a Chinese graduate student in the U.S., from degree to degree, academic advisors, cohorts, Chinese and American friends, relief after tough examinations, up and down moments, numerous parties and events organized by CSSA at both Indiana University and UCLA, to my newly formed family and most recently birth of our first child, I have come to realize how much I have been going through and how many of my original ideas have changed. It dawned on me that six years before, the psychological distance between me and my American dream had been as great as the physical distance between China and America. But I increasingly and strongly believe that I am currently living in that dream indeed. The fact that I knew that deep in my heart I had changed was also proved by my elderly parents, who were here visiting me in early 2008, telling me that I look different, not too much physically but more psychologically and emotionally.

Obviously, I am not the exception. In the last three decades, several hundred thousand Chinese students walked out the national gate (*zouchu guomen*) to more than seventy countries around the world, with America as the most desired place to be. Surviving in alien cultures, their lives underwent a transformation that would not have been possible had they remained in China.

My intuition keeps telling me I have changed, and so have other people. There are several questions I also keep asking myself: What are the changes that take place in a Chinese graduate student who moves to a distant land such as the United States? What forces shape these changes? And how can a student organization help students through the complex process of adjusting to a new society and their new university context?

My personal story reflects an ongoing fact that the presence of international students on university campuses in the United States has increased greatly over the past decades. According to the Report on International Educational Exchange (Institute of International Education, 2011), 34,232 international students were enrolled in the U.S. colleges and universities in 1954 - 55, which accounted for 1.4% of the total enrollment. By the 2009 – 10 academic year, this number had increased to 690,923, a three percent increase from the previous year, accounting for nearly 6% of the total student population (Institute of International Education, 2011). Indeed, 145 U.S. higher education institutions hosted 1,000 or more international students in the same year (Institute of International Education, 2011).

As almost every middle-age or elderly Chinese citizen knows, it was on January 1st, 1979 that the United States and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations. This event occurred decades after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and nearly seven years after President Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. The shift in U.S. - China relations since normalization in 1979 has resulted in a rapid influx of Chinese students and scholars studying at U.S. institutions. Even just five days before the diplomatic exchange, fifty Chinese students arrived in America to begin their studies (Qian, 1996).

Since then, the number of students coming from Mainland China to the U.S. for higher education has increased dramatically: in 2010, Chinese students represented the largest group of all international students (Institute of International Education, 2011). With 127,628 as the total, the number of Chinese international students in the United

States has grown by 15 percent over the last five years (Institute of International Education, 2011).

II. Statement of the Problem

Higher education has a profound impact on society and the development of its citizens (Rhoads and Torres, 2006). As the world becomes increasingly globalized, residents of different countries are more mobile than ever before. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, mutual understanding becomes more and more vital. Given the important role international students play in diversifying higher education learning environments, their needs and adjustment problems will be a concern to host institutions in the United States (Orleans, 1988).

Among the 690,923 international students who studied in the United States in 2009–10 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2011), about 300,000 of these students were enrolled in graduate programs. International graduate students often face a unique challenge of navigating a new culture while striving for academic excellence and professional competency. Spending one to six years in graduate programs, international graduate students in the United States commit to an extended stay in a new cultural environment while they receive advanced training in their field of study. Given the rigorous nature of advanced academic study, it is challenging to most graduate students; however, adding the challenges of cultural learning to international graduate students makes it even more difficult.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in international students' adjustment among faculty members, administrators, and student personnel professionals

(Shahmirzadi, 1989; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001). Studies conducted on international students' needs and adjustment problems have undoubtedly provided important information (Hull, 1978). However, little attention has been given to the needs and adjustment problems of the students who come from certain national or regional groups. Basically, researchers have tended to take international students as one group, often to the exclusion of the unique characteristics of students who come from a particular culture and social system. In this study, some of the important research relative to needs and adjustments of Chinese students have been examined; the research focused exclusively on Chinese doctoral students and their learning and living experiences in American institutions of higher education. Given the size of international graduate students from China, combined with the growing need to strengthen US-China relations, focusing specifically on this population was warranted.

As Hofstede and Bond (1999) stated, American and Chinese cultures represent two extremes of the cultural continuum, with respect to the particular dimensions of culture, such as individualism versus collectivism . Due to considerable cultural differences, the transition from studying in a Chinese academic setting to an American academic one may suggest great difficulties for Chinese students. Their affiliations with the university academic and social environment both in the classroom and outside of class might be different from those who are from any other countries. For this reason, this study focused on the academic and social integration experiences of Chinese graduate students who are currently studying in the U.S. Additionally, I sought to explain the role a particular student organization (CSSA) has played in such processes.

In the United States of America, a vast country that covers over 3.8 million square miles (The World Factbook, 2007), it is not surprising to learn that regions that are separated by large distances will be noticeably different. Not only are there great differences in climate and landscape, but also in the people who live in each of these regions. These regional differences, such as the states in the Midwestern part of the country and in the West, have displayed different cultural and social differences (Goldin and Katz, 2001). For instance, the Western coast has more varied mixture of immigrants than any other region. Many studies have examined the geographical distributions and differences in American higher education: Richards and Rands (1965) found significant differences among different regions in the U.S. in terms of various junior colleges' characteristics on factors such as cultural affluence, transfer emphasis, business orientation, and learning experiences, and so forth. In order to better understand the academic and social integration experiences of Chinese doctoral students in geographically different parts of the U.S., I selected the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) located on the West coast and Indiana University (IU) in the Mid-West as research sites for this study. To conduct this important research, Chinese students' needs, adjustment problems, studying, and living experiences in these two U.S. universities were compared and contrasted. An additional concern of my analysis centered on the role the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) plays as a mediating force in the adjustment of Chinese doctoral students.

III. Purpose of the Study

The goal of the study was to better understand the social and academic challenges of Chinese doctoral students while studying at two U.S. universities located in geographically different locations, one on the West coast and the other in the Mid-West. Additionally, I examined how the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), a major Chinese student organization on both campuses, plays a role in assisting students in their integration process. More specifically, the following research questions frame this study:

1) What are the academic and social challenges that Chinese doctoral students face in their adjustment (integration) to a U.S. university? What different strategies do they employ in coping with their new environments, including the ways in which they are able to access various resources?

2) What role does the Chinese Student and Scholar Association play in support of Chinese international doctoral students and their academic and social adjustment to their U.S. universities? In what ways does the CSSA promote elements of Chinese culture at the respective university in a manner supportive of Chinese students?

3) How are Chinese doctoral students' national and cultural identities challenged and potentially reconfigured in light of their experiences at U.S. universities?

4) What organizational differences related to the academic and social integration of Chinese doctoral students may be observed between U.S. universities located in two distinct regions of the country?

5) What disciplinary differences are revealed among Chinese doctoral students that relate to their academic and social integration?

Based on the results of this study, recommendations were made to university personnel and international student organizations to help Chinese graduate students have more enjoyable and productive educational experiences.

IV. Significance of the Study

Adjustment issues of international students have been increasingly studied in recent years, yet there are still gaps in this area of inquiry. First of all, few studies have been done on the role of student organizations in helping international doctoral students adjust to American universities. This has been a central concern of this study.

Second, based on the fact that great differences in social and cultural aspects can be found in different parts of the United States, West coast versus East coast versus Mid-West, it has been important to explore, then compare and contrast the integration experiences of international students studying in geographically different universities.

Third, although adjustment problems have been correlated with background factors such as disciplines, science major versus social science majors, and so forth, it is important to further explore the relationships among adjustment and background factors, as well as other related aspects.

Overall, this study should begin to answer some of the questions that faculty members, administrators, and student personnel professionals have concerning the needs and adjustment problems of Chinese doctoral students. The study provided important information for further insights into the role student organizations play in helping international students' adjustment.

V. Definition of Terms

The following key terms were used throughout this study and to ensure clarity of meaning and usage are defined below:

Chinese doctoral students. In this study, Chinese doctoral students are defined as those who: (a) were born in the People's Republic of China (mainland China), and still maintain their Chinese citizenship; (b) use English as a second language; (c) have had higher education experiences and obtained either a bachelor or master degree in China, and came to the United States for a doctoral degree.

Acculturation. Acculturation is defined as the process by which one incorporates the language, values, and practices of a new culture – the level of one's acculturation may be treated as an individual trait carried across domains and contexts (Monzo and Rueda, 2006).

Assimilation. The term assimilation refers to the tendency to understand new experiences in terms of existing knowledge (Park and Burgess, 1921). Moreover, assimilation is defined as “a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, by sharing and explaining experience and history, which are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Park and Burgess, 1921 pp.64).

Adjustment. After reviewing the literature in the field, Hannigan gave the following definition of adjustment: “Adjustment can be conceptualized as a psychosocial concept which has to do with the process of achieving harmony among the individual and the environment. Usually this harmony is achieved through changes in the individual's knowledge, attitudes, and emotions about his or her environment. This culminates with

satisfaction, feeling more at home in one's new environment, improved performance, and increased interaction with host country persons" (Hannigan, 1990, p.91).

Adaptation. Hannigan (1990) also offered the following definition about adaptation: "Adaptation encompasses cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral, and psychological changes in an individual who lives in a new or foreign culture. These changes result in the individual's movement from uncomfortableness to feeling at home in the new environment" (p.91). In this study, the above four terms of acculturation, assimilation, adjustment, and adaptation are used interchangeably.

Academic integration. According to Nora, academic integration is the development of a strong affiliation with the college academic environment both in the classroom and outside of class. Includes interactions with faculty, academic staff, and peers but of an academic nature (1993, p. 235).

Social integration. The development of a strong affiliation with the college social environment both in the classroom and outside of class, which includes interactions with faculty, academic staff, and peers but of a social nature (Nora, 1993, p. 237).

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

This chapter highlights the previous research on international students in U.S. higher education, graduate education and the unique challenges of doctoral students, and Chinese graduate students and their integration to the United States.

I. International Students in U.S. Higher Education

Different people in the U.S. respond to the increasing presence of international students in quite different ways, and their responses change over time. For example, some people view them as illegitimate outsiders competing for limited educational and financial resources with American students, and more people think this way when America goes through tough economic times (Paige, 1990). Similarly, others think international students not only create intense competition in almost all kinds of areas, such as admission, scholarships, teaching and research assistantships, but also make employment after graduation more difficult for domestic American students (Fels, 2002). Extreme and tragic incidents such as the events of 9/11 also have had a great impact on Americans' perception of international students. As a result, some people think international students may pose a physical threat to America. As Borjas (2002) cites, Hani Hasan Hanjour, who came to the U.S. to study English by holding a student visa, as it turned out he never attended any class; instead, he became one of the terrorists in the plane that crashed into the Pentagon on September 11.

In contrast to the aforementioned, the majority of the relevant literature shows that the presence of international students has benefited the U.S. in a great many ways. According to the Open Doors Report (2005), international students brought \$13.3 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in the year of 2004-05 in the form of tuition, living expenses and consumption. As the report states, this makes American higher education one of the top five largest service sector exports ranked by the Department of Commerce data banks (2005). In contrast to the belief that international students are competing for a pool of scholarships against American students, The Institute of International Education reports that more than 70 percent of undergraduate international students pay full tuition, without receiving any financial aid. This actually allows colleges and universities to offer more financial assistance to domestic students (NAFSA, 2003).

Research has also been conducted on the contributions of international students to advance cultural understanding and sensitivity, and to enhancing campus climate (Barger, 2004). Some researchers believe that international students add cultural diversity and serve as cultural resources (American Council on Education, 2002).

Because of the importance of international students, as well as the benefits attributed to their stay in the U.S., adjustment issues for international students constitute a significant area of study. It is worthwhile to look at their difficulties. In general, international students face difficulties in cultural experiences, in academic study, and in daily life activities. The difficulties faced by international students adversely influence their academic achievement and life experience (Orleans, 1988). If they cannot overcome the difficulties and adjust successfully, they may not reach their educational goals and objectives. Adjustment is crucial to their success while studying in the United States.

Campus administrators have become more and more aware of the significance of smoothing the adjustment process, and even research on domestic students demonstrates the importance of adjustment “due to the potential impact of adjustment problems on student attrition” (Hurtado et al, 1998, p.70).

The following review deals with the experiences of international students in terms of four areas: English language proficiency, academic adjustment, social integration, and acculturation.

A. English Language Proficiency

Among all the needs and adjustment problems, English proficiency is almost always the first difficulty international students encounter and have to overcome (Gaither & Griffin, 1971). English language ability is related to most of what students do in terms of their academic work and social conduct. To a large extent, English proficiency is positively related to a student’s academic success and social interaction (Hull, 1978). Therefore, ability with the English language has been used in many studies as one of the main factors associated with academic performance and social conduct (Hull, 1978).

In a number of studies, lack of English proficiency was found to be the major problem in adjusting to academic life. Reiff (1972) surveyed 367 international students at the University of Georgia. He found more than half of the total sample identified English proficiency as a problem. Some studies have focused on identifying the problems of particular regional groups. Using a questionnaire consisting of 62 items, a study of 118 international graduate students from the Far East at the University of Southern California (Han, 1975) found that English language barrier and financial difficulty were the two

most serious problems students had in achieving their academic goals. Hull (1978) reported on a survey of international students newly enrolled at three institutions. He found that Asian students rated their academic English extremely low in categories of writing papers, reading, speaking in class and understanding lectures. Compared with other regional groups, Asian students were among the least satisfied with their ability in English with regard to writing papers and reading speed, as well as with regard to their ability to speak in class, understand lecture discussions, and comprehend reading materials (Hull, 1978).

B. Academic Adjustment

International students come to the United States from almost everywhere in the world. Some of their most important goals frequently mentioned are: (1) acquiring knowledge and skills in their academic fields, (2) obtaining advanced degree from an American university, and (3) improving career opportunities at home or in the United States (Manese, Leong, & Sedlacek, 1988). In assessing international students' academic needs, a number of studies found that difficulties in understanding lectures, participating in class discussions, and preparing oral and written reports, regardless of the primary language, were the most serious academic problems (Breuder, 1972). Other studies found that international students need to be acclimated to the unfamiliar academic system. In addition to mastering course materials, they must become familiar with a new grading system and the difference between units and credits, semesters and quarters, among other organizational nuances. They also have to become accustomed to the use of discussion sections and numerous multiple-choice exams (Manese, Leong & Sedlacek, 1988).

Although international students face difficulties in their adjustment to U.S. campuses, they also have been found to have strong academic skills, high educational aspirations, and positive attitudes toward their colleges and universities (Boyer and Sedlacek, 1986). In a study of the academic and career needs of 215 international students, Leong and Sedlacek (1988) found that international students were less concerned about specific study skills such as using the library, taking tests, or taking better notes. Instead, they were more concerned about their academic plans and expressed greater need for (a) help in selecting/scheduling courses, (b) help from academic advisors, and (c) help in establishing their academic plan of study.

C. Social Integration

Although the main goal of international students is educational in nature, they have all kinds of difficulties with their personal and social needs and adjustment (Deressa & Beavers, 1988). To identify the adjustment problems experienced by graduate students from Asia, Africa and Latin America at universities in the state of North Carolina, Sharma (1971) analyzed 195 completed returns and found the most severe personal problems concerned home sickness, finding adequate housing, funding, and finding companionship. Sharma also found a strong positive relationship among the academic, personal and social adjustment of these students. According to Schram and Lauer (1988), academic success may be hindered by inadequate or slow adjustment to the university setting. Pruitt (1978) found that the major problems faced by international students in her survey were in the areas of adjusting to different weather and/or climate, communication with Americans, discrimination, homesickness, depression, irritability

and tiredness, particularly when they first arrived on campus, although most of these difficulties diminished over time.

Barratt and Huba (1994) conducted a survey of 170 international undergraduates on motivation, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, participation in activities, English language skills, and community adjustment. Among the many findings are the positive correlations between interpersonal relationships and current self-esteem as well as English language skills. Grey (2002) examined three international undergraduate business students on their social, cultural, and study experiences. Results show that students have specific expectations and goals that are often neglected.

The research conducted by Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker and Al-Timimi (2004) indicated that social support and English proficiency uniquely contribute to international students' acculturative stress, and their research also suggested students from Asia experience more stress than students from other regions.

D. Acculturation

Coming from different cultures, international students face changes in every aspect of life, including changes in geographical location, climate, food, culture habits and behaviors. Hence, the major task in cultural adjustment is to cope with change in many cultural aspects of life. The term "culture shock," which originated from the challenges of being confronted by culture differences, is used to describe people's anxious feelings when entering a new culture (Hannigan (1990). Researchers such as Conner (1992) found culture shock to involve differences in value systems, communication patterns, signs and symbols of social contact, and interpersonal

relationship patterns. Being more familiar with successful human behavior patterns during the process of change, an individual is in a better position to make adjustments.

Hull (1978) performed a comprehensive survey of the overall adaptation of foreign students within the American educational environment. A total of 669 foreign students from three U.S. institutions participated in the survey, representing 70 percent of all the foreign students at those three universities. The study found that these students from varying cultural backgrounds clearly differed in their level of adjustment, mostly depending on similarity of their backgrounds to American culture.

Tomich, Mcwhirter and Darcy's study (2003) suggested that Asian students' adaptation to the U.S. universities should be studied with the cultural difference/distance in consideration. Hinchcliff-Pelias and Greer (2004) studied international students' communication problems and strategies from their hesitancy in intercultural interactions and found that international students have perceived obstacles to effective intercultural communication.

In summary, in recent years U.S. colleges and universities have witnessed a steady increase in international student enrollment. The growing number of international students enrolled in the U.S. higher education each year has called attention to provide special services to help international students adjust to the host culture and solve the problems common to all international students, or challenges unique to students from certain countries of origin and cultures, thanks to numerous established researches done by scholars in the fields of psychology, education, communication, and English by using different groups of subjects in different locations in the world. Those findings have helped us to recognize that for most international students, entering U.S. universities and

colleges can be an overwhelming life, social, and cultural transition. In the meanwhile, among all academic challenges, English language proficiency has been widely recognized as one of the major adjustment issues for international students.

II. Graduate Education and the Unique Challenges of Doctoral Students

According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education Online Almanac* (2012), there are more than 2 million graduate students in the United States. People make the choice of attending graduate school for a variety of reasons, including pursuit of continued education in their original field, greater credentials for career development or to change to different careers paths. Although an individual's decision to seek graduate education comes after he/she attends an undergraduate institution, the graduate student faces new challenges unique to her/his pursuit. Graduate students come from a variety of backgrounds, and many have families and full time jobs and live away from campus. In addition, students can find themselves in a class without others to relate to and many face significant family and financial challenges (Polson, 2003).

According to Tinto, graduate education in the United States is a developmental process (1993). Doctoral students are a diverse group whose needs and motivations change significantly through three distinct stages of doctoral persistence: transition and adjustment, attaining candidacy, and completing the dissertation (Tinto, 1993). The transition stage encompasses the first year of doctoral training during which the student's task is to establish membership in the social and academic communities of the university (Tinto, 1993). To achieve this, the student develops personal affiliations with other students and faculty within the department and determines how well the norms of those

communities fit his/her own. Tinto's second stage of doctoral persistence encompasses the time until comprehensive exams and the attainment of candidacy when the primary task is to acquire knowledge and competence necessary for doctoral research. The third stage encompasses the final years writing the dissertation. With different goals in different stages, a range of competencies are needed, and therefore, graduate students face numerous challenges in each stage.

The larger structural differences between graduate programs in different academic disciplines have been studied by researchers (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Tinto, 1993). For example, in the natural sciences research is typically externally funded and is conducted in a relatively structured laboratory-based apprenticeship mode. This entails frequent student–faculty interactions. In contrast, in the social science and humanities research is typically conducted with fewer resources and is less structured and more often individualistic (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). As a result, it is important to study the experiences of graduate students in different disciplines based on structural differences.

International graduate students often have different educational experiences than American students because they have the added challenge of adjusting to a new environment and culture (Jacob & Greggo, 2001). Compared with American students, international students may exhibit different learning styles, face differences in sociopolitical factors, have different acculturation experiences, perceive greater prejudice and discrimination, be more affiliated with their own international groups, use less English, and encounter greater language barriers compared with domestic students (Jacob & Greggo, 2001).

Graduate education is a unique context because every graduate student has a thesis/dissertation supervisor or advisor (Naidoo, 1991). Numerous studies have shown that it is critical for graduate students to develop and maintain professional relationships with their advisors in order to achieve academic success (Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Naidoo, 1991). Research also indicates international students and their academic advisors may have different perceptions of the ideal role of the advisor (Khabiri, 1985). International students may encounter unique social barriers that make it difficult for them to form relationships (Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Naidoo, 1991). Such social barriers can contribute to academic difficulties because, as reported by Wan et al. (1992), social support networks play an important role in international graduate students' ability to cope with academic stress. International students might be specifically interested in a mentor who can help them develop their social skills or perhaps become a part of their personal relationship network (Naidoo, 1991; Wan et al., 1992).

International graduate students account for 43 percent of the total international enrollment (Open Doors, 2010). However, some studies use a mix of graduate and undergraduates, such as Pruitt's questionnaire study of 296 sub-Saharan African college students from 9 American campuses (1978). Compared to undergraduate students, in a study of foreign students on college campuses and factors influencing their level of social difficulty in social situations, Olaniran (1996) examined such variables as the relationship between social difficulty and age, academic classification, cultural similarity, and communication network patterns. As one of the findings, Olaniran posits that international graduate students tend to experience more social difficulties than their undergraduate counterparts. By using survey questionnaires and demographic questions

to identify adjustment problems, resilience characteristics, and background factors, Cheng (1999) also points out that graduate students experience significantly more problems in religion, social activities, personal relationships, and student activities. Therefore, a distinction should be made between international graduate students and undergraduates since they can differ so much in age, maturity, leaning style, social and family support systems, financial status, and many other areas. Findings based on a mixed or undergraduate population are unlikely to be representative of the experiences of international graduate students.

As a conclusion, compared to studies focusing on the population of undergraduate students, there have been significantly fewer studies on the experience of international graduate students. Moreover, no research has been conducted on the role of student organizations in helping international doctoral students adjust to American universities, which has been one of major inquires in my study.

III. Chinese Students and Their Integration to the United States

This section of literature review can be divided into two subsections. In the first part, the historical journey of Chinese students as a population to U.S. universities will be briefly reviewed. The second part covers research related to the experiences of Chinese students in the United States.

A. The Historical Journey of Chinese Students to American Higher Education

Due to its powerful ethnocentrism and isolationism, the Qing Dynasty (1664 - 1919) was left behind by the Industrial Revolution by more than a century. Its national

economy was weakened even more when China was defeated by Great Britain in the First Opium War (1839 - 42) and by Britain and France in the Second Opium War (1857 - 60) (Qian, 1996). However, it was China's defeat by Western industrial countries that stimulated its push for modern knowledge from the West (Wing, 1909). Yung Wing was the first Chinese person sent to the West, the United States of America, to study at Yale University in 1847, at the age of eighteen, returning to China in 1854. Thus, Yung Wing was one of the first Chinese to recognize the huge gap in knowledge and technology between the West and China (Wing, 1909).

A historically significant figure on the American side emerged in the form of Anson Burlingame, U.S. minister to China from 1861 to 1867, who helped to open the doors of American colleges to Chinese students. When he became China's ambassador-at-large, and largely through his effort, the two countries signed the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, Article 7 of which stated, "Chinese subjects shall enjoy all the privileges of the public educational institutions under the control of the government of the United States" and provide reciprocal privileges for American citizens (Clyde, 1940). Soon afterwards, China launched its first-ever study-abroad project, sending the first thirty Chinese students to America. Yung Wing became the deputy commissioner of the Chinese Educational Commission. He chose Hartford, Connecticut, as the city for its headquarters (Qian, 1996). Further, it is interesting to note that on May 5, 2000, Yale University honored Yung Wing putting his portrait in its Grand Hall (E. Rhoads, 2005).

Because of strict U.S. immigrant laws and the expenses involved in late 1890s (Clyde, 1940), few Chinese students went to America; instead, many went to Japan instead, given geographical proximity and Japan's eagerness to host Chinese students. By

1906 the number of Chinese students in Japan exceeded 12,000 (Chen, 1980). Not until 1909 to 1911, the last year of the Qing Dynasty, was three groups totaling 179 students sent to America (Hu, 1981).

After the founding of the Republic of China, students supported by remission money were selected from the Tsinghua School. Between 1912 and 1925 a total of 852 students, including forty-three women, were sent to America. In 1936, the year before the China War of Resistance against Japan, 1,002 Chinese students went to America to study. During the War era, the number dropped significantly (Chang, 1995).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, no students from Mainland China were sent by governments at federal and local levels to America for thirty years. However, still many students managed to come to America on their individual efforts. At the same time, the United States blocked Chinese students who were already in the U.S. from returning to China (Qian, 1996) due to the tensions between two countries after the Korean War broke out.

Chairman Mao Zedong passed away in 1976, and Deng Xiaoping took control and started the Reform and Opening national policy. Since then, significant changes have taken place nationwide, including a new study abroad policy. Along with the normalization of China and America relationships on January 1st, 1979, there has been a rapid increase of Chinese students and scholars studying at U.S. institutions. As stated previously just five days before the diplomatic exchange, fifty Chinese students arrived in America to begin their studies (Qian, 1996). Since then, the number of students coming from Mainland China to the U.S. for higher education has increased dramatically: there were 62,523 in 2007 as the total number of Chinese international students in the United

States (Institute of International Education, 2007), and Chinese students represented the second (to India) largest group of all international students (Kivowitz, 2007).

B. Chinese Students in the United States

International students who attend universities in the United States come from diverse social, academic, and cultural backgrounds. Chinese students often find themselves struggling in a totally new environment. In order to assist Chinese students to successfully complete their academic programs in the United States, the examination of their needs and adjustment problems is essential. As a sub-population of international students, the four areas for understanding the needs and challenges of Chinese international students also apply. Thus, in what follows I discuss their needs and challenges relative to English language proficiency, academic adjustment, social integration, and acculturation.

1. English Language Proficiency

Several cross-cultural studies have focused specifically on the experiences of students from Mainland China, treating them as a unique and significant group in U.S. universities. As previously stated in the Introductory Chapter, Hofstede and Bond (1999) stated that American and Chinese culture represent two extremes of the cultural continuum, with respect to the identified dimensions of culture. As a result, it makes the transition from studying in a Chinese academic setting to an American academic setting even more difficult for Chinese students. While several studies of Chinese international students have indicated that most achieve academic success (Huang, 1997), other studies

have reported the many difficulties that Chinese students often encounter while studying in the United States. In a comparative study, Perkins (1977) found that most Chinese students had problems with not only English proficiency, but also racial or religious discrimination, homesickness, separation from family, and unfriendliness of the people in the community, which hindered their adjustment to American culture.

In analyzing the results of the questionnaires, Reiff (1972) compared responses of Chinese and Indian students apart from other international students. He found that Chinese students most frequently noted English as a problem. Using a modified version of Reiff's questionnaire (1972), Guglielmino and Perkins (1975) surveyed 210 international students at the University of Georgia. They found that the Chinese students noted English proficiency as the first of the top five problems. In order to be accepted by American universities, Chinese students have to pass English proficiency examinations, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Yet a fairly large number of Chinese students still find it hard to become accustomed to speaking and writing English in their academic work and daily social life.

2. Academic Adjustment

A number of studies have been conducted about international students from specific areas. In a study of 1,147 international students on their adaptation problems, Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) found that heavy academic pressure is commonly experienced by Asian students, particularly Chinese Students. All Chinese students in this study were supported by their families, and family expectations seemed to be an

important factor in students' attempts to perform well. In a comparison of the adjustment problems of three international students groups, Perkins and others (1977) surveyed 210 international students and found that the Chinese students perceived "adequacy of educational preparation" and "difficulty in getting along with my teachers" as more important problems than the Indian students did.

Additional studies have investigated not only the problems of the international students in general but also of particularly national groups. In analyzing the results of the questionnaires, Reiff (1972) compared responses of Chinese and Indian students apart from other international students. He found that Chinese students most frequently noted English as a problem. Using a modified version of Reiff's questionnaire (1972), Guglielmino and Perkins (1975) surveyed 210 international students at the University of Georgia. They found that the Chinese students noted English proficiency as the first of the top five problems.

Chinese students, like many other international and U.S. students, have some common reservations about asking questions in class. They are usually very shy, not wanting to look foolish by asking a "dumb" question (Van Naerssen et al., 1984). In a word, Chinese students prefer to be good listeners rather than talkers. Even though they have questions concerning course materials or class assignments, they seldom ask the professor a question. Instead, they either figure out the answers by themselves or get the information they need from classmates (Yao, 1983). Feng (1991) reported a study from 52 Chinese students through participant observations and interviews. The results were: (a) Chinese students, either supported by their government or families, have great pressure to perform well and usually do quite well academically; (b) Chinese students

have difficulty in understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions and writing essays; and (c) academic concerns are expressed differently by Chinese students depending on their major. Natural science students generally adapt better than social science students. Besides the ability to take notes, participate in class discussions, and write essays and term papers, social science students require a better understanding of American culture, including values, norms, and the broad social structure (Feng, 1991).

Some researchers studied learning styles (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Shi, 2006; Ladd & Ruby, 1999; Zhou, Knoke & Sakamoto, 2005) and teaching styles (Yang, 1999; Huang, 2004;). Their research revealed the differences between American and Chinese in academic learning and teaching and the difficulties brought by these differences to Chinese students studying in the U.S.

3. Social Integration

Another study of international (mostly Chinese) students in a teacher-training program at Mid-Atlantic University by Chen (1996) found that loneliness was a common feeling shared by international students. The students reported that they had few or no friends in the new country, mainly because their time was restricted by heavy academic workloads and language limitations.

Sue and Zane (1985) conducted a study on the academic achievement and socio-emotional adjustment of Chinese students; the study consisted of 177 students enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles, and included both recent immigrant Chinese students and American-born Chinese students. The findings indicated that “for some Chinese students, particularly recent immigrants, good academic performance may

involve certain academic and psychological costs” (p.517), and that the recent Chinese immigrant students reported more socio-emotional difficulties than American-born Chinese students.

More recently, a study conducted by Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) showed that it is likely that Chinese international students may encounter social difficulties fitting in the American style of social conversation, which features more direct expression of feelings, assertive expression of opinions, and direct communications (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006).

4. Acculturation

Sun and Chen’s study (1997) explored the dimensions of the difficulties that Chinese students encountered in the process of adjusting to American culture. They conducted ten in-depth interviews with Chinese students enrolled in a mid-size public university. Three dimensions of difficulties have been identified: language ability, cultural awareness, and academic achievements. In terms of the dimension of academic achievement, for example, they found that most Chinese students are very concerned about their academic performance, which the authors conclude relates to differences in teaching and learning styles among Chinese and American academic settings.

In their study of citizenship in a global context, interviewing international graduate students from China, Italy, and Brazil, Szelenyi and R. Rhoads (2007) noted that, Chinese students felt that they are “more disadvantaged than people from European countries” (p. 36) based on the fact that a Chinese student needs to apply for a visa to come to U.S. every six months while students from many European countries can use

their visa for five years. On the other hand, some Chinese students in this study also expressed their willingness to serve as “transmitters” and “cultural mediators (p. 25) of Chinese cultures in the United States.

Given the literature that I just reviewed, which focused on the challenges Chinese students have encountered while studying in the United States, such as their English language barrier, academic difficulties, social-emotional adjustment, I have come to realize that most of the previous studies focused mainly on what the experiences of Chinese or international students in American higher education are, but tended to ignore concerns related to the challenges they face. I believe that the conceptual framing of this past work is part of the problem, in that the theoretical frameworks applied did not lead researchers to ask these other sorts of questions. With this in mind, in next chapter I will discuss in detail the theoretical perspective and related methods I implemented in seeking to address questions that previously were not central to the analyses of the experiences of Chinese graduate students.

IV. Summary

Focusing on different groups of subjects in different locations in the world, by using different research methods, researchers and scholars in the fields of psychology, education, communication, and English and so forth have conducted research on the experience of international students in U.S. higher education. In this chapter, I reviewed and highlighted these previous research by particularly focusing on whether or not the challenges and difficulties faced by international influence their academic achievement and social integration. Those findings have shown that for most international students,

entering U.S. universities and colleges can be an overwhelming life, social, and cultural transition. In the second part of this chapter, I reviewed previous research and studies on graduate education. With comparison to undergraduate education in the United States, my reviews have shown why graduate education is more of a developmental process, and why it is a unique context. The larger structural differences between graduate programs in different academic disciplines have also been compared. In the final section, I looked closely into the studies on historical journey of Chinese students in American higher Chinese and their integration to American society.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

My decision to organize the dissertation in terms of a broad conception of methodology and then more focused discussions of theoretical perspectives and methods (with the latter being similar to research design) follows the sort of social science thinking advanced by Crotty (1998) and Harding (1990); from their perspective, methodology mostly concerns the way one thinks about a research problem, including one's theorizing, whereas methods refers more specifically to the actual steps or procedures involved in addressing a research problem and then delineating actual data collection and analysis strategies. Hence, in what follows I begin my broad methodological discussion by first focusing on theories I used in framing and conducting my research.

I. Theoretical Perspective

Most theories used to explain international students' adjustment focus on social, cultural, and academic factors. Guzman and Burke (2003) classify such theories into four categories. The first contains theories that describe various stages of the adjustment process, including Oberg's (1954) cultural shock theory, Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve model of initial adjustment-crisis-regained adjustment, Oberg's (1960) four-stage model of honeymoon-crisis-recovery-adjustment, and Adler's (1975) five-stage model of contact-disintegration-reintegration-autonomy-independence.

Theories in the second category analyze the nature and extent of problems experienced by international students such as financial hardship, language difficulties and so on. (Barker et al., 1991; Church, 1982; Hull, 1978). The third category identifies predictors of cross-cultural adjustment such as openness to experience, interpersonal skills, communication competence, and behavioral assessment (Hannigan, 1990; Ruben, 1976). Theories in the fourth category define and study performance criteria in different cross-cultural environments (Hopkins, 1982; Wiseman, 2002). All of these theories are helpful in understanding different aspects of the experiences of international students. They served as a basic foundation in terms of informing my study, but theoretical frameworks developed by Tinto, linked to academic and social integration, together with critiques on Tinto's model, such as Tierney's focus on institutional adaptation, and Astin's student involvement theory, respectively, provided a more concrete basis for framing this study.

A. Tinto's Model of Student Retention

Academic and social integration have been examined in numerous studies of college student persistence at four-year (Tinto, 1975; 1988; 1993; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, Astin, 1993; Braxton, 2000; Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista, 2005) and two-year institutions (Nora, 1987; Nora, 1993). Major syntheses have been published over several decades. One of the most notable models addressing the issue of retention is that of Tinto (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005), which has been used as a conceptual framework for persistence studies for the past three decades. The basic premise of Tinto's model (1975; 1988; 1993) is that social and academic

integration are essential to student retention. The model claims that whether a student persists or drops out is strongly predicted by the degree of his/her academic and social integration. Tinto (1993) notes that his persistence model is an “interactional system” (p. 136), where both students and institutions (through social and educational communities) are, over time, continually interacting with one another in a variety of formal and informal situations. Key to the interaction view is that persistence is contingent on the extent to which students are incorporated (integrated) into the social and academic communities of the college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1992).

Under Tinto’s model, which was first published in 1975, family background, personal disposition and schooling are integrated with one another, and this interaction ultimately has a direct influence upon goal commitment and institutional commitment. Goal commitment refers to the commitment to obtain a degree, while institutional commitment refers to the individual commitment to a specific college. Goal commitment tends to have a direct influence upon academic performance while intellectual development has an influence on academic integration. Peer and faculty integration reinforces each other and ultimately lead to social integration (Tinto, 1975). Both social and academic integration have an influence upon institutional and goal commitment, which in turn results in student retention, as depicted in his well-known “Theoretical Model of College Withdrawal.”

Tinto's (1975) Theoretical Model of College Withdrawal

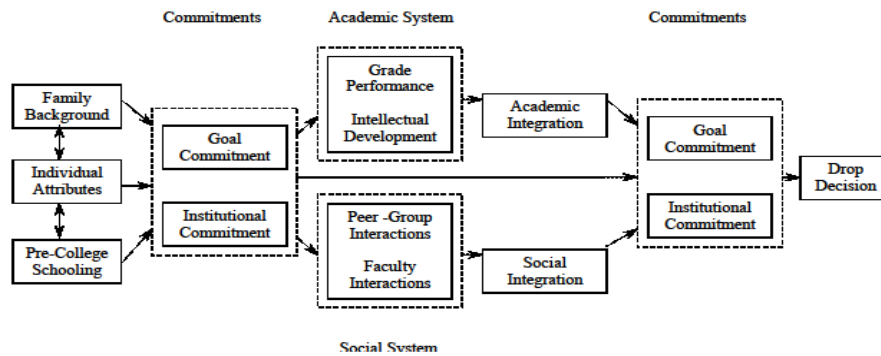


FIGURE 2. A Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure

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Stated clearly in his book, *Leaving College* (1975), the origin of Tinto's (1975) conceptual model is deeply rooted in the foundation of Durkheim's (1897) suicide theory Van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage framework, as well as Spady's (1970) model of the student dropout process.

The explanatory theory underlying Tinto's model came originally from the research of William Spady (1971), who saw an analogy between committing suicide and dropping out of school. In both instances, according to Spady, a person leaves a social system. The French philosopher and sociologist Émile Durkheim (1897) had found that some people committed suicide because they lacked the values of the social system in which they participated, and because they were not supported by a social network. At the core of his model, Tinto borrowed Spady's use of Durkheim's suicide theory to identify the concepts of academic and social integration. Academic integration was thought to be the result of sharing academic values, and social integration was viewed as the result of

developing friendships with other students and faculty members. In Tinto's model, a student who does not achieve some level of academic or social integration is likely to leave school.

Tinto's theory also borrowed from work on the rites of passage by Van Gennep (1960), which includes a three-phase process of separation, transition, and incorporation. In stage one, separation, the individual becomes separated from past associations and a decline occurs in interactions with members of the group from which the individual originated. Specific ceremonies marked outmoded views and norms of the old group. In stage two, transition, the individual begins to interact in new ways with members of the new group in which membership is being sought. Rituals such as isolation, training, and ordeals may be used to facilitate separation which ensures that the individual acquires the knowledge and skills of the new group. In the third stage, incorporation, the individual adapts on new patterns of interaction with members of the new group and establishes competent membership. Though able to interact with members of the old group, individuals now do so only as members of the new group. In this stage, individuals become fully integrated into the culture of the new group (Tinto, 1987). Tinto (1987) stressed that it was "possible to envision the process of student persistence as functionally similar to that of becoming incorporated in the life of human communities..." (p. 94).

Tinto's original theory involved five specific factors that contribute to student retention: (1) a student's pre-entry attributes (prior schooling and family background); (2) goals and commitment (the student's individual aspirations in the institution); (3) experience at the institution (academics and faculty and peer interactions); (4) external commitments while at the institution; (5) integration both academically and socially.

Many variables have been identified, each with its operational definitions. Academic integration included (1) grade point average (GPA) for the freshman year; (2) satisfaction with intellectual development; (3) the student's perception of having a positive experience of intellectual growth. Social integration included (1) involvement in extra-curricular activities; (2) contacts with faculty; (3) having close personal relationships with other students; and (4) interactions with faculty which had an influence on career goals and personal growth. Institutional commitment included: (1) confidence that the student made the right decision in choosing to attend this university. Goal commitment included the variables: (1) the highest expected academic degree; and (2) the importance of graduating from college; and (3) the rank of the enrolled institutions as a college choice; and (4) confidence that the choice is the right one. Intent to persist included (1) the likelihood that the student would enroll at this university the following fall (Pascarella & Terenzi, 1986).

All these variables are important indicators of whether or not students are satisfied with their academic learning and social campus life, which likely leads to the decision to persist or drop out. However, while most of these variables can still be applied to my study of Chinese doctoral students, such as their contact with faculty and other students, and their goal of gaining expected academic degree, some others are not applicable for international doctoral students. For example, instead of GPA for freshman as Tinto's research primarily focused on four year college students, capability of doing academic research and producing research papers, or numbers of times attending and presenting at academic conferences will make more sense for doctoral students.

B. Critiques of Tinto's Retention/Departure Model

Tinto's (1975; 1987; 1993) model of student retention has been widely quoted and tested to study how college students become academically and socially integrated into college life. Accordingly, his model has increasingly drawn critiques in the past two decades. After carefully reviewing literature on student retention and critiques of Tinto's model, it has come to my attention that there are at least three conceptual problems with his social/academic integration theory.

The biggest problem with Tinto's model is his over-emphasis on individual responsibility over institutional responsibility (Tierney, 1992) and his focus on the individual at the expense of the group. This can be best seen from Tinto (1987)'s statement that "The problems associated with separation and transition to college are conditions that, though stressful, need not in themselves lead to departure. It is the individual's response to those conditions that finally determines staying or leaving. Though external assistance may make a difference, it cannot do so without the individual's willingness to see the adjustments through"(p. 98). It is Tinto's belief that social and/or academic integration theory is that individuals, not the system, are responsible for departure.

Holding a different idea, Tierney (1992) argues that Tinto tends to approach the concept of integration in an individualist, rather than a collective manner. According to Tierney, it is important to be aware of the distinctions among cultures, differences among students with regard to class, race, gender and sexual orientation, and the role of group members and the institution in assisting students to succeed. Similarly, Nora, Kraemer, and Itzen (1997) and Nora and Cabrera (1993) argue that current quantitative models

must include factors that are able to differentiate among racial and ethnic groups or must include measurement approaches that provide indicators of constructs that reflect racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. In a study of student persistence at an exclusively Hispanic two-year institution, Nora, Kraemer, and Itzen (1997) employed a different, and more culturally sensitive set of items that more closely reflected the manner in which they found out that Hispanic student became more integrated on their campus.

Tierney (2000) further captures the idea that integration needs to be modified to include institutional adaptation:

Rather than a model that assumes that students must fit into what is often an alien culture and that they leave their own cultures, I argue the opposite. The challenge is to develop ways in which an individual's identity is affirmed, honored, and incorporated into the organization's culture.(p. 219)

Tinto's work focused on traditional four year college students, freshman in particular. For most traditional students, who are predominantly White, they often come from upper- to middle-class backgrounds, and come from families where at least one parent has attended college and where the expectation of college attendance is well established. For these groups of students, going to a college is just normal rite of passage. With cultural capital accumulated, it is easier for them to understand values and traditions of being successful in college.

But it is a whole different picture for nontraditional students (Terenzini et al., 1994), who likely find it more difficult to survive and get involved in college as they are often come from working-class backgrounds, and may have to work

full or part-time. They are mainly from minority groups (Terenzini, Allison, Gregg, Jalomo, Millar, Rendón, & Upcraft, 1993). To many scholars who study minority students, great differences between traditional and nontraditional students, which are believed to lead to different integration experience, were not well explained in the original conception of student retention theory.

Tinto's model has been called into question partially because it was only developed for a traditional college population (Tierney, 1992). For example, it remains to be explored whether or not it is an appropriate model for a study of Chinese international students studying and living at U.S. universities, as pre-entry attributes, goals and commitment, and institutional experiences may differ greatly from those of traditional four-year American college students. As a result, they may undergo significantly different personal and normative integration processes. Due to considerable cultural differences, the transition from studying in a Chinese academic setting to an American academic setting may present great difficulties for Chinese students.

Another major critique of Tinto's model focuses on Tinto's use of "rites of passage". Tierney criticized it by making a different claim: that ethnic and racial minority students (particularly Native Americans) withdraw from college because they are required to adapt to an environment defined by the dominant culture. Furthermore, they must adapt as individuals rather than as a group, which may violate elements of their cultural orientation. However, Tinto's model seems to suggest that students, as part of their rite of passage, must leave behind their own cultures if they are not of the dominant culture of the university to which they wish to become a part. Tierney's criticism thus suggests that one needs to think of academic and social integration occurring without the

erasure of one's own cultural uniqueness—in other words, there must be a way for students to develop a sense of academic and social connection to their institution without losing site of their own culture. This suggests that institutions may need to change and embrace elements of multiculturalism or cultural diversity or that some aspect of the organization may play a mediating role, as in a student organization.

An additional shortcoming of the Tinto's model, as well as Tierney's critique of it, is that neither Tinto nor Tierney specifically acknowledge the potential role students and student groups may play as key agents of social and academic integration. Through a critique of Tinto's model, Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista (2005) stated that Tinto's model "fails to acknowledge the importance of the role students and student groups play in mediating their own environment" (p. 609). They developed a new theoretical perspective by proposing the addition of new conceptual points concerning cultural capital, social capital, collectivism and social praxis derived from their study of student-initiated retention projects (CIRPs). A key aspect of their argument useful to my study is the emphasis they placed on the role of students as agents for institutional change and specifically in terms of their role in supporting student retention. I consider this key to my analysis of the Chinese Student and Scholar Association (CSSA) as they too, I presumed, play a key role in supporting Chinese graduate students. Essentially, Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista contend that the Tinto model places too much emphasis on the background characteristics students bring to college and whether those characteristics (and initial commitments) "fit" into the academic and social environment of the institution. The Tinto model thus neglects the role students and student organizations may play as mediating forces, potentially altering the campus environment and culture.

To examine the role student leaders or organizers in the Chinese Students and Scholars Association play in helping Chinese doctoral students with their academic and social adjustment, it is essential to view students as socializing agents and as sources of academic and social adjustment. The previous research on students and their academic integration, as revealed in Tinto's model, may have underestimated the role and importance of students and peers as agents of support (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005).

In addition to Tinto's retention model, which focuses on academic and social integration of college students, Astin's (1985) theory of student involvement is perhaps the most widely adopted college impact model of student development, in which he placed great emphasis on the role of peer support. According to involvement theory, "the individual plays a central role in determining the extent and nature of growth according to the quality of effort or involvement with the resources provided by the institution" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 51). He defined involvement as "the amount of energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 27). Indeed, research indicates that the more time and energy students devote to learning and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater the achievement, satisfaction with educational experiences, and persistence in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987).

According to his student involvement theory, students' involvement in student government, and involvement in a peer group is associated with greater than average increases in political liberalism, artistic interests, and status needs as well as satisfaction with student friendships. Astin (1984) posited that it is beneficial for students to become actively involved in student government and interact frequently with their peers. Thus,

Astin's work also points toward places emphasis on the potential socializing role of student organizations such as CSSA.

Different from Tinto's model, which tends to better fit quantitative analysis, mostly regression analysis, I chose to adopt qualitative research methods for my study. I did not follow the typical implementation of his model, mostly because of the concerns raised by those critiquing it, including Tierney (1992) and Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista (2005). To be more specific, I altered some of Tinto's variables relating to the model's five key categories and interpreted them from a more qualitative perspective. This enabled me to design a study in which I presumably could collect meaningful data through interviews and observation. More specifically, I organized my variables (and appropriate interview questions) in terms of background information, organizational information, academic interaction, social communication, and external/environmental influences. In what follows, I summarize these variables and how I conceptualized them.

Chinese doctoral students' background information: These included family support, previous higher education experience, pre-doctoral academic success, educational goals, previous living or studying experience overseas. For Chinese doctoral students, it is also important to have their background information, such as their marriage status, spouse support, church and community support, and previous positive interracial/intercultural contact.

Organizational information: These included their financial aid, orientation programs by both university, department, or CSSA, affiliation with campus organizations, or organizations of their own ethnicity origin, housing and transportation, counseling, staff attitudes toward students, role models in staff and faculty, and a

supportive environment. It is also important to include information such as admission, child care, campus safety, and availability of services after hours.

Academic interaction: For Chinese doctoral students, information were collected such as courses offered, faculty interaction (both in class and out of class), advising, general skills programs (e.g. English tutoring/help, and writing centers), campus resources (e.g., library, athletic, and tax report seminar), different challenges by majors, and academic integration, as well as expectations for individual faculty member attention.

Social communication: Among the social interaction affecting retention are close friends on campus, peer culture, social involvement, informal contact with faculty, identification with a group on campus, and social integration. For Chinese doctoral students, whether or not there is a positive intercultural/interracial environment may have impact on their satisfaction of social integration.

External/environmental influences: Different by individual Chinese doctoral students, some external factors might be vital to their successful integration, such as visa status, financial resources, significant other elsewhere, family responsibilities, getting married, and hours working on/off campus per week, or if their job is or isn't contributing to their research.

The fact that Tinto's theory of social and academic integration still is of some value relates in part to the issue of equal access for people from different ethnicity groups. It has also been interwoven with issues of multiculturalism and diversity (Liu, 2002). The relevance of Tinto's theory to today's campus culture is an important issue, and it is particularly true in the studies of international students in the United States as the multicultural theme of contemporary campus culture has great significance in the

research of retention of these groups of students. However, my use of the theory comes with some important adjustments, as proposed by the critiques of his model. Hence, my utilization really reflects some of the new ideas that have been brought to the more recent student retention literature.

In summary, given the related research and theoretical perspectives I brought to this study, it has become clear to me that a rigorous qualitative study was needed to better understand the social and academic adjustment of Chinese international doctoral students and the potential role of a student organization as a mediating force. Thus, in what follows I delineate a rigorous plan for a qualitative exploitation of these issues.

II. Methods

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain Chinese doctoral students' academic and social integration to American universities. This section of the chapter presents the research design or methods that were used to collect and analyze data relating to my key research questions. Thus, I begin by first delineating my five key research questions as well as related hypotheses used in helping me to frame my data analysis and interpretations. Here, it is important to note that I am not employing my hypotheses in the logical-deductive manner typically associated with quantitative research design; instead, I tend to think of these hypotheses more as educated hunches, upon which a preponderance of my qualitative data will help me to evaluate their usefulness or lack of usefulness in explaining the experiences of Chinese doctoral students and the role of CSSA.

A. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Five key research questions served to guide my analysis of the experiences of Chinese international doctoral students and the role of the Chinese Student and Scholar Association. In what follows, I delineate these key questions:

1) What are the academic and social challenges that Chinese doctoral students face in their adjustment (integration) to a U.S. university? What different strategies do they employ in coping with their new environments, including the ways in which they are able to access various resources?

2) What role does the Chinese Student and Scholar Association play in support of Chinese international doctoral students and their academic and social adjustment to their U.S. universities? In what ways does the CSSA promote elements of Chinese culture at the respective university in a manner supportive of Chinese students?

3) How are Chinese doctoral students' national and cultural identities challenged and potentially reconfigured in light of their experiences at U.S. universities?

4) What organizational differences related to the academic and social integration of Chinese doctoral students may be observed between U.S. universities located in two distinct regions of the country?

5) What disciplinary differences are revealed among Chinese doctoral students that relate to their academic and social integration?

Based on the above research questions, and grounded in the theory and literature review framing this dissertation, I proposed the following hypotheses (given that I proposed a qualitative study in which “testing” hypotheses is not the ideal goal, it may be better to think of these as “educated hunches” that served to frame my data collection and

analysis).

Hypothesis 1: Chinese international doctoral students face unique challenges in integrating to the academic and social spheres of a university. These challenges in part are the consequence of cultural differences between Chinese culture and the culture of American universities. Consequently, I expected that some of my data would highlight various points of confusion, contradictions, and misinterpretations experienced by the students and linked to cultural differences.

Hypothesis 2: The Chinese Student and Scholar Association serves a mediating role in helping Chinese international doctoral students in their adjustment to their American universities. This role involves both helping students to become more integrated academically and socially, but also involves creating programs and activities at the university that are more reflective of key aspects of Chinese culture. Consequently, I expected that my analysis of the role of CSSA would reveal various programs and activities designed to help Chinese students connect to the university socially and academically, while also offering events and programs designed to express and value Chinese culture. The latter efforts by CSSA may actually have a modest influence on the overall culture of the universities under study and are suggestive of CSSA's role in advancing a multicultural (perhaps intercultural) campus community.

Hypothesis 3: Given that academic and social integration involve a degree of learning and adjustment at a university situated in a different cultural context from their homeland, Chinese international doctoral students will likely have experiences leading them to rethink various facets of their own national and cultural identities. Consequently, I expected students in this study to voice some of their thoughts and perhaps

reconsiderations relating to their sense of national and cultural identity. Some may question various facets of their past experiences and at other times discuss experiences that reinforce their sense of national and cultural identity.

Hypothesis 4: This hypothesis derives in part from my literature review highlighting the role geography plays in shaping American culture and its institutions. Accordingly, this study should reveal some institutional differences between the two universities in which my study was conducted (UCLA and Indiana University) in terms of the experiences of Chinese international doctoral students. Consequently, I expected that some of my data would highlight differential challenges experienced by Chinese international doctoral students that are related to geographic factors of being located in the mid-west versus the west coast regions of the U.S.

Hypothesis 5: This hypothesis also derives from my reading of the literature on U.S. universities and various differences linked to disciplinary affiliation. I expected that my findings will reveal some differences linked to students' integration to the university on the basis of academic major. Consequently, I expected subtle patterns to emerge linked to academic major that reveal differences in the academic and social integration challenges Chinese doctoral students to face.

B. Qualitative Case Study Design

This study used qualitative research methods in the form of two case studies (Yin, 2003). The principle premise of case study method is to better understand some complex social phenomena—while retaining the holistic and meaningful particularities of real-life circumstances (Yin, 2003). In this study, the intent was to observe, describe and explain

Chinese doctoral students' integration into universities, which are geographically differently located in the United States. Qualitative case study (Yin, 2003) is most often referred to as interpretative case study (Merriam, 1998). Such case studies are “used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). In this multiple-case study, data were gathered from each selected doctoral student at his or her university using their semi-structured interviews transcription, their communications records on several Chinese social networks, Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) records and documents.

Case study method is a logical sequence that connect empirical data to a study's research questions and ultimately, to its conclusions (Yin, 2003). Moreover, this design is a logical plan for getting from here (initial set of questions) to there (some set of conclusions-answers). “The main purpose of case study is to help to avoid the situation which the evidence does not address the initial research questions” (Yin, 2003, p. 21). Ethnographical case studies emphasize more “how” and “why” type questions than “what” type questions (Yin, 2003).

C. Research Sites

A country as vast as the United States, it is clear that regions that are separated by large distances will be noticeably different. Not only great differences in climate and landscape, but also in the people who live in each of these regions can be noted. These regional differences, such as the states in the midsection of the country and in the West, have displayed different cultural and social differences (Goldin & Katz, 2001). For

instance, the West has more varied mixture of immigrants than any other regions. Many studies have examined the geographical distributions and differences in American higher education: Richards and Rands (1965) found significant differences among different regions in the U.S. in terms of various junior colleges characteristics on factors such as cultural affluence, transfer emphasis, business orientation, and learning experiences, etc. In order to better understand the academic, social, and cultural integration experiences of Chinese graduate students in geographically different parts of the U.S., the researcher chose the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) located in the Western coast and Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) in Mid-West of the United States as research sites of this study.

Both UCLA and IUB are large research universities, and both have significant numbers of Chinese graduate students: UCLA has 1,727 Chinese graduate students in the year of 2009 (Graduate Division, 2010) while at IUB, the number of students from China at IUB increased 57% between 2009 and 2010; since 2006 that increase on the IUB campus has been more than 300%, from 386 to 1,582. Among them, there are 292 doctoral students in fall, 2010 (IStart, 2011). Chinese graduate students are the largest international group in both universities. To conduct continuous formative and summative research, Chinese students' needs, adjustment problems, studying, and living experiences in these two U.S. universities will be compared and contrasted.

D. Purposive Sampling

I sampled 15 students at each site, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Indiana University Bloomington (IUB). A public invitation calling for research

volunteers were posted on the websites of CSSA and the Office of International Affairs (OIA) at each university. They were purposively sampled because their studies are in diverse and different disciplinary areas at both universities. The participants' gender and age were also considered in order to provide maximum diversity. Furthermore, through purposive sampling, I sampled about a half from the social sciences/humanities/professional programs and half from engineering/hard sciences.

I also sought a small sub-sample (4 of the sample of 15 at each site) that was not involved much at all in CSSA programs and activities to compare their experiences with those who were comparatively more involved.

Additionally, I interviewed 4 CSSA leaders or student organizers from each university. Approximately a total of 38 students – 30 doctoral subjects and 8 CSSA student organizers will be interviewed.

I also interviewed the director of Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars at UCLA and the director of Office of International Affairs at IUB.

To gain access to these Chinese doctoral students in their various universities, approvals were sought from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) of UCLA and Indiana University. All 38 Chinese students were asked to volunteer to participate in this study and asked to sign consent forms indicating their willingness to do so. The procedures implemented throughout the study were in accordance with IRB approvals from the respective universities.

E. Data Collection

Data were collected during the 2009 to 2010 academic year. Three types of data

in this study were collected, formal and structured interviews, observation, and documents. Among them, formal and structured interviews with the participants are the primary research method. All doctoral student subjects were asked to answer up to twenty questions about their learning and living experience at their university (See Attachment One for the Interview Protocol); research subjects of CSSA leaders or organizers were asked ten questions (See Attachment Two for the Interview Protocol), which focused on their observation and understanding of how Chinese students as a whole are adapting to American culture at their university and what role the CSSA plays in assisting that adaptation process. I used another interview protocol while conducting interviews with both directors of international student service office, namely, the Dashew Center at UCLA and OIA at IUB (See Attachment Three for the Interview Protocol).

Two sets of question protocols, one for doctoral students and the other for CSSA leaders, are derived from the literature on student diversity, challenges, retention, and factors associated with, as Tinto's (1975) defines, goal commitment, which refers to the commitment to obtain a degree, and institutional commitment, which refers to the individual commitment to a specific college. Interview questions focused on definitions of an inclusive culture, satisfaction issues, key aspects of doctoral program experience, factors impacting on success and areas needing development in different programs at different universities. More importantly, some interview questions, as I hoped, directed me to see the essential nature of how Chinese doctoral students experience the academy and American society as well as their involvement with student organizations, such as CSSA.

The interviews were conducted in Chinese and transcribed and translated into English at a later stage. The length of the interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes and were all tape-recorded. According to Yin (2003), the researcher has two jobs in conducting interviews: (a) to follow the interview case study protocol, and (b) to ask the researcher's actual (conversational) questions. A combination of open-ended questioning in which the researcher asked participants factual questions as well as their opinions about people, places, and events related to their potential assimilation into the university and American society (Yin, 2003) using a face-to-face structured interview approach in which the participants will be interviewed for a short period of time (approximately 60 to 90-minutes) (Yin, 2003). In these cases, the interviews remain open ended and assume a conversational manner. Moreover, the interviews will be guided by a pre-established set of questions. For this study, the specific questions were modified and carefully worded for relevancy to the current Chinese doctoral students at both universities, their academic and social interactions with faculty, staff, and peers, as well as their participations in student organizations.

To study CSSA, I visited and observed CSSA executive meetings, parties, seminars, and events held by the CSSA committee at both universities. Handwriting observation field notes were taken. Documents from CSSA, the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars at UCLA, the Office of International Affairs at Indiana University, as well as the Graduate Division at each university were also collected.

Given the increasing usage of internet and online communications, I have closely followed the Chinese BBS (A Bulletin Board System, or BBS, is a computer system

running software that allows users to connect and log in to the system using a terminal program. Once logged in, a user can perform functions such as uploading and downloading software and data, reading news and bulletins, and exchanging messages with other users, either through electronic mail or in public message boards.) designed and maintained by CSSA at both universities for its Chinese fellow members. I have also collected a year-long electronic mailing list information from Dashew Center at UCLA, and OIA of Indiana University intended for its international students and scholars.

F. Validity and Reliability

A major concern commonly voiced by conventional scientists regarding qualitative types of inquiry is whether or not the findings from such analyses are trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asked questions such as: “How can an inquirer persuade the audience and also self that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to or worth taking into account?” “What arguments could be raised or criteria invoked or what questions asked would be persuasive regarding the issue at stake?”

Yin (2003) described three tactics which are available to increase validity in case study method. The first is the use of multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), in a manner, encourages convergent lines of inquiry, and this tactic is relevant during data collection. Triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives to receive and analyze information. Triangulation does hold some cautionary ground for the qualitative inquirer, who must at all times remember that it is a process directed at a judgment of the accuracy of specific data items as opposed to one concerned with seeking universal truth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of triangulation is to explore differing perceptions not to

determine the “truth” of the matter under investigation (Merriam, 1998). This study utilized different sources of data, which included interview transcriptions, field observation from participants, BBS messages, and e-mailing lists from CSSA, and so on.

A second tactic is to establish a chain of evidence (reliability) and relevance during data collection. In this study, the researcher consistently followed the same procedures of data collection and focused the same case study protocol. The goal was to minimize errors and biases (Yin, 2003).

Member checking, as the third tactic, was used to reduce the impact of subjective bias, while establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2000). For member checking, the researcher took data and tentative interpretations back to the people (Chinese doctoral students) from whom they were derived and asked them if the results were plausible (Merriam, 1998). That is, all tapes are transcribed and sent back to each participant for him or her to confirm, which includes getting the evidence from informants by the researcher or by repeated interpretations (Morse, 1994). This process was used to ensure that the transcribed data accurately represented the participants’ experiences in studying within their doctoral programs.

G. Role Management

For most researchers conducting qualitative research, it is essential for him or her to systematically reflect on their own role and ties to the research context because “the personal-self becomes inseparable from the research-self” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Being a Chinese doctoral student myself at UCLA since 2005, I always care about what is happening in the Chinese community (which I think of as “my community”), and I

have been actively involved in the CSSA at UCLA. Having served on the executive committee of CSSA in 2006, I helped host several events aimed at assisting new Chinese doctoral students on campus. I have made a great number of friends while serving them. As a result, it has been helpful for me to recruit participants and gain access to field observation.

I myself being as a member of this Chinese community have been one of primary reasons that I wanted to do this study. However, at the same time, I have been fully aware that my personal experience may also lead to personal biases on some particular perceptions and judgments. Another limitation came from the fact that I needed to translate my interview and field-notes originally taken in Chinese into English. It was very difficult, many times, to fully catch the meanings of conversations especially when the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, and when slang and sayings are frequently used. The accuracy of translation from Chinese to English might have lead to losses of meanings.

H. Data Analysis and Category Construction

My analysis of the data began while the interviews were transcribed. For this study, my challenge was to move beyond basic descriptions to data interpretations; that is, “the challenge is to construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across the preponderance” of the empirical evidence (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 139). Categories and subcategories were constructed through constant comparative method. I was mindful that a unit of data was any meaningful segment of data, which can be as small as a word a participant used to describe a feeling or phenomenon, or as large

as several pages of field notes describing a particular incident (Merriam, 1998).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a unit of analysis meets two criteria. First, it should be heuristic, which means the unit should reveal information relevant to the study and stimulate the reader to think beyond the particular bit of information. Second, the unit should be “the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself” (Guba, 1985, p. 345). A unit of data “must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out” (Guba, 1985, p. 345).

In this study, category construction began with reading the participants’ interview transcripts, field observation notes, and e-mailing messages (Merriam, 1998). As I read down through the transcript, for example, I jotted down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins.

These notations were bits of data that struck me as interesting, potentially relevant, or important to the study (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). After working through the entire transcript in this manner, I went back over those marginal notes and comments and attempted to group those comments and notes that seem to go together (Merriam, 1998). For all participants’ set of data, I followed it in exactly the same process as just outlined above. I checked to see all lists of grouping which the researcher extracted from the first transcript in subsequent data sets. I then made a separate list of comments, terms, and notes from the data set and then compared the lists from across data sets (Merriam, 1998). Next, categories were named.

The naming of thematic categories can come from at least three sources, including the researcher, the participants, or sources outside the study, such as the literature in a

particular area of inquiry (Merriam, 1998). In this multiple-case study, I came up with terms, concepts, and categories that reflected what I gleaned from the data (Merriam, 1998). In addition, the data were organized into schemes suggested by the participants themselves. This approach required an analysis of the verbal categories used by the participants with regard to the complexity of their realities during their doctoral programs at different universities.

I. Cross-Case Analysis

Multiple-case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases. In a multiple-case study, there are two commonly used stages of analysis, the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003). Procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data have direct linkages to address the research questions that guided the study. For this study, within-case analysis and cross case analysis (Yin, 2003) using tabular materials and constant comparative procedures to analyze the participants' interview responses. Specific to within-case analysis, each case was treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Data were gathered so the researcher could learn as much about the contextual and outside environment as possible that have a bearing on the case (Merriam, 1998). Once the analysis of each case was completed, cross-case analysis was initiated (Yin, 2003). The researcher sought to build a general explanation that fit each of the individual cases, although the cases varied in detail (Yin, 2003). Further the researcher sought to glean contradictions and commonalities that occurred across several cases, UCLA versus Indiana University Bloomington, to understand how the participants' individual circumstances represented other's realities in different institutions, which led

to the development of full, rich descriptions and explanations of the phenomena under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

III. Summary

Tinto's model of student retention has been widely quoted and tested to study how college students become academically and socially integrated into college life. The purpose of this study was to describe and explain Chinese doctoral students' academic and social integration to American universities. Therefore, using Tinto's retention model as the research framework for this study seemed to be a natural and organic choice. However, I was being critical of this model firstly because Chinese doctoral students, the targeted population in this study, are so different from the four-year undergraduate students that Tinto was originally studying at. Another major problem with Tinto's model is his over-emphasis on individual responsibility over institutional responsibility and his focus on the individual at the expense of the group. In this study, I intended to look at the role of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association in mediating the integration of Chinese graduate students.

In this chapter, I presented the research design or methods that were used to collect and analyze data relating to my key research questions in order to examine the experience of Chinese doctoral students by conducting continuous formative and summative research in Chinese doctoral students' needs, adjustment problems, academic study, and living experiences in two geographically different U.S. universities, UCLA and Indiana University (IU). In the form of two case studies, 15 doctoral students, 5 Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) organizers, and university

administrators at each site have been structurally interviewed. Three other types of data have also been collected, ethnographical observation notes, CSSA website and mailing information analyses, and university documents regarding international students. In this qualitative research study, I used inductive methods to analyze the data.

Chapter Four:

Findings

The goal of this study was to better understand the academic and social (including cultural facets) challenges that Chinese doctoral students face as they adjust to and integrate into a U.S. university, including the diverse strategies they employ in coping with their new environments. Additionally, I explored the role that the Chinese Students and Scholars Association plays in supporting Chinese international doctoral students during this period of academic and social transition. Accordingly, this findings chapter contains two key sections: the first on the specific challenges faced by Chinese doctoral students and the second on the role of the CSSA in supporting them.

I. Challenges Faced by Chinese Doctoral Students

After careful analysis based primarily on research participants' interview data, as well as their recorded interactions with THE CSSA, I discovered several major challenges that many Chinese doctoral students faced while transitioning into their new environment, most notably financial, academic, and social – both in terms of the relationships with academic advisors, and the struggle to socially integrate into the surrounding American culture. In what follows, I share some of the data demonstrating the importance and predominance of these four critical challenges faced my research participants.

A. Financial Challenges

The financial situations of this study's participants vary greatly, dividing distinctly into two groups. For doctoral students in science majors, particularly lab-based fields, such as biology, chemistry, biochemistry, physics, mathematics, etc., their school guaranteed continued financial support through the completion of their Ph.D. and stated as much clearly in their admission letters. For these students, financial support was never a major concern. Many other students, especially those studying social sciences or humanities, encountered instability in financial support since day one. These students worried about how to secure a Teaching Assistant (TA) position, or a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) position at UCLA (on a quarterly basis), or a Research Assistant position at IUB (on a semesterly basis). In many cases, the challenge of keeping a position amplified the challenge of finding a position. Participants in this study who did not receive adequate funding from either their native governments or from their current universities struggled with financial issues throughout their doctoral studies.

Many students did not receive funding from either their governments or their universities. These participants experienced some degree of frustration during their doctoral studies. To examine a specific case, Mingsheng has not received any funding from his university to aid him with his doctoral program. He has spent four years on his academic program, but has yet to begin his candidacy exam. He will spend at least another two to three years completing his doctoral degree without funding. He stated that he had no idea when his studies would finally end.

Qing, a doctoral student at IUB, explained the frustration and financial struggles that forced him to return to China in order to conduct his dissertation. In 2007, after being

in his program for six years, he lost his university funding and has been required to pay his own tuition. He struggled to manage financially, relying on his parents to pay for his housing, food, and, at times, to help him with fees at Indiana University in both 2008 and 2009. This was too great a financial burden for him and his family. Thus, he decided to return to China to conduct his dissertation. He thought that returning to China would afford him the opportunity to make some money and work on his dissertation simultaneously.

Several students, particularly those who did receive funding from their universities, revealed that their financial support opportunities served as motivators, encouraging them in their doctoral studies. Consistent and ample financial support from universities or departments helped them continue their doctoral studies, as they did not want to ask their parents to help pay for their tuition and living expenses. This finding is consistent with previous findings, demonstrating that financial aid serves as an important criterion in the process of choosing a college (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997).

In nearly all of the interviews, the students pointed out financial worries as their greatest concern. Most participants in this study, whether sponsored by the Chinese government, by their families, or by scholarships from a university, were under some kind of financial pressure. As one participant said, “For Chinese students, financial problems are number one. Money is our main concern. This city on the western coast, where the university is located, is well known for its expensive cost of living. What is even worse is that we, as international students, have to pay the Non-Resident fee every quarter.” Another student commented, “I like this university a lot, but what I do not like

is the fact that a lot of graduate students are not fully financially guaranteed. We have to apply for different RA or TA positions every quarter, which is very time-consuming and frustrating.”

Due to financial difficulties, it is not surprising that most Chinese students have rather modest lifestyles. They have to struggle to survive with limited financial resources. As one of the CSSA leaders revealed:

Financial problems are a headache for us Chinese students. It’s our major concern. ... All of us have to be extremely careful about our spending. We cannot buy what we want, even what we need. We have to look at the price first before we buy anything. It is not unusual for three or even four Chinese students to share a modest two-bedroom apartment. It is not unusual for some of us to have several jobs, to work weekends, holidays. ... We are struggling to survive.

Some of these students have to work after school doing heavy labor and earning minimum wage just to support basic living. Because of American immigration laws, they are banned from obtaining work permits allowing them to work off-campus legally. In order to survive, they often work off-campus illegally, risking their doctoral program should they be discovered and sent back to their home country.

Economic support not only determines how these students live in the States, but also how they choose American universities for continuing their studies. One Chinese student was very straightforward, stating: “I would go wherever I could get money. This

university offers me a teaching assistantship, so I am here. You know, no money, no nothing.”

In general, a student’s financial situation is closely related to and can have a negative impact on other aspects of life, such as participation in social activities, academic development, social interaction, and English language skills. Due to financial difficulties, “they have to work on weekends, holidays, or after school. . . . They do not have time to participate in many social activities.” In most cases, due to financial constraints, they also tend to live together, so they continue to speak Chinese all the time and have no opportunity to practice their English outside of class. Because their social interactions are often heavily centered within the Chinese community, many remain isolated from American culture.

Different research participants adopted different strategies. Some attempted to be very money conscious, saving as much as they could. One student with financial trouble soon after his arrival asked for a loan from a classmate who had arrived a few years earlier. The classmate gave him a stern lesson: “This is America. How can you walk around and ask for a loan? Here nobody will lend you money because you’re a friend.” Then he calmed down and added, “because we are old friends, the advice that I just gave you is free.”

Many Chinese students choose to have a rather modest lifestyle. As one of my research participants shared, “It is not unusual for three or even four Chinese students to share a modest two-bedroom apartment. Take me, for example, I live in the living room with less privacy, but I manage to save a couple of hundred dollars every month.”

B. Academic Challenges

Academic challenges, particularly the language problem, became another recurrent theme as I analyzed the research data from this study. Many participants faced academic difficulties, such as struggles performing academically, interacting with academic advisors, writing papers and assignments, reading assigned textbooks, and orally presenting class assignments during their doctoral programs. In this section, I present the findings that speak to the major academic challenges that Chinese doctoral students in my study encountered, including a discussion of the reasons for the struggles and of the areas that caused these challenges. Chinese doctoral students often experience a lack of familiarity with American academic culture and struggle to relate to different practices within the academic community. A lack of English proficiency may further hinder academic performance. Moreover, Chinese doctoral students sometimes assume new roles such as teaching assistant (TA) or research assistant (RA), and the responsibilities associated with these roles often can be quite confusing to them. In what follows, I include and analyze some of the data relating to these issues.

1. Academic Culture

Although American higher education is well known for being diverse, by comparing it to Chinese higher education system and practices, it is still possible to characterize some of the base elements of American academic culture. One fundamental purpose of American colleges and universities is to create knowledge by way of academic freedom accompanied by a critical spirit of questioning and inquiry. In order to pursue knowledge, faculty and students are encouraged to discuss and debate questions.

Universities are places that equip students with knowledge, skills, and the ability and desire to pursue knowledge on their own.

American academic culture manifests itself clearly in its approach to classroom participation. Many Chinese doctoral students in the study reflected that when they first began taking American classes, they did not feel comfortable with open discussions; in part it was because they were familiar with a different set of rules for classroom participation. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) noted that students from an individualistic culture tend to actively participate in classroom activities, asking and answering questions and engaging in debate. On the other hand, students from a collectivistic culture are less likely to actively participate in class discussion. American classroom culture is highly individualistic. In contrast, Chinese students, who are from a collective culture, were not trained to actively participate in classroom activities, preferring to avoid open confrontation. In this new world of the American university, however, students are penalized for a lack of participation. In addition, there are rules for how to appropriately take the floor and the proper amount eye contact to make (Robinson, 1992), and it is highly possible that many Chinese students are neither familiar nor proficient with these rules.

Academic culture may also be seen in the learning experience. American higher education values critical inquiry while higher education institutions in other cultures may value rote memorization. Having become accustomed to rote memorization, some international students do not feel comfortable with American instructional methods. Pratt (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) also pointed out that in China, the learning focuses on acquisition of skills and knowledge, rather than upon questioning and

challenging the status quo. Several participants in this study shared similar experiences, noting their struggle to think critical and how challenging it was for them to dare to question and debate both professors and peers analytically and intellectually.

Overall, I found that academic culture manifests itself in every aspect of university life in the United States, ranging from the faculty-student relationship to the learning experience proper. Initially, Chinese students can be overwhelmed by the differences in academic culture and encounter many related problems.

On the other hand, American colleges and universities provide all kinds of support to their students, such as orientation programs, academic advisors, and career centers. Since higher education systems in other cultures tend to provide support in different ways, international students often do not even know of these supporting agents and programs, and thus may not take advantage of them.

2. Lack of English Proficiency

In addition to students' lack of familiarity with American academic culture, the frequent lack of English proficiency adds yet another degree of difficulty for international students attempting to navigate the foreign academic culture. The English language proves to be a major hurdle for many international students. Sharma's study of foreign students attending North Carolina (as cited in Spaulding & Flack, 1976) found that the most difficult academic challenges were "giving oral reports, participating in class discussions, taking notes in class, understanding lectures and preparing written reports" (p.47). A lack of linguistic proficiency lies at the root of all of these problems, and the Chinese doctoral students in this study shared similar experiences.

When these Chinese students were asked about the most challenging part of studying in the U.S., the most frequently identified issue was their lack of proficiency with the English language – nearly every participant identified language or communication as his or her main problem. In order to successfully adapt to American culture, Chinese students must master both formal and conversational English. The participants brought up a number of specific issues concerning their ability to speak English – “[My English] is okay for social purposes. Academically, I need some help”; “Public speaking creates some tension for me”; “If I go to the store, I have no problem, but if I go to class, I have a hard time participating in discussions”; and “I can only understand about half of the lectures. I need to spend a lot of time just to read a book.” These results strongly support the findings of Henderson et al. (1993), which state that the most common academic problems experienced by international students have to do with language barriers.

Chinese students in this study were generally well motivated, and they tried to do well academically. They genuinely appreciate the opportunity to study in the United States, so they study hard and purposefully, which leads to their academic success. However, due to language problems, Chinese students still commonly experience heavy academic pressure. What a native English speaker finds relatively easy becomes a nearly unbearable workload for those struggling with an unfamiliar language. Many participants shared that at the beginning of their studies in the United States, they had great difficulty understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, and (particularly) writing essays. This is especially true for those who major in the social sciences, since they deal linguistically (including taking more extensive notes and writing more essays) far more

than those who study the sciences. These various language barriers cause students to lose confidence in their ability to successfully complete their doctoral studies. Many fear that, because their native Chinese language and culture so heavily influence their understanding of the English language, they will fail to ever finish their doctorate.

In this study, most of the participants maintained an acceptable, or even strong, academic status, but a few students still worried about maintaining a certain GPA over the course of their doctoral studies. The many language barriers made it difficult for some to maintain the 3.0 GPA required by their respective graduate schools. When one of the doctoral students at IUB received a letter of academic deficiency, the possibility of losing the legal immigration status granted due to his participation in a higher education graduate program (non-immigrant student visa) terrified him.

He was not alone. Another student explained that he had difficulty maintaining his GPA during the first year of his doctoral program. He received a probation letter from the graduate school admissions office and subsequently lost his funding. Both participants stated that many Chinese students receive lower grades during their first academic year. The struggle with linguistic proficiency impacts the GPA and coursework of many Chinese students; some, however, do show noticeable improvements in their English proficiency. The longer they study in the U.S., the better their English becomes, and the better they perform academically.

Nonetheless, many continue to struggle with academic writing, and Angelova (1998) outlined the difficulties that it poses for international students. Academic writing is a complicated process wherein several layers of skills and competencies are required for success: grammar, formatting, a mastery of the American rhetorical style, a

knowledge of textual structure and organization, a large technical vocabulary, academic literacy, critical thinking abilities, and a complete mastery of the conventions of a specific discipline. Each of these layers presents a difficult hurdle for international students to clear, including Chinese students. Hull (1978) pointed out that, compared to other international students, Asian students rate their ability in academic English low with the following categories: “writing papers, reading speed, reading comprehension, speaking in class, understanding discussion, and understanding lectures” (p.60). Of this list, writing was universally acknowledged as the most challenging linguistic obstacle.

That said, neither understanding lectures nor speaking in class is an easy task for many international doctoral students. Dolan (1997) found from his study that the low levels of linguistic proficiency displayed by international students causes (at least in part) the lack of classroom participation frequently evident. Limited listening skills block their understanding of classroom lectures and discussions, and weak speaking abilities hinder their contributions during dialogue.

In this study, Chinese doctoral students disclosed their struggle with understanding class lectures, which made them reluctant to participate in class discussions. It is a common belief that U.S. academic culture provides a perspective that differs from Chinese students’ previous academic experiences. This study, however, found that most Chinese doctoral students were willing to conform and change their language in order to accommodate the culture of their respective doctoral programs and be successful, even at the expense of the linguistic values of their native countries. For example, one student explained that he changed his place of worship from a Chinese church to an American church because he felt that his English language proficiency

might be enhanced and improved by doing so. Thus, these students utilized various strategies to meet the requirements of their doctoral programs.

Some participants also discussed different instructional methods that they preferred and that seemed better suited to their linguistic challenges. Most of the students felt that smaller classes afforded them the opportunity for more personal interaction. One student said that in smaller classes “you have more opportunity to express yourself and are encouraged to do so by professors.” Another said, “a small class is more comfortable for me. Large classes sometimes do break up into groups, but some Americans still may not want to talk to me because of language problems.”

Chinese doctoral students, on the whole, face a great difficulty in using English for academic purposes. Comparatively speaking, such difficulties are more severe for students in arts and humanities than those in sciences. One participant, who just received her Ph.D. and went on to pursue her J.D. degree at UCLA, stated that, based on her experiences and her observations at UCLA, Chinese students studying humanities or social sciences had the biggest struggles with academic writing. For students in science and business communications, writing was not as challenging, since “conventional disciplinary discourses were relatively well defined”. Additionally, she said that in law school, most of these students were required to take remedial classes to improve their legal document writing skills because of their deficiency. By contrast, students studying the humanities were initially faced with the daunting task of heavy and intensive writing in complex genres with little preparation, but were better prepared and more proficient in later challenges.

Apart from differences in educational practices and difficulties in using English

for academic purposes, international graduate students sometimes have to assume new roles. Many Chinese doctoral students face greater difficulties and challenges while working as teaching assistants (TA's), rather than as graduate student researchers (GSR's) or research assistants (RA's). They suffered additional difficulties in their work setting because of their relative inexperience with the American academic culture, language, and pedagogical methods.

3. Issues of Losing Face

In addition to issues of linguistic proficiency, there are also some cultural aspects to consider, such as the concept of “saving face.” “Face” (face, by definition, refers to ‘one’s public image’) is an essential component of the Chinese psyche, and thus Chinese students are especially sensitive to maintaining and not losing face in all aspects of social and academic life. Interviews revealed that the students preferred keeping silent in class not only because of their limited English proficiency, but also from a crippling fear of making a mistake. Making mistakes in front of others would lead to embarrassment and “losing face.” For example, one female student reported that while other students asked questions from time to time, all of the Chinese students in her classes stayed silent because they “were afraid to be embarrassed”; they were concerned that they might not be able to respond if the professor “asked (a question) back.” Those few who dared to speak during class did so only when they were “very sure” of themselves. This pursuit of “safety” in American classes reflects the ideas of Chinese culture and can be characterized as “high risk avoidance” (Hofstede, 1997). In contrast, the participants observed that American students were “extremely brave” in class, and did not seem afraid

of making mistakes. To the Chinese students, some of the questions other students asked during class were even “silly”, but “[the American students] did not seem to care.” This observation demonstrates the “low risk avoidance” characteristics of American culture (Hofstede, 1997).

C. Relationships with Academic Advisors

Previously, I elaborated upon how academic culture manifests itself in both classroom participation and student learning experiences. Academic culture also displays itself in the roles of faculty and students, the relationships between faculty and students, and the manner in which students solicit aid from faculty members. McCargar (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) studied ESL (English as a second language) students from different geographic regions such as Indonesia, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Hispanic countries. He found that “there are significant discrepancies among their expectations and those of their American teachers... in classroom participation and in student-teacher relationships” (p.157). McCargar found that these students expected their professors to act chiefly as authority figures while American professors expect that international students to “have an internal locus of academic control” (p.157). Liberman’s research on Asian students (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) revealed similar findings. He showed that “international students were often critical of informality in the classroom, perceived lack of respect for professors” (p.157).

Pratt (as cited in Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001) compared American and Chinese educational systems and values. He noted that from an American viewpoint, teachers were regarded as facilitators and students were put at the center in the learning

process. In China, however, teachers acted as a transmitter of knowledge and as a role model. Robinson (1992) pointed out that in the United States, the status difference between faculty members and students may not be immediately apparent, but it may be expressed in subtle ways, such as tone of voice and choice of words. He also noted that students are expected to take advantage of office hours and ought to take initiative in approaching faculty for help. In summary, international students, unfamiliar with American culture, may not know how to establish comfortable relationships with faculty members or how to take initiative in seeking help from them.

Many Chinese doctoral students experience relationships with their academic advisors wherein the academic relationship overpowers and drowns out any possible social relationship with them. Each student experienced different types of relationships, but most of the participants recognized that their academic relationships with their advisors helped them to succeed in their doctoral programs.

Due to their unique culture and traditions, Chinese students have certain expectations for the relationships with their professors and advisors. Many students want the professors to take a personal interest in them, which could be demonstrated by taking the time to listen to them and demonstrating an understanding of their differing cultures in class discussions. They want the professors to hold more office hours for tutoring and academic advising, to speak more slowly in class, to use simpler vocabulary, to write more clearly on the board, and to distribute handouts of their lecture notes. One student believed that “professors should understand things in [students’] lives, treat us to dinner with Americans, keep promises, and develop relationships and friendships with us. Our relationships should not be just academic. We need to be a part of these [academic]

families.” These beliefs lead to the belief that the entire university community, including faculty, should be involved in programs and activities with international students.

As revealed in my case studies at UCLA and IUB, academic interactions fostered one-on-one relationships between more experienced academic advisors and less experienced students. In these connections, academic advisors provide guidance and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of doctoral students. The majority of the time, Chinese doctoral students had one-on-one mentoring relationships rather than social friendships with their respective academic advisors. This finding supports Heikano and Shute’s (1986) conclusion that two of the most fundamental objectives in advising international students are to help them adjust to the demands of their respective academic programs, and to achieve academic success. In this case study, participants felt accepted within their doctoral programs when the quality of the student’s work satisfied their academic advisors.

My study revealed three different problems that frequently arise in academic relationships: difficulties meeting academic advisors’ expectations, differing philosophies or academic interests, and limited or slow progress of doctoral research. Some of the participants felt that if they could not overcome negative interactions with their academic advisors, they would lose their current advisors’ trust. As a result, many are delayed in completing their doctoral programs. This finding supports Lee and Carrasquiro’s (2006) conclusion that when Asian international students have negative academic relationships with their advisors, poor communication is often at the root of the problem.

More specifically, although I did not interview any faculty or advisors in this study (one of the major drawbacks to my research), the participants’ reflections on their

interactions informed me of advisors' expectations for their Chinese students. For example, even though some advisors requested that their students get help writing before submitting their works, they seemed to be less concerned with their students' pronunciation, but more concerned with the lack of students' oral interaction and communication.

It is commonly believed that low quality work greatly hinders academic relationships between Chinese doctoral students and their advisors. For example, academic advisors understand that when students write their papers in English, their mistakes are frequently caused by the differences in the structure of English and Chinese languages. Although advisors repeatedly provide useful feedback for their international students, they get more and more frustrated when they often do not see their students' writing improve. One participant, an education major at IUB, shared how she felt embarrassed and frustrated every time she could not present a high-quality paper to her advisor. She could tell that he was not happy with her writing simply by reading his facial expression and tone of voice. She said with tears in her eyes, "I really tried, very hard, but it is just so difficult to improve my writing, and I do not know what to do. Maybe only time can tell."

In summary, major academic difficulties faced by Chinese doctoral students stem from their unfamiliarity with the American academic culture, their insufficient knowledge of the academic support units at campus, their lack of English proficiency for academic purposes, and their assumption of new roles and activities as TAs, GSRs, or RAs.

In spite of the problems and difficulties that Chinese students face in adapting

academically, Spaulding and Flacking (1976) found that the following hypothesis was strongly supported by research: “academic performance of foreign students is equal to that of American students” (p.310). They also found that “although certain difficulties are common to all foreign students, students from substantially different backgrounds tend to have special types and intensities of academic problems” (p.51).

Findings in my case studies suggest that Chinese doctoral students believe that their cultural, academic, and linguistic characteristics may have adversely affected their academic performance. For example, they may be required to take more ESL courses to be officially enrolled, may have difficulties maintaining a certain GPA, and may lose their funding from their institutions. Thus, the failure to understand cultural differences can lead to miscommunication and confusion.

D. Social Integration Challenges

International graduate students feel pressured by difficulties in cultural encounters, social isolation, discrimination, and marginalization in daily and social activities. One of the most effective coping strategies that international students adopt is establishing support networks among co-nationals that provide actual help and emotional support. In this section, I cover some of the major challenges and concerns that Chinese doctoral students encountered during the social integration process, as well as strategies they adopted to deal with those hurdles.

In the previous section, I discussed the academic challenges facing Chinese doctoral students, such as the language barrier, the relationships with advisors, and the foreign nature of American academic culture. Now, I will handle the social integration

experiences of students. Of course, based in part on the Tinto model, social and academic integration are closely related. Some of the fundamental ideas in student development theories demonstrate this: “feelings affect thinking and learning,” “personal circumstances affect learning,” and “out-of-class environments affect learning.” These ideas also hold true for international graduate students because they live in an academic community surrounded by larger social and societal environment. Their studies are influenced by the interrelated social and academic adjustment.

Many Chinese students find American culture quite different from their own, so it is often difficult for them to adjust to the new culture and to socialize with Americans. For example, American society values individuality, competition, and independence; in contrast, Chinese culture values collective unity and cooperation. As one participant said, “As you know, we are from a quite different country. We have different cultures, different values, and different behaviors. This makes me feel like it is hard to socialize with Americans. I don’t know how to communicate with them, how to behave in class, and how to make friends with them.” Another student added a specific example, “I barely understood the humor that my American classmates told. This is just one example showing how difficult it is for us to communicate and make close friends with them.”

Many students I interviewed felt socially distant from American graduate students, even going as far as to say that they felt some degree of discrimination from white American graduate students in particular. Several participants believed that some students intentionally avoided communicating with them. Such barriers made the students feel unwelcomed by white American groups within their own program, department, or on campus. One student said, “In the physics lab, we work in pairs. Because I am an

international student, American students don't want to work with me. I don't like it when we have to work in pairs.”

Moreover, participants were afraid of communicating with white American graduate students, because they never felt as if the Americans attempted to integrate and interact with them. Hence, the data that I gathered from this study indicated an intergroup barrier. Discrimination, as defined by Dovidio and Gaertner (1986), is the behavioral component of attitudes or stereotypes. It consists of evidencing unjustifiable behavior toward members of a target group. In the cases of my participants, this occurred when white American students displayed negative attitudes or stereotypic beliefs about Chinese doctoral students. Further, the findings of my study corroborated Poyrazli et al.'s (2002) conclusion that international students have communication barriers caused by the difficulty faced in establishing social relationships with white American graduate students.

There was no student I interviewed, however, who understood and could fully explain why they had experienced discriminatory behaviors such as avoidance and a reluctance to communicate with them. Several were wise enough to recognize that they might have been overly sensitive.

I really wanted to make friends with white graduate students, black graduate students, and Latino graduate students as well. But somehow I always [thought] there is something that is not right. I am not who I am in front of them talking to them. As you know, there is no way that we can make friends with someone who makes you feel you are not yourself. Of course, I might be wrong with

saying this, or I might be too sensitive, but that is exactly how I feel.

We can be good co-workers, but not friends.

Some participants believed that many American graduate students had some stereotypic beliefs about Chinese doctoral students and Chinese people as a whole. One student in UCLA's Linguistics department helped me understand that international students who have low language proficiency tend to have communication barriers. As a result, students are not able to develop or maintain meaningful relationships. When communication barriers between two intergroups (e.g., Chinese and white American groups) are great, international students tend to perceive White American graduate students as promoting social isolation and being discriminatory (Gordon, 1964).

1. Feeling Marginalized

What is the most difficult thing to learn American culture? I would say it is jokes. I usually have no idea what they are laughing about, not laughing at [me], I hope.

Many students, the one quoted above included, felt marginalized within their environments when they did not understand why American graduate students or faculty members laughed. More specifically, they had difficulty in understanding jokes told by American graduate students. This barrier makes Chinese doctoral students uncomfortable in many situations because they feel that they are unwelcome guests in conversations with both American faculty members and graduate students from which they feel implicitly excluded.

More than often, I urged myself to go with American students to a

local bar, restaurant as I really wanted to socialize with them for the purpose of social integration and also practicing my English. But every single time, I find it tough to keep up with them whenever they talk about professional sports, one particular pop star, etc. My chance of having a meaningful conversation is very limited. As a result, without even realizing it, I gradually stopped trying.

Another student expressed a similar sentiment: “normal American people are not aggressive, but they do not accept me. They are only polite and friendly, but you cannot form a deep relationship with them.” “My relationships with my advisor, professors, and cohorts stay at a professional level, and it is not possible for me make life-long friends with them, even though that is really something I am looking for.”

This participant touched upon a dilemma shared by many Chinese doctoral students; they were unable to understand the dominant American culture, causing them to lack a strong sense of belonging. Instead, they turned to the more familiar Chinese community that they found much more comfortable.

A couple of participants told me that they felt offended when they were constantly asked about the Communist party, the Tiananmen Incident, the Free Tibetan Movement, and other similar events. Many defended their party and country.

Most of the students, however, recognized the fact that the interracial climate on campus was friendly. One student said, “People smile at each other and are helpful. They help me with problems.” A female student said, “In small classes people are friendly, but not in big classes.” Though they recognize the difficulties of interacting with Americans, most participants replied that they would still like to have more American friends, and

some believed that such friends could help them improve their English and learn more about the foreign culture. Moreover, they hoped to get mentoring experiences from faculty members as well as peers to help them better understand American cultural points-of-view.

In conclusion, there are two possible reasons that have caused Chinese doctoral students to feel marginalized. First of all, they have difficulty understanding American culture during their doctoral studies, and secondly, they lack the high level of English comprehension necessary to understand white American graduate students and faculty members.

2. Problems with Social Adjustment

Based on research about relationships, the more connected we are, the less likely we are to feel depressed and lonely. That is the most important reason for maintaining close friendships. Since friends provide valuable support for international students, it is important to look at their friendship patterns.

International students' friendship networks help provide an understanding of their social adjustments. Bochner et al. (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) divide the friend groups of international students into three categories and posit that the different networks have different functions. The primary network for international students includes their friendships with students from the same country; the second kind involves relationships with host nationals; and the third kind incorporates friendships with international students from other countries. The network with co-nationals provides "companionship and emotional support;" the network with host nationals serves to

“facilitate the academic and professional aims of students (p.148);” and the friendships with international students from other countries offer recreational opportunities and mutual support.

Of these three types of networks, the most prominent interactions for international students occur with co-nationals. International students tend to interact extensively with co-nationals (Bochner et al., 1977 as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). This kind of network provides support to international students in a variety of ways. Ward and Kennedy (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) found that many students associated the co-national network with cultural identity; Ward and Searle (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, p.149) discovered that the network was related to international students’ psychological wellbeing. In answering one of my interview questions (“please list five close or best friends you have, and tell me about who they are”) most of the participants named five people from China.

One student explained this phenomenon by saying, “It is easier for us to understand each other. There is a link between us. Otherwise, we have worry about dealing with people from other cultures without causing any trouble.” Another participant said, “We have lots of things in common. We try to encourage each other. I have some American cohorts over the age of 35 but not below 30; I can’t relate to them and can’t talk profoundly with them.” A different student said that the closest relations are “Chinese, because we all speak slowly, and we think the same.” These statements support the findings of Henderson et al. (1993), which suggest that confusion and frustration are products of not being understood.

Besides providing emotional support and maintaining traditional values, many of

the participants found that co-national groups were more likely to develop in the science departments.

I share a 2b2b apartment with two more Chinese roommates. My advisor and all of my biochemistry lab mates, except one who is from India, are also all Chinese. So as you can tell, I speak Chinese all the time, and sometimes I got even confused and wondering if I am sitting in my old lab at Tsinghua University.

Another student majoring in Physics shared a similar response:

Chinese students are the majority in our lab, where Chinese is the most spoken language. I am surrounded all by Chinese fellows, labs, classes, the China Town, and my apartment.

This participant confirmed that his experience is not the exception, but rather the norm at many research labs and institutes, where you can easily find a network of international students and host nationals. This relationship provides international students with many benefits. As Pruitt (1978) stated, the more extensive the interactions with host nationals are, the fewer academic problems and social difficulties arise.

Although all three kinds of networks provide support and help for international students, they do not rely on all three equally. Much research shows that international students most frequently associate with fellow students from the same country, less frequently with American students, and even less frequently with students from other cultures. In spite of the benefits of co-national groups, however, relying on this network too heavily may isolate international students from campus social life and lead to social

isolation, along with a continued lack of cultural understanding. It also can negatively impact both cultural adjustment and English language proficiency, as many participants have experienced. This supports Hull's (1978) finding that Asian students tend to share their accommodations with their fellow nationals, have limited contact with Americans, and do not generally choose to socialize with Americans.

Those who do not have either Chinese friends or American friends feel extremely isolated and helpless. One such a student said, "I feel very lonely sometimes, especially when I don't understand my homework and have no one to ask for help." Another student, however, had an interesting, but contradictory, reply: "I do not feel isolated at all because I have too much to do. I simply have no time to make friends or to feel isolated."

Even though many suggestions have been made in an effort to reduce the social isolation felt by many international students, generally by increasing contact with host nationals, the current movement strives to recognize some of the benefits brought about by co-national groups, and not to be overly critical of apparent social isolation.

In summary, friend support is important for Chinese doctoral students. They should try to establish friendships with both co-nationals and host nationals. It is also important to make Chinese students realize that friendships are capable of transcending cultural differences.

This first major section of my findings delineated an extensive variety of challenges that Chinese doctoral students face in trying to successfully assimilate into their university environments, both in terms of academic and social integration (again, I see social integration as including many cultural facets). The prominent presence of these

challenges in the lives of my participants reinforced some of the key hypotheses I proposed in this study. Chinese international doctoral students face unique challenges in adjusting to the academic and social spheres of an American university. These challenges, at least in part, are the consequence of cultural differences between Chinese culture and the culture of American universities.

E. Cross-Case Comparison

One of the goals of this study was to understand whether or not Chinese doctoral students at two different public universities that are separated by large distances will have noticeably different academic, cultural, and social integration experience.

University of California, Los Angeles is located in one of the largest and most populous cities in the United States while Indiana University resides in a small town of Bloomington in the Midwestern part of the country. Not only there are great differences in climate and landscape, but also in the people who live in each of these regions. These regional differences, such as the states in the Midwestern part of the country and in the West, have displayed different cultural and social differences (Goldin and Katz, 2001).

As the researcher of this study, I was fortunate enough to have studied in both universities, and I have found my experiences to be quite different. For instance, the Western coast has more varied mixture of immigrants than any other region.

Being fully aware of potential personal bias, in the following, from a cross case analysis perspective, I intend to present some findings based on my interviews with Chinese doctoral students at these two universities, to unpack issues of geographic, social, and cultural differences between Bloomington, Indiana and Los Angeles, California, Some of

this could be simply geography, other parts may relate to the different demography, academic program offering, power quotients, etc.

Rural Campus Life at Bloomington, Indiana

Relaxing, and quiet, students are seen walking to class, sitting under trees reading books or enjoying time together for an athletic practice. This is pretty typical of life on the Bloomington campus in Indiana. To most of research participants at IUB, their campus life is free from big city distractions such as air pollution, noisy traffic, and tall buildings. They treasure the opportunity to get in touch with nature. Most of them have abundant outdoor activities, such as biking, hiking, jogging, or simply studying under a tree are relaxing opportunities. One student shared with me how much he enjoys his campus life, and he finds it difficult to separate the campus with the town. He said, “This is a college town, and we own this town. I love the feeling that I know everything about this town.”

Many Chinese graduate students reported that they might have closer or stronger relationships with their mentors than those peers in an urban city. They strongly believe the ability to communicate directly with faculty, staff, administrators and alumni on campus is an additional benefit of studying and living in a rural campus. Actually, it is a must for them. Many students won't see their professors only in class; professors will interact with students as advisers to their housing units, advisers to campus clubs, participating in intramural athletic programs, such as a NCAA game, attending art or theatre productions, and much more.

During the interviews, comfortable and safe are often words that nearly all of the

IUB participants described the environment of being in such a small and peaceful college town community. On a small campus, interaction with other students, faculty, and townspeople is a must. More Chinese graduate students make friends with other international students very quickly and the American students are very welcoming as well.

Because it is located hours away from major metropolitan cities, such as Indianapolis or Chicago, availability of specialty stores, museums, or major shopping centers at Bloomington are relatively limited. Most of students and their families need to plan ahead to help alleviate this problem. That is why IUB Office of International Affairs or CSSA provide services to international students for transportation to shop in neighboring cities on a regularly basis, because specific items require traveling to the larger cities or purchasing items via the internet. Most of Chinese students have had experience driving more than four hours to shop or dine in the China Town in Chicago. Based on my interviews with all participants and my field observation on campus, campus based activities are an enormous part of life for Chinese doctoral students. They are engaged inside and outside of the classroom, labs, and apartments. It is not unusual to find a couple, pair, or group of Chinese students gathered around watching the latest Chinese TV show, studying in groups for tests, or hanging out at a local Chinese restaurant. Team sports and other athletic opportunities are also abundant on campus for Chinese students.

Urban Campus Life in Los Angeles, California

On the other hand, student life at UCLA is very much influenced by the city—the

size of the city, the cultural life, and the geography. UCLA, unlike IUB, is not the focal point of local life. Students have a much wider range of choice when it comes to entertainment, restaurants, food markets, living arrangements and the other elements of daily life in cities than in small college towns and rural areas. My observation of some Chinese doctoral students at UCLA has shown that their student life is a combination of on campus activities and life in the city itself. In Bloomington, Indiana University dominates the life of the town because students represent more than 50% of the entire population.

Students at UCLA frequently do not live in university graduate student housings during their entire stay. Many of them find that they are more comfortable and it is more economical to join together with friends to rent an apartment off campus, such as Santa Monica.

Social interaction or entertainment is more varied for students at UCLA than those in Bloomington. Los Angeles has very lively student life with many great theaters, museums, or an amazing array of clubs playing music from all over the world and offering students from other countries a chance to feel at home, thanks to the fact that there is a great number of Chinese immigrants in the city, . This is, of course, in addition to all the activities and entertainment options available at the university itself at Westwood.

However, many participants also reported that, UCLA, located in such a large urban city, therefore, can be very exciting and can offer students the chance to experience student life in special ways. However, fending for themselves (even with a group of Chinese friends) in an apartment or rented house, going dancing or to listen to music at

clubs, and taking advantage of the other opportunities offered by city life can distract them from their heavy graduate studies.

II. The Role of the CSSA in Supporting Chinese Doctoral Students

A second key aspect of my study concerns the potential importance of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (the CSSA). Hence, this section of my findings focuses on the CSSA by analyzing the role it plays in supporting Chinese international doctoral students in their efforts to adjust to the academic and social cultures of their U.S. universities. I begin, however, by first discussing the nature of the CSSA and its mission in relation to both Chinese students and U.S. university life. I then highlight its role in helping students develop a sense of belonging, while also promoting a national and cultural identity.

A. What is The CSSA?

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association (the CSSA) is the official organization for overseas Chinese students and scholars registered in most colleges, universities, and institutions outside of China. The CSSA, as an organization of overseas Chinese students in foreign higher education institutions, serves to help Chinese who are away from home in their study, their work, and many other facets of their everyday life. The CSSA also serves as a bridge between the Chinese and other communities, spreading Chinese culture.

Many CSSA websites prominently display their mission statement. Each different CSSA has a slightly different mission statement. UCLA's CSSA's mission statement reads as follows:

- 1) Represent Chinese students and scholars at UCLA;
- 2) Express Chinese students and scholars' wishes;
- 3) Protect Chinese students and scholars' legal rights and interests;
- 4) Promote social, cultural, and intellectual activities both among its members, and with other on and off campus organizations;
- 5) Help the newly arrived Chinese students and scholars settle into the new environment;
- 6) Help non-Chinese better understand China and Chinese culture.

Similarly, the CSSA at Indiana University also identifies itself as a non-profit, non-political, and non-religious volunteer organization of Chinese students and scholars studying, visiting, or living in Bloomington. As a registered student organization, the CSSA at IUB is open to all Chinese students. The organization aims to provide warm and friendly communication among Chinese students, scholars, and their families; to facilitate their studies and lives in a new environment; and to promote cultural communications with other communities and culture groups.

From a comparative perspective, different CSSAs have different ways of achieving their missions. Based on my full-year field observations of all their organized social gatherings, academic lectures, and festival celebrations, the UCLA CSSA, for example, has their own way of achieving their mission and supporting the student population they serve:

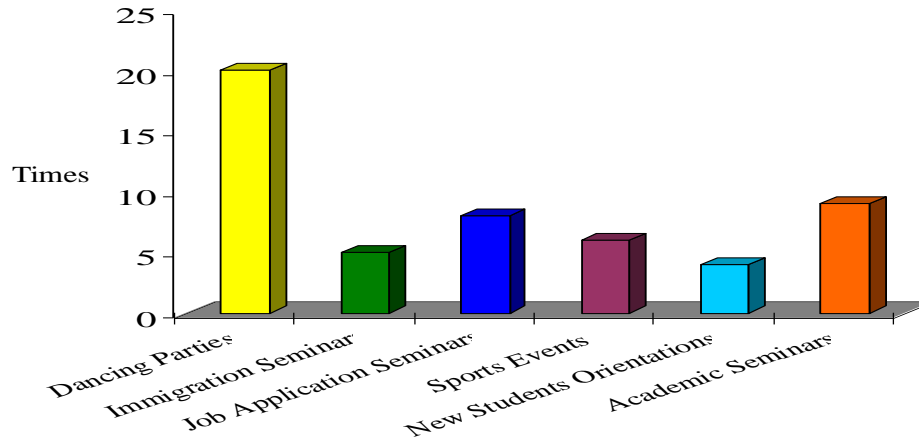
- 1) Organize small activities for close interaction between members, and large events in celebration of Chinese festivals and holidays;
- 2) Organize events and activities with other cultural and academic groups on and off campus;
- 3) Provide career and academic information by organizing career fairs and professional events;
- 4) Provide members with a forum to express their concerns and interests;
- 5) Work with local legal office to provide members with legal consultation;
- 6) Help members in practical matters such as airport pick- up and visiting.

In Table 1, a total of 57 events have been planned, organized, and executed by the CSSA at UCLA for one academic year 2009-10, occasionally collaborating with other organizations on campus:

Numbers of People Attended	Numbers of Events
> 500	1
[300 to 500]	2
[200 to 300]	5
[100 to 200]	7
[50 to 100]	11
[30 to 50]	12
[10 to 30]	19
Total: >3,500	57

Table 1: UCLA-CSSA Events Organized by Number and Category

Table 2: Events organized by UCLA-CSSA in the year of 2009-10



These events can be divided into several artificial categories: social events, including sporting events, movie nights, dance parties, and Karaoke; professional events, including job fairs and applications; academic lectures and symposiums; legal presentations regarding OPT and U.S. permanent residency applications; and so forth (See Table 2 for events organized by UCLA-CSSA in the year of 2009-10). For example, the largest event was the Chinese Spring Festival Celebration, which boasted an attendance of more than five hundred, including many non-Chinese.

The goal of this study, however, is not merely to report the CSSA's missions and the manner in which they attempt to achieve their mission, rather I designed it to explore whether or not the CSSA plays a prominent role in assisting its fellow Chinese students, and, if so, what that role is. To answer these questions, I have collected data by conducting interviews with Chinese students who attended or were closely involved in CSSA events or activities, and with CSSA leaders.

I was interested in knowing whether or not, after so many colorful and exciting social and academic events, the CSSA had succeeded in playing an important role in assisting Chinese doctoral students in the integration process. Based on interviews with doctoral students who had involvement with the CSSA, I have come to the conclusion that the CSSAs at UCLA and IUB provided two main services to the Chinese doctoral students. Firstly, the CSSA offers Chinese students a “home” where they feel accepted, supported, and comfortable. Secondly, the CSSA gives Chinese students a stage upon which to express their own cultural and national identities, and to advocate for their ethnic communities.

B. The Role of the CSSA in Promoting a Sense of Belonging

One of the key factors in facilitating Chinese study abroad is the existence of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (the CSSA), which provides useful information to prospective and current students. During an interview with one CSSA organizer, he stressed the fact that the organization did not come into being spontaneously, but that the students and scholars who handle the workings of the association maintain close contact with the Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in the United States. He shared with me that every year the CSSA can get around five thousand dollars from the Consulate. The Consulate provides funding to the CSSA, according to the president, in order “to bring Chinese students and scholars together and keep their ties with the motherland.” In this sense, the CSSA is supposed to create a sense of belonging for Chinese students abroad. For this same reason, the CSSA shoulders the

burden of maintaining communication between overseas Chinese students and their home country, China.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the first and most important role that the CSSA plays involves creating a sense of belonging for Chinese doctoral students, allowing them to connect with peers from similar cultural backgrounds and with whom they share common cultural knowledge. Their shared cultural background allows event participants and their peers in the CSSA to understand each other's experiences and struggles in a unique way. Thus the CSSA provides outlets for what otherwise might be a devastating cultural frustration.

Many interviewees expressed how important it was that the CSSA provided them with opportunities to connect with Chinese co-nationals who shared similar cultural backgrounds and experiences. One student, for example, described how Chinese doctoral students at the university were able to interact in a unique way due to their common cultural experience:

We all know that Yellow River is regarded as the mother river of Chinese culture. We can sing same songs together. We are also familiar with some Chinese national jokes, for example. That's why I went to the Spring Festival party held by CSSA every year.

Participants noted that those common cultural backgrounds allowed them and their peers to understand one another's college experiences and struggles. For example, when one Chinese student in the third year of her studies was asked why she joined the CSSA instead of any other on campus organizations, she explained that she longed for the shared cultural background and understanding unique to Chinese students, and that this

common ground and understanding was a crucial missing piece in her interactions with her American lab mate:

I thought I would take advantage of the fact that there were a lot more Chinese now in my environment. You know, people who were like me . . . people who were from China . . . who had experienced a culture like I had with experiences that my American friends might not have understood.

Along with the common cultural background and understanding, participants felt that they could connect on a deeper level with their peers in the CSSA than with those students in other organizations and environments throughout campus. A female doctoral student studying education at IUB described how those cultural connections allow Chinese students on campus to identify with each others' academic struggles:

We can relate to each other easily, as we have been through severe competition and the pressure resulting from national entrance examination to colleges, GRE test preparation, applying for U.S. visa, and so on. We tell each other about our hardships and how we got over them. It helps us get over them in a sense. And, I guess, they want to pursue the same goals as I do, and so we share the same goals and we're striving for the same things. And, being with people who are also Chinese helps create a strong sense of community.

Participants expressed that the CSSA and their members provided them with vital support and important services, such as airport pick up, rides for shopping trips,

student orientation, and so on. All of these services helped each student settle down, get to know their local community and campus, and ultimately integrate into both the university and American society. Some participants actually went so far as to refer to their organizations as a family, home base, or home away from home.

Many Chinese doctoral students attend the CSSA in order to make new friends, or even to find a significant other. Most doctoral students, whose ages range from twenty-four to thirty, are at a stage in their life where they consider finding a significant other to be of great importance. Sometimes, this desire to settle down stems from their own personal desires, but can also be the result of parental pressure. A fourth year humanities student at UCLA shared his own experience:

I am tired of my mum who asks me to date someone whenever I call my parents in China. But she might be right on this one, as I am turning 29 this year. Therefore, I attend the CSSA dance party every time, hoping to meet someone that I like.

In conclusion, the CSSA serves as a source of cultural validation by expressing to Chinese doctoral students that they are accepted and supported at the university, and that they have access to peers who share similar background, culture, and experiences.

C. Building Social Support Networks

The CSSA plays another key role by helping Chinese doctoral students to

develop social support networks. These students are a group in a temporary state of transition, living in the United States to pursue their educational goals. These students need to seek the support and help of different sources, including personal networks in order to cope with the feelings of homesickness and frustration, the difficulties of life, and the psychological stresses of school. The interviews with this study's participants led me to the conclusion that there are three types of strong ties in their cross-cultural adaptation: new relationships established in the United States, long-standing distance relationships (primarily in China), and online ethnic social networks.

When all Chinese doctoral students arrived at Los Angeles or Bloomington, Indiana, they enter a new cultural and social environment. Building close ties with one person or a group of people who share common characteristics is an important first step for these students. In this regard, Chinese co-nationals are usually natural and reasonable options. As many participants remembered what they experienced in the first days and weeks of their time in the United States, they used words such as, "exciting but anxious", "homesick", and "isolated." Their insecurities caused many of them to seek something familiar, making them "eager to know more Chinese co-nationals". They talked specifically about the benefit of gaining new Chinese friends, and they all believe that these new relationships helped facilitate their adaptation to the new campus and society.

Thanks to those Chinese older brothers and sisters, who came here several years earlier than I did, I have got tons of help, such as informational and emotional support from them. They, playing a parenting role, provide me a strong sense of security and well-being as well as various types of knowledge about Indiana University and

the town of Bloomington.

When long-standing distance relationships are not available, the support of a more immediate social structure becomes a necessity in order to cope with a strange new world. Based on my findings in this study, online ethnic social groups deserve more attention as one viable source of social support. With the increasing availability of the Internet, many online ethnic social groups allow sojourners and immigrants to communicate with one another regarding their common concerns and the problems they encounter while living in a new culture. These online groups are fast becoming a crucial part of the average Chinese doctoral student's social network.

With the rapid development of communication technologies, people have access to more and better means of long-distance interaction with their parents, siblings, and high school or college classmates. The Internet, mainly through email and online messaging services like MSN and Skype, further facilitates communication, and thus allows students to maintain close ties between their family and friends, especially those too far away to come to the United States for regular visits in person.

Just recently, computer-mediated ethnic social groups became another important source of social support for international students. Ye (2006) defines online ethnic social groups as online groups developed for people currently living in a foreign country who have the same national origin. The majority of these groups' users are international students, who may learn about these online groups from their local international student associations or other ethnic organizations. Much like other online groups, Chinese social groups usually have moderators. The CSSA web manager, for example, maintains healthy, ongoing interactions among group members. The moderators are responsible for

encouraging members to contribute to the group and for maintaining a respectful and relevant site.

Compared to the two traditional social networks in cross-cultural adaptation, these online Chinese social groups tend to provide anonymous, universal support. Members of these groups are not required to disclose their real identities, and their interactions are frequently limited to online communication. They share, however, the similar experience of living and studying in a new cultural environment, and face many of the same difficulties arising from socio-cultural and psychological adjustment.

Many Chinese doctoral students are willing to exchange ideas about different aspects of life in the United States in an effort to provide help and support to each other. Communication in online Chinese social groups covers a variety of topics, ranging from opening a bank account to dealing with homesickness. Since group members are only loosely related to one another, they can maintain their privacy and feel more comfortable revealing their private concerns or problems.

The CSSA members of an online group may engage in a variety of activities. As the web manager at CSSA-UCLA told me, the CSSA members can share personal stories, information, and support with other members. In addition to posting messages on public boards, most newsgroups and bulletin boards also allow Chinese students to send private messages to a specific member. During the entire 2008 and 2009 academic year, I followed the CSSA's Online Bulletin Board System (BBS) at UCLA and Indiana University. There were a total of 907 posts on the UCLA BBS versus 367 on the IUB BBS. The information posted on the two BBS's covered nearly every single aspect of student life, addressing academic development, social networking, and daily living.

Logging onto those BBS's becomes a part of everyday life for many Chinese doctoral students.

One post that appeared on May 3, 2010 on the CSSA-UCLA mailing list told of a student's moving sale.

Hi all, there is something for sell from my friend as he is leaving the town.

Sorry to bother those who are not interested.

TV set (Sharp about 25"): 35

Wireless telephone (panasonic): 15

Ricecooker (zojirushi made in Japan): 35

Sofa: 10

Printer (Samsung laser): 5

Woofers Speaker (Altec lansing): 18

Breadmaker (Sunbeam, It can makes Mantou): 25

Hotpot (zojirushi made in Japan): 25

Multi-outlet extension cord: 8

Mini table: 9

Vacuum cleaner: 7

Acoustic guitar (Yamaha, electronic tuner, case, new almost new): 140

In this post, twelve items were on sale for very affordable prices from five to one hundred and forty dollars. I contacted the seller and the female friend who helped him post the ad, and I made some inquiries regarding these items. She told me that she had bought most of them from someone else four years earlier, and that she had to sell them because she was moving to a new city for an internship. In the end, she sold eight items at discounted

prices, and gave the rest away to newer students.

If we look at this post a little more closely, several grammatical errors can be easily identified, such as “something for sell”, and “It can makes Mantou”. This serves as another example showcasing the ongoing struggles of some Chinese students with the English language.

D. Cultural and National Identity and Connection with China

The CSSA also serves as an important resource that students use to keep, change, or shape their cultural and national identities. Many participants explained that the CSSA helped them express their cultural identity by allowing them to teach others about their own unique heritage.

The participants of the study described the manner in which the CSSA served as a tool with which Chinese doctoral students could advocate for their own cultures and countries. Many participants, for example, explained how they found themselves empowered and encouraged to express their cultural, political, and national identities with their campus environments and even with the larger U.S. society. This feeling of empowerment was particularly strong when several major conflicts occurred in the year of 2008, namely, the rally against the Free Tibet Movement on UCLA’s campus, the support torch relay of the 2008 Beijing Olympic in San Francisco, California, as well as the protest against CNN in Hollywood.

On April 15, 2008, as the *Daily Bruin* (April 16, 2008) reported, “Chinese and Tibetan supporters gathered in front of Kerckhoff Hall on Tuesday, in an unorganized protest that featured speakers from both sides voicing their opinions and frustration . . .

one Tibetan supporter spoke vehemently against the injustices perpetrated by the Chinese government, explaining the circumstances of the killings last month and recalling the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident . . . Meanwhile, many Chinese supporters held up signs supporting the Olympics, which were also labeled with the slogan ‘One China.’” The *Daily Bruin* interviewed Joseph Kong, a UCLA doctoral student and “One China” supporter. Kong related his experiences after visiting Tibet, and said that he believed Tibetans were free for the most part. “On a local level, the Chinese government does not have a big hand on the Tibetans. They basically rule themselves,” Kong said.

During my interviews with participants who attended this rally on Bruin Walk, many recalled that, during the protest, about three hundred Chinese students gathered to show their support for the “One China, One World. We want justice!” movement. They shared their experience with great excitement, even though the interview was conducted one and a half years later. When asked why they wanted to attend such a rally, all of them answered without hesitation, and their answers were remarkably similar, “Because I am a Chinese. . . . I love my country even though I do not necessarily agree with the ruling party all the time.”

Most Chinese students are dedicated to their academic achievement and research progress, and, as a result, they are reluctant to participate in any gatherings that have a political agenda, or that might jeopardize their studies. The above incident at UCLA was a rare and nearly universal exception to this rule.

The CSSAs at both UCLA and Indiana University also play a very active and important role as the bridge between the local Chinese community and cultural or academic organizations in China. The CSSAs help and host Chinese cultural and

academic delegates who came to the U.S. in an effort to recruit the most talented Chinese students and scholars. A job advertisement that was posted on April 6, 2010 on China-list at IUB follows.

Position opening in the Hopkins-Nanjing Center's U.S. office on the campus of the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC. - includes benefits and Johns Hopkins tuition remission (see attached). --EASC

The CSSAs also help in welcoming Chinese cultural performance companies and teams that come to perform Chinese music, opera, and other art. Many students in this study shared with me their beautiful memories of similar events, and they used the expressions “homesick”, “intimacy”, and “wanting to return” frequently in doing so.

Another example of the inspiring cultural unity of Chinese students in the U.S. involves their response to major natural disasters in China. The 2008 Sichuan earthquake (or the Great Sichuan Earthquake) was a deadly earthquake that measured at 8.0 Ms and 7.9 Mw. It occurred on Monday, May 12, 2008 in Sichuan province, killing 69,195 people, and leaving 18,392 missing. A great sense of sympathy, loss, and empathy permeated the Chinese community at both UCLA and IUB.

On May 16, 2008, the CSSA at UCLA organized a candlelight vigil for Sichuan Earthquake victims. They collected a donation and collected nearly twenty-nine thousand dollars. A similar gathering was also held at the IU campus at Bloomington.

At the end of 2008, the CSSA organizer, in her message to all the CSSA members, clearly recalled and articulated what the CSSA community had achieved and been through, all of which were closely connected to the happenings in China. It is

evident that the CSSAs have played a crucial role in serving as a bridge, connecting its members to China, where they are originally from. One example of this connection is this holiday message from CSSA-UCLA:

A Special Happy Holidays Message from CSSA-UCLA

Happy Holidays from CSSA-UCLA!

As the year comes to a close, we would like to wish all of you and your families a safe and joyous holiday season.

Looking back, the year 2008 has brought us some of the most unforgettable events and moments of our lifetime: the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, the tragic Wenchuan Earthquake, the San Francisco Olympic Torch Relay, the vis-a-vis confrontation with the Tibet Freedom Campaigns on April 15, the anti-CNN protest... The past twelve months tested our faiths and political beliefs, our capabilities and the strength of the bond that binds all of us together.

We are so proud of this year's achievements and we know none of it is possible without your help and support. Thanks for being part of the CSSA-UCLA family!

Now is the time of year when we gather with family and friends to share the true gifts of the season: Peace, Hope, Health,

Love and Happiness. May beautiful moments and happy memories surround you with joy this holiday season.

*We wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
And we can't wait to share more excitement with you in the next year!*

The Volunteers of CSSA-UCLA Executive Committee

December 22, 2008

Chinese doctoral students' expression of their ethnic identities through their participation in the CSSA's numerous events, some of which are described above, is inextricably linked to their advocacy for the awareness of Chinese language and its culture. They are particularly concerned with what is really going on in China. By fully investing themselves in their country's culture, they serve as a collective ambassador of China and its people.

E. Fundraising and Community Support

Most students could manage to get by without affiliating with the CSSAs, but in some extreme cases and situations, such as severe diseases and accidents, the CSSA's aid and support become vital and irreplaceable.

In January of 2008, the CSSA committee created a special taskforce to help XX, a former CSSA-UCLA committee member who was diagnosed with leukemia. Many CSSA leaders, as well as some Chinese doctoral students, went to the hospital and even

visited her in her home many times. They bought her groceries, brought her birthday presents, talked to her doctors and nurses, and found other experienced, knowledgeable people to help her. The CSSA also organized a donation for XX, and ultimately, the Chinese community at UCLA raised fifty thousand dollars.

The original fundraising letter reads as follows:

A fundraising letter for our sick friend, XXX

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to you to solicit your generous donation for a UCLA graduate student who is in grave danger. Her name is XXX, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of XXXX.

XX joined UCLA in Spring 20xx and has been working hard towards her Ph.D. degree. She has successfully progressed through the Qualifying and General Exam stages of her Ph.D. program. She has completed all of her academic coursework and has collected sufficient data for her first two dissertation chapters and written her first dissertation chapter. During the summer of 20xx she began to exhibit increasingly debilitating symptoms, to the point that she was hospitalized under intensive care in the hospital in XX. She was diagnosed with a relatively advanced form of IgA Nephropathy, a kidney disorder caused by deposit of the protein immunoglobulin A (IgA) inside the glomeruli (filters) within both kidneys. She was able

to leave intensive care with the help of some fairly strong medication, but remained relatively weak and unable to conduct active research. Despite this, She had enough drive to successfully prepare for, and passed her Doctoral General Exams in December 20xx. She went back to China to visit her family, not knowing if she would ever see them again and realizing that if she went on a kidney transplant list, she would have to stay in the USA while on this list. However, her situation has deteriorated while she has been in China. Since this disorder leads to end-stage renal disease which is life-threatening, XX now must go on blood dialysis to sustain her life. Currently XX is in intensive care in China and she is suffering from high blood pressure, swelling, and uremia. Testing is also being conducted to find the compatible kidney from her family and relatives. Her kidney disease is becoming increasingly debilitating and the only solution is a kidney transplant with a compatible kidney.

However, the cost of organ transplant is prohibitive, and additionally this cost is not covered by her student health insurance at UCLA since the operation will be conducted in China. XX's parents, who are both retired workers in XXX in Northeast China, have spent all their savings for the hemodialysis treatment to keep her alive and they cannot afford the expense of a kidney transplant. She is currently undergoing hemodialysis every other day. XX and

her family desperately need donations so XX can receive a kidney transplant.

I strongly urge your support and generosity to save a young and aspiring life. Without your help, XX will not live.

Please make the check to "CSSA (to XXX)" (Chinese Students and Scholars Association), put a note on the check for "XXX" and send the check to:

Note: CSSA will have a fundraising on XXX in front of XXX through selling some Chinese items. If you have some Chinese craft such as Chinese knots, Chinese fans, that would be helpful too. Thank you!

CSSA

In summary, the CSSA plays a crucial mediating role in assisting Chinese doctoral students during their social and academic integration process. At the same, the CSSA also provides a home base and support structure, allowing many Chinese doctoral students to connect with others experiencing similar challenges. In addition, the CSSA allows students to share and take pride in their unique cultural and ethnic identity.

Section Three: Summary

In this chapter, I presented major findings that have emerged from this qualitative research study that was aimed at better understanding specific academic and social challenges that Chinese doctoral students face as they adjust to and integrate into a U.S.

university. Four major challenges that have been identified include financial insecurities and challenges, academic challenges, relationships with academic advisors/mentors, and lack of social interactions with Americans.

In the second section, I explored the role that the Chinese Students and Scholars Association plays in supporting Chinese international doctoral students during their academic and social transition process. According to most of the participants in this study, CSSAs at both research sites, UCLA and IUB, have played positive roles in promoting a sense of belonging, building social support networks, fostering cultural and national identity and connection with China, and providing member and community support especially during severe individual illness or natural disasters.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

This study focused on the experiences of Chinese doctoral students as they integrated into two different U.S. universities: UCLA and IUB. In this chapter, I begin by summarizing my major findings before returning to my five key hypotheses, and reiterating their relevance as demonstrated in the preponderance of the qualitative data I collected. After highlighting the findings relative to my hypotheses, I proceed to explore some of the practical implications of my study for universities, international centers, CSSAs, and Chinese doctoral students. Then I examine some of the future research implications and possibilities that my study revealed. Finally, I conclude by offering my closing remarks.

I. Summary of Findings

Most importantly, I concluded that nearly all Chinese doctoral students in this study encountered numerous challenges in the realms of both academic development and social integration. In addition, I found that the Chinese Students and Scholars Association plays an important role in assisting Chinese students with the challenge of integration at both UCLA and IUB. Accordingly, the following summarizes the key findings presented in Chapter 4. I then return to my five key hypotheses and discuss my findings in relation to them, including a look at their ultimate accuracy. I proceed to delineate the implications of the study, and to outline my recommendations for four key constituencies: universities, international centers, CSSAs, and Chinese doctoral students

themselves. After discussing the practical implications of my study, I address some of the related areas of potential future research. Finally, I conclude with some of my personal reflections on the findings of this dissertation, and briefly discuss its relevance to my life at a personal level.

The four greatest challenges that many Chinese doctoral students share in common while studying and living at UCLA and IUB, as identified in this study, are financial, academic, and social – both in terms of the relationships with academic advisors, and the struggle to socially integrate into the surrounding American culture.

Nearly all of the research participants in this study were partially or fully supported by scholarships in the forms of University Fellowship, GSR/RA positions, or TA positions. The economic recession that began in 2008 had a strong negative impact on both UCLA and IUB as public research universities, and, as a result, many Chinese doctoral students struggled in frustration to secure their financial support from their faculty, department, university, or even external resources. Many students identified their tentative financial situation as a great concern, even though both they and their families attempted to live modestly and prudently.

Research data from this study shows that the English language barrier serves as another major academic challenge. This difficulty can be seen most prominently in the students' lack of familiarity with the American academic culture and the practices within the academic community. The lack of proficiency with academic English poses an additional difficulty for international students. English proves to be a major hurdle for many Chinese doctoral students, even more so for those studying the social sciences (including sociology, humanities, business, law, education, linguistics, and so forth)

where mastery of the English language and of speaking and writing in particular, is a requirement. Some possible strategies that might enhance academic integration include more effective orientation programs, improved English proficiency ESL classes, more frequent interactions with locals, and enhanced dialogue among faculty and students.

Although this study uncovered a multitude of different relationships between Chinese doctoral students and their academic advisors (with most being strong working relationships), due to disparities and misunderstandings caused by diverging expectations deeply rooted in two different cultural traditions and education systems, many of said relationships prove either difficult or negative, and lead to unconstructive experiences and outcomes. Nonetheless, most participants recognized that their interactions with their academic advisors helped them succeed in their doctoral programs.

Many Chinese doctoral students in this study did not feel that they had effectively integrated into U.S. culture and society. Instead, they expressed difficulties with cross-cultural encounters, social isolation, discrimination, feelings of marginalization, and daily social activities. They universally recognized the need to make American friends and expressed a desire to interact with people from different cultures, but, more often than not, they still felt most comfortable interacting with other Chinese students on and off campus. Most chose to surround themselves with Chinese classmates, lab mates, roommates, and friends.

II. Five Key Hypotheses

Here, I return to my five basic hypotheses and reiterate my interpretations based on the data this study provided and my analysis of said data.

Hypothesis 1: *Chinese international doctoral students face unique challenges in integrating to the academic and social spheres of a university. These challenges in part are the consequence of cultural differences between Chinese culture and the culture of American universities.*

I found that my data highlighted various points of confusion, contradiction, and misinterpretation experienced by the participants, much of which could be easily linked to cultural differences. Examples of this included frustration with financial insecurity, a lack of proficiency with the English language necessary for academic purposes, different expectations for academic success leading to miscommunications between faculty and students, as well as the feeling of isolation and marginalization while attempting to adapt to American culture. Most understand the differences in educational systems, social norms, and cultural values between China and the United States to be the driving forces behind these challenges. Thus, the data clearly supports my first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: *The Chinese Student and Scholar Association serves as a mediating role in helping Chinese international doctoral students in their adjustment to their American universities. This role involves both helping students to become more integrated academically and socially, but also involves creating programs and activities at the university that are more reflective of key aspects of Chinese culture.*

I found that the CSSA and its many programs and activities played a key role in helping Chinese students connect to the university both socially and academically. Through the annual Chinese Spring Festival celebration or Chinese arts or cultural performance events, Chinese students and scholars of different cultural heritages have an opportunity to get to know and interact with each other socially, while China Colloquium

or lectures and presentations on China's language and culture provide students and scholars great opportunities of becoming more intellectually and academically integrated. The programs also offer numerous opportunities to express and value Chinese culture. Such efforts are likely to have some influence on the overall campus cultures of both universities. Thus, my data supports the assumption that the CSSA plays a role in advancing a multicultural (or intercultural) campus community.

Hypothesis 3: *Given that academic and social integration involve a degree of learning and adjustment at a university situated in a different cultural context from their homeland, Chinese international doctoral students will likely have experiences leading them to rethink various facets of their own national and cultural identities.*

Although this finding was not one of my strongest based on the data, there was a modest amount of evidence that students in the study did reconsider their sense of national and cultural identity to some extent. While some felt very close to their family, their country, and their civilization and were much less likely to jump cultural ship, some others questioned their past experiences and understandings. At other times, students discussed experiences that reinforced their sense of national and cultural identity, although perhaps the experiences of their new environment modified it slightly. In some extreme cases and situations, such as when natural disaster struck or when embracing large events such as the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the national pride of the Chinese doctoral students came on display as they prayed or celebrated together as Chinese men and women, first and foremost.

Hypothesis 4: *This hypothesis derives in part from my literature review highlighting the role geography plays in shaping American culture and its institutions.*

Accordingly, this study should reveal some institutional differences between the two universities in which my study was conducted in terms of the experiences of Chinese international doctoral students at UCLA and IUB.

UCLA and IUB are two prestigious public universities in the U.S. Research participants in my study, however, revealed different social, cultural, and academic integration experiences, possibly due to different organizational cultures; campus climates; academic, teaching, and research strengths; and different geographical locations at these two universities. The two international student affairs offices offered different services, which, as a result, had different impacts on Chinese doctoral students' participation, learning, and living experiences. For instance, while UCLA's Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars organizes tours around Los Angeles and its famous sights – such as the Hollywood Bowl, or L.A. Dodgers games – for international students, the Office of International Services at Indiana University has organized more on-campus social gatherings. The geographic differences between Los Angeles and Bloomington, Indiana provide varying opportunities for students.

Hypothesis 5: *This hypothesis also derives from my reading of the literature on U.S. universities and various differences linked to disciplinary affiliation. I expected that my findings will reveal some differences linked to students' integration to the university on the basis of academic major.*

I interviewed students from various different disciplines and majors in this study. While each discipline tends to have its own unique integration challenges, the greatest observable difference was between two larger academic umbrellas: natural sciences versus social sciences. Students from these two major fields had very different

experiences in terms of their collective relationships with academic supervisors, peer communications, GSR/TA experiences, as well as language skills and communications. Many students in natural science fields, whose research is based more heavily on lab work and experimentation, reflected that their relationships with their supervisors tended to be more organized and their communications seemed to be more frequent than those of students from social science fields.

III. Implications/Recommendations of the Study

The findings from my study offer insight into the experiences of Chinese doctoral students and the role of the CSSA while also indicating some practical implications that might help to direct universities, international centers, and CSSAs. Additionally, the findings also suggest some practical guidelines for Chinese doctoral students. Thus, in what follows, I delineate the implications and recommendations implicit in my study for four key constituencies: universities, international centers, CSSAs, and Chinese doctoral students

A. Implications and Recommendations for Universities

To help Chinese doctoral students feel more comfortable and to help them perform better academically, universities have a lot they can do to enhance their academic adjustment period, including developing more effective orientation programs, supporting the improvement of English proficiency for international students, and enhancing the dialogue between professors and international students. Also, a basic course on cultural adjustment may help.

First, as Dolan (1997) found, international students may not be aware of potential academic differences initially. Hence, conveying relevant information that may help international students become familiar with the academic culture and academic system is crucial to their academic adjustment. Orientation is a good way to begin to provide the required information to them, but many students may not get all the information they need from these orientations. The basic reasons for this failing as outlined by Dolan are simple: most orientations are in English, attendance is not mandatory, and orientation sessions are provided at times when international students may not have fully recovered from their travel fatigue.

In addition, many participants in this study called for in-service staff development for academic advisors and other faculty members in the area of multicultural education. More specifically, since the American way of thinking, teaching, and learning differs from the Chinese (as well as many other cultures'), faculty members can better provide an appropriate learning environment both in and out of the classroom when they are familiar with the background of their international students. When American faculty members better understand Chinese doctoral students' culture, language, and typical learning styles, they may be better able to understand their behaviors and avoid the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that are currently so common.

Second, international doctoral students should receive from their doctoral program or department, an orientation, accompanied by written literature, on what to expect in their particular programs in terms of cultural, learning, and linguistic expectations. Many international students have academic performance anxiety, and such

a simple measure would help ease their fears while outlining the precise expectations of both professors and academic advisors.

Third, improving English proficiency helps with the adjustment process. Ideally, I would suggest that better English instruction methods be implemented in China, so that more Chinese doctoral students arrive at the United States with adequate linguistic skills. More importantly, I would suggest that American universities offer more courses geared towards improving the academic English skills of international students. At the same time, advisors should immediately refer students to the English as a second language (ESL) program, or the English department, if they require additional assistance in improving their English skills. For example, English departments often conduct research on international students' language proficiency by examining how well students transfer words and sounds from the Chinese ideographic system to the English alphabetic system for writing, reading, and speaking. Thus, English departments may be able to help gauge how much help a particular student needs, and thus to break down many of the Chinese doctoral students' language barriers.

Lastly, I would ask for improvements in terms of communication and understanding between professors and international students, which I believe will be conducive to academic adjustment. A strong line of communication will help students understand academic differences, class expectations, as well as faculty and student relationships.

B. Implications and Recommendations for International Student Service Offices

Student services provided by various International Affairs or Student Offices have

proved to represent a potentially powerful tool for enhancing the quality and sustainability of the overall internationalization agenda of U.S. higher education institutions (not to mention its global competitive position).

My study shows that crossing national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries is a complex human experience, as is integrating oneself into a new and potentially very different academic culture. Thus, there is value in providing meaningful services to international students in order to address their needs and challenges.

In my study, both participating universities had already made international student support a part of the Student Services' mandate, but they each utilized different approaches and practices. Based on a rough timeline that most, if not all, international graduate students pass through (namely pre-arrival, arrival, academic and social integration, legal regulations, and after-graduation), I am suggesting some of the following guidelines in response to requests and wishes gathered from research participants during my research at both universities. These suggestions are in no way intended to be an exhaustive or forcibly prescriptive list of requirements. Rather, I hope they are viewed as suggestions for the barest guidelines that ought to be enforced in order to ensure the success of international students.

Pre-Arrival

- Support international graduate students and their family, helping them find places to live either on and off campus;
- Ensure that information on accommodation options includes the type of housing available, its cost and location, any safety concerns, and any available support

network;

- Offer graduate students comprehensive advice on the process and requirements of applying for and obtaining their student visas, as well as obtaining valid and appropriate visas for their spouses and children;
- Offer students comprehensive advice on the process and requirements of institutional registration, including all deadlines for enrollment, registration, and so forth;
- Offer students comprehensive advice on the structure and requirements of their academic program

Arrival

- Provide a comprehensive institutional and faculty orientation program for all new international graduate students in order to assist them with the transition into the new academic and campus community;
- Consider planning arrival and orientation activities across the whole institution, incorporating academic, social, and cultural activities;
- Involve current international and domestic students in arrival and orientation;
- Assist in developing relationships and connections with domestic students and the campus community.

Academic and Social Integration

- Ensure that each international graduate student has a dedicated point of contact within the institution for all academic and social issues. A faculty member,

advisor, or the student service office as a whole may play that role;

- Provide international graduate students with a dedicated handbook for their continuing support, either online or as a printed publication. Such measures can be more helpful for new students who have better reading skills than speaking and listening skills;
- Provide frequent communications from the international student offices and advisors.
- Ensure that a social and cultural program for international graduate students is offered throughout the year, involving current students, the institution, and the local community;
- Ensure that international graduate students have awareness of and access to appropriate academic support and development resources on campus;
- Provide clear academic guidelines for each international graduate student, including explicit requirements for success and failure, as my study clearly demonstrates that there are different expectations in different educational and cultural traditions;
- Develop and utilize current students to help support new international graduate students through mentoring and “buddy” schemes;
- Ensure all international graduate students have access to dedicated language support for academic and social purposes;
- Promote international graduate student representation in student leadership, as well as social and academic organizations or associations;
- Provide more variety and better access to ethnic foods on campus, as many of this

study's participants expressed a desire to have their native fare available.

Legal Regulations

- Provide clear and concise details of work and other formal regulations to prospective and enrolled international graduate students;
- Designate a point of contact in the institution responsible for advising students on legal requirements;
- Ensure all relevant information is updated regularly and is easily accessible to all international graduate students;
- Ensure that international students who are facing financial issues are supported appropriately and are able to find on or off-campus work that satisfies all legal work requirements;

Post-Graduation

- Offer students the opportunity to remain engaged and connected in the life of the universities through social media channels, such as Facebook and LinkedIn;
- Offer students membership in a formal alumni association, and allow them to actively participate in either the host country, or their home country;
- Offer students the opportunity to connect with prospective international graduate students from their native countries who are interested in studying at the host institution;
- Offer networking opportunities for academic and professional purposes.

Providing the best service for a growing population of international students takes a lot of strategic planning and an integrated collaboration effort within the university. Developing effective working relationships between the institution's academic and non-academic stakeholders to ensure a collective approach to delivering the best education possible is most important. The first step involves better understanding the academic and personal expectations of international students in order to respond effectively to them and successfully serve and retain these students. Providing faculty and staff the necessary training, continued education, or professional development necessary, as well as promoting dialogue between students and faculty, will enhance understanding of those needs, challenges, desires, and expectations.

A more collaborated approach also requires sufficient financial backing. Having the financial and human resources in place to meet the demand for services and supports is critical, as we are still in the midst of recovering from one of the worst economic recessions in the history of the U.S. and the world.

C. Implications and Recommendations for the CSSAs

Based on interviews with students who actively participated in CSSA organized events, with those who barely attended such events, and with CSSA organizers at both universities, I am in a good position to offer some of my preliminary suggestions for CSSAs.

- To have more events that encourage interactions between Chinese students and non-Chinese students. Students to miss out on experiences or networking because they stick to people who shares the same language and culture.

- To be more active and proactive in working and connecting with other student-led organizations on campus.
- To include students from various departments, generations, genders, and educational levels to increase diversity, as the leadership teams of the CSSAs do not seem to accurately represent the entire student body.
- To be more transparent during the leadership team creation, voting, and election process. To be also more transparent by sharing the CSSA financial budget and financial reports on an annual, if not quarterly, basis.
- To simplify communication channels and to involve students as broadly as possible, so that every Chinese student on campus is considered, and everyone's voice is heard.

D. Implications and Recommendations for Chinese Doctoral Students

Based on the finding and analysis from this study, I offer the following suggestions for the potential benefit of Chinese doctoral students.

- Start the adjustment process well before ever arriving in the U.S. For example, one can try to improve his or her English proficiency before leaving the home country. Also, one can gain knowledge about the general and academic cultures in the United States.
- Bear in mind that adjustment is a growing process. A student will become stronger and more capable after persevering and overcoming the struggles.
- Be mentally and emotionally prepared to encounter many difficulties, both in life and in academic studies. Since studying in the United States is a major change,

there are sure to be a variety of challenges. Some of the difficulties, such as those concerning the English language, everyday living, and dining may be easily anticipated, while difficulties in the academic culture may not be so easily predicted. People usually function better when they know what to expect. Consequently, being mentally prepared for all kinds of difficulties is the first step in handling them.

- Try to learn how to stay focused on priorities. Coming from a foreign country to study in the U.S., a student is sure to encounter a variety of new things. Learning to focus on major goals is crucial to successful adjustment. One good way to enhance one's abilities to focus on priorities is to work and learn from someone who is already capable of setting and sticking to their priorities.
- Learn to think more flexibly. Try to understand that there is no right or wrong in cultural differences. The ability to view cultures from multiple perspectives is an important step before adjustment. One good way to enhance one's flexibility in thinking is to work and learn from someone who is already flexible in thinking.
- Ask, rather than figure things out. Although it is important to be self-confident and self-reliant, it is also very important to ask and observe because an entirely new and different set of social rules are in play in the United States.
- Try to stay focused on the positive rather than the negative aspects of life. Coming to study in a totally new culture, a student is sure to encounter setbacks. At such times, optimism can help one maintain hope and high morale, and, therefore, become better adjusted. One good way to enhance one's positive perspective on life is to work and learn from people who already have a positive

perspective.

- Set up and utilize social networks in overcoming difficulties. One sure way to set up useful social networks is to offer help to others when they need it. In the meantime, one should also try to bear in mind that the American society is a much more individualistic society and being self-reliant is very important.
- Compared to students from Europe, North America, and South America, Chinese students, and all Asian students, should bear in mind that they may face more difficulties due to greater cultural differences and more prominent linguistic problems than others.
- Reach out to the local community, and try not to feel offended if the host people do not understand the cultural backgrounds of international students. If you reach out to the community and interact their own culture, they and their fellow international students will have a better chance to be understood. Students should take initiative and seek to be proactive, rather than hoping to be understood passively.
- Try to find groups you identify with, and then work with these groups to deal with difficulties and problems.
- Actively engage in all kinds of activities organized and offered by the CSSA, International Affairs Office, or International Center to gain cultural knowledge, set up social networks, practice English, spread knowledge of your own culture, and so on.

IV. Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study may not be generalized to all Chinese doctoral students, due to my qualitative approach and the ever-changing demographics of student populations. My recommendations for future research have to do with the size of sampling, research methods, and targeted population, in order to better understand and comprehend their integration experiences in U.S. higher education.

Even though I use the term “Chinese doctoral students” in this study, I am referring specifically to those students who were born and raised in China, and who had a Chinese education before they came to the United States for their graduate schools. Given the vast size and huge population of China, it is worth mentioning the cultural and ethnic diversity among different Chinese students, including linguistic differences. With this in mind, my first recommendation is that within the large sample of Chinese students, regional and individual differences relative to collegiate adjustment should be explored in future research. For example, what kinds of different challenges do students from China who have English as a third language and Mandarin as their second, such as students from Xinjiang or Tibet, face? In other words, I want to caution against thinking of Chinese students as a single monolithic unit, and hence encourage the continued research of diverse populations of Chinese international students.

- Future research could be conducted to study the integration experience of Chinese undergraduate students in the United States, as there has been a dramatic growth of Chinese undergraduate students in recent years. There are some big differences between graduate and undergraduate students.
- Similar could be done using a similar population in more universities, which

could potentially give results that more effectively generalize the average Chinese doctoral students' experience, and thus be more applicable to other universities.

- Future studies could also include quantitative methods for additional understanding and depth by examining a much larger population on a larger scale or by adding an institutional integration scale (Pascarella & Terenznin, 1980).
- Future research can also be conducted to explore how institutional culture and different student affairs/service practices affect students' integration experiences in China and in America.
- Future research should examine the impact of Chinese Student Organizations on social integration at other U.S. universities.
- Finally, future research can be conducted to better understand such topics as international student engagement in communities, and international students' networking through social media.
- Recognizing that China as a whole is emerging as one of the strongest economies in the world, future research should also examine to what extent financial hardships of Chinese students in American universities trace to notions (and possibly resentments) of China as the "world's banker."

V. Concluding Remarks

As I mentioned in the opening chapter, as an international graduate student myself, I came to the United States trying to see the other side of the planet. I have had good and bad times, and I have been through ups and downs both on and off-campus, just like many others. With the attempt to adapt to the new social, cultural, and academic

environment, many students, myself being one of them, decide to leave habits, traditions, and roots behind in order to bring their American dreams into realization. It was through this journey, isolated or collective, that new relationships have been formed and old ones have been maintained, strengthened, and nourished. All of sudden, I find myself a new, changed, and different person from the one I was when I entered this country several years ago. With that said, this study has been extremely personal to me from the very beginning. In the end, however, I realized that it could also be relevant to many others.

In summary, my goal was to make some contributions to the literature and research in the areas of multi/cross-cultural integration, social capital, and the concept of social network and campus climate; to enhance understandings of the expectations and experience of international graduate students at different universities during their transition process; to explore and include the support staff and office perspective and experiences; and, finally, to make recommendations for practices and to identify topics for further research.

In conclusion, in order to help Chinese doctoral students smoothly adapt to American culture, and American universities in particular, university personnel and international student organizations must realize that, while international students share many common adaptation problems, they also have problems peculiar to their own cultural groups. Chinese students generally share the same or similar culture, but due to historical, political and familial socioeconomic reasons, they can also differ in many ways; therefore, Chinese international students must be studied not only as a group, but individually as well.

Appendix One

Research Questions

- 1) What are the academic and social challenges that Chinese doctoral students face in their adjustment (integration) to a U.S. university? What different strategies do they employ in coping with their new environments, including the ways in which they are able to access various resources?
- 2) What role does the Chinese Student and Scholar Association play in support of Chinese international doctoral students and their academic and social adjustment to their U.S. universities? In what ways does the CSSA promote elements of Chinese culture at the respective university in a manner supportive of Chinese students?
- 3) How are Chinese doctoral students' national and cultural identities challenged and potentially reconfigured in light of their experiences at U.S. universities?
- 4) What organizational differences related to the academic and social integration of Chinese doctoral students may be observed between U.S. universities located in two distinct regions of the country?
- 5) What disciplinary differences are revealed among Chinese doctoral students that relate to their academic and social integration?

Appendix Two

Interview Protocols

Interview Question Set One --- To Chinese Doctoral Students

Section One: Background and demographic information

1. What is your name and age? How long have you been in the United States? Do you have family here?
2. Can you tell me briefly your educational background in China?
3. Why did you choose (name of institution)? How much did you know about this institution before you came to it? Can you describe your first impression when you just arrived? Has your impression about this institution changed? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. What is your current major and program? What is your degree goal? At what stage are you in the program?

Section Two: Academic and social challenges

A. Visa status

1. What was your experience of obtaining your current visa? Do you have any concerns about applying for your next visa for entry to the U.S.? If so, please describe your concerns. If not, why not?
2. How does your area of study impact your visa application? (Please elaborate?) In what ways did your advisor, department, or university help you with the visa process?

3. Have you ever thought about changing your visa status? If so, have you ever attended any immigration seminars hosted by the CSSA? What have been your experiences in such seminars?

4. What is your career goal after you finish your current program? Do you plan to go back to China? Why or why not?

B. Financial support

1. What is your current financial support situation? What are your experiences with applying for scholarships at (name of institution)? What is the major challenge or concern in finding financial support? In what ways did your advisor, department, or peers help with financial support?

2. How often have you attended financial workshops hosted by the CSSA? What has been your experience?

C. English proficiency

1. Are you able to fully understand your lectures, classroom discussions, or meetings with faculty and/or peers? What do your faculty, advisor in particular, think of your language proficiency?

2. As a Chinese doctoral student, what do you find most challenging about the English language (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, or writing)? Do you think there are differences by disciplines?

3. Have you ever taken any ESL language classes? Did you attend the English courses offered by the CSSA? Have you ever attended a writing workshop or ESL writing group? Have you turned to native speakers for help?

D. Social interactions

1. What key relationships have you made since coming here? What are their ethnicities/nationalities? How often do you spend time with your friends? What language do you use in your interactions with them?
2. What is your support structure? In what ways have they helped you most?
3. Please describe your experiences with your advisor, faculty, staff, and peers in social settings.
4. What student organizations are you affiliated with at this institution? How often do you attend their meetings or activities?
5. What has been your experience with CSSA? In what ways did you make friends at any CSSA parties or gathering?
6. What has been your experience living in Los Angeles/Bloomington?

E. Academic interaction

1. What are the differences/similarities of your higher education experience in China and the U.S. (e.g., grading, teaching, research)?
2. Please describe your experiences with your academic advisor, other faculty members, academic staff, and peers?
3. How many times a week/month/quarter do you have meetings with your advisor? How long do your meetings last? What are your expectations of your advisor or other faculty? Do you feel that your advisors are supportive and helpful?
4. What has been most academically challenging as a Chinese doctoral student at this institution? Are there university resources available to help you deal with your academic challenges? What can the institution do better to help with your studies/research?

Interview Protocol Set Two --- To CSSA Organizers/Leaders

Section One: Background and demographic information

1. What is your name and age? How long have you been in the United States?
2. How long have you been involved with CSSA?

Section Two: Their involvement in CSSA

1. What is the mission of CSSA at this institution? How is that mission achieved? What is the structure of CSSA? How does it work? How is CSSA funded?
2. What influenced your involvement with CSSA? What have been your experiences with serving Chinese doctoral students? What are the greatest challenges you have faced in serving them?
3. What do you believe are the major challenges Chinese doctoral students face while studying and living at this institution?
4. What kinds of resources or activities do you have to help Chinese doctoral students in terms of their academic and social challenges?
5. How many Chinese doctoral students are active or casual participants? What is the degree of their involvement?
6. Can you describe the role CSSA played in organizing the Anti-Tibet Independence Rally last year? Can you describe the effort that CSSA has made in preparing for the Chinese New Year Party? Or any other events?
7. Has CSSA partnered with other student organizations or university administrators on campus to address Chinese doctoral students' concerns?

8. Do you think the practices at your CSSA are different from those at other institutions?
9. What can CSSA do to better serve its members or community?
10. Does CSSA have any observable impact on the culture of this institution?

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