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ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the challenges Chinese students may encounter from the beginning of their study-abroad experience in a Midwestern U.S. university and their responses to these challenges. The sample group was composed of 26 Chinese students who were studying in a Midwestern university in the United States. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to the participants. The results of this study indicate that 1) most Chinese students ask for help in the visa application process when they pursue their study in the U.S.; 2) Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges only when the “mianzi” (face) and “guanxi” (relationship) issues are considered as less important in the situation; 3) Chinese students identify their co-nationals (family, significant other, and friends) as their strongest social support. This study also found that Chinese students have both academic and non-academic difficulties in the U.S. The biggest non-academic difficulty for this group of participants was transportation. The differences among their reactions to different levels of challenges were studied in previous research. Their needs for help in the visa application process, the available help sources, and the helpfulness of these sources were first researched in this study. Recommendations for universities, professors, international program specialists and Chinese students were provided based on the results. Future research may include open-ended questions, employ cross-sectional research design and recruit a larger sample of participants. The difference in Chinese students’ reactions to different levels of challenges has not been researched before in other studies, so replications of research are needed to retest this conclusion with a different sample or population.
To my Grandfather, for the perseverance he demonstrated in the Long March;

and my Grandmother, for her unconditional love and care.
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My parents, Wu Xiaowu and Xian Shengzhen, did not have a chance to go to college in the Cultural Revolution, but they have given me the most important part of my education without asking for anything in return.

And my loving husband, Wang Pu, has endured all the hardships but has never complained. His support and insightful ideas made the writing of this thesis enjoyable.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

An Overview of Chinese Students in the U.S.

From Rong Hong “the first Chinese student to be educated in a U.S. university,” who started his study in 1847 and graduated from Yale College in 1854 (Hwa, 2005) to all the Chinese students who are studying on the campuses of almost all types of American colleges and universities, studying in the U.S. has been one of the sources for generations of Chinese students to receive education.

As Weili Ye introduced in her book *Seeking Modernity in China’s Name—Chinese students in the United States 1900-1927*, the first group of Chinese students experienced “traumatic” transformations when they first came to the U.S. They had to lose their queues, abandon their silk garments, shift from chopsticks to knives and forks, eat large pieces of raw steak, and all these happened so rapidly that the Chinese students became bewildered. However, all these accounted transformations happened more than one hundred years ago. Do Chinese students who are staying in or preparing to come to the U.S. have the same bewilderedness? They wear T-shirts, enjoy eating pizza, watch Hollywood movies, use Windows operating systems on their laptops and speak English. The differences seem not as obvious as what their predecessors experienced, but does this mean that they can easily adapt to their study life on American campuses? Does this mean that they do not have the “traumatic” transformations? How do they solve the problems they encounter in the U.S.? Whom do they ask for suggestions? How can they be better prepared for this experience?

According to the *Open Doors Press Releases 2006*, the press releases of the annual report on international academic mobility published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,
Mainland China remains the second largest sending country of students to study in the U.S., with numbers steady at 62,582 (up 0.1% from 2005).

As more and more Chinese students come to the U.S. in the pursuit of education, problems they encounter and their choices of solutions have aroused the interests of many researchers in different disciplines, such as communication studies, English, psychology, and education to analyze from their own angles and perspectives. These studies have already probed into the issues and topics related to Chinese students in the U.S. and provided a sound basis for future research.

Ward (2001) pointed out that the comparison between British or American and Chinese educational systems and values has shown that the differences can be interpreted in relationship to individualism-collectivism and power distance. It is also stated by Ward that international students need to achieve academic success not only through intellectual endeavors but also through “culture-learning”. The burden of making successful adjustment to this different study life is on the international students themselves, although sensitivity and concerns have been aroused on American campuses and in some communities.

The problems international students may encounter on a foreign campus can be put into two groups: those that occur in the classroom (academic adjustment) and those in their daily life (social life adjustment). Both of these two groups of problems have been studied by researchers in the fields of psychology, education, communication, and English by using different groups of subjects in different locations in the world.

Different variables have been studied by researchers. Huang (2004) studied English proficiency of Chinese students especially in understanding academic lectures. The results of this study proved that Chinese students have language difficulties. There are also several different
studies on the cultural adjustment (Tata, 2005; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Hinchcliff-Pelias & Greer, 2004; Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor & Baden, 2005; Chang, 1996; Zhang & Rentz, 1996). 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.

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. 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 & 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. Wu (1999) found that on the Internet Chinese students continue to maintain their cultural identity and help each other. Petress’s research (1995) was the only one that mentioned the preparations and permits seeking of Chinese students.

**Visa Application Process for Chinese Students and Hypothesis 1**

Once Chinese students make a decision to come to the U.S. to study, they also start their process of finding solutions to difficulties they may encounter. Problems may occur before they arrive in the U.S. and start their study when they start all the preparations, such as taking exams, applying for programs, and applying for visas to the U.S. In Petress’s interviews (1995) with Chinese students who were preparing to come to the U.S. to study, the respondents all said that
they did not get any help in getting permits from either the Chinese side or getting visas from the U.S. to come to the U.S. Petress explained this with the following reasons:

(1) a reluctance by response to admit receiving such sensitive help; (2) an isolation from influence of permit granting officials; or (3) a reluctance to ask for, offer, or accept help in this arena due to its political sensitivity and potential disastrous effects for one's future, one's family, or one’s home school. (Procedures section, para. 18)

However, these interviews were conducted in the 90s, and the situations now in China have changed. Study-abroad plans are no longer considered as sensitive issues. On the contrary, there are quite a number of agencies or companies that provide services in helping these Chinese students. They help these students make their study-abroad plans, teach them language skills in preparing for exams like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Examination), and even conduct mock visa interviews with the students.

Getting U.S. visas has been one of the most unpredictable issues for students or scholars after “911”, especially for those majoring in sensitive fields of study such as Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. Various groups of scientists and educators have been working hard to help their colleagues to obtain visas to study in the U.S. academia. Hard science disciplines expressed their concerns in journals like Nature, Science and Physics Today, talking about reduced recruitment of international graduate students after “911” (Brumfiel, 2002; Dawson, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2004) and updates on efforts and improvement afterwards (Unger, 2006). Chinese journals also reported the visa restrictions and effects on Chinese students (Liu, 2003). Some Chinese study-abroad experts wrote about the situation and gave students tips in applying for U.S. visas (Xue, 2003). These reports and discussions all indicated that the visa issue is not only crucial to international students but also important to the academia these students are to enter and
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contribute to. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on Chinese students’ visa application process.

Previous research suggested that during the 90’s, Chinese students did not get help for the process of getting permissions from either Chinese universities and government or the U.S. immigration offices, and no other research has been conducted on this issue since then. According to my own experience and the experience of those who came to the U.S. to study, it is very common among Chinese students to seek help or information in the visa application process, and this experience contradicts the results of Petress’s study. Then, it is worth studying how Chinese students with an intention to study in the U.S. solve these permission problems and whom they go to for help in this post “911” era. **Hypothesis 1**: Chinese students tend to ask for help from their co-nationals in the visa application process.

**Challenges, Responses of Chinese Students and Hypothesis 2**

Chinese students now form the second largest group of international students by nationality in the U.S. When they come to the U.S., they often come with “a false and distorted idea about social life here. (Klomegah, 2006, p.305)”. Before they come to the U.S., international students perceive Americans to be “less friendly, more competitive, and uninterested in foreigners” (Ekachai, Greer & Hincheliff-Pelias, 1999, p.302), which is, according to this research on international students’ perceptions of Americans via U.S. media, a result of the U.S. movies and television programs. For international students, before they come to the U.S., American media products, mainly films and TV programs are the influential sources for them to try to picture what the U.S. and Americans are like before their arrival.

Then how do Chinese students form perceptions about the U.S.? How do they adjust to this new environment under the pressure from lack of English proficiency, social support, and
knowledge in the social norms? According to previous research results, Chinese students tend to be satisfied with explanations about grades rather than appeals that are preferred by their American classmates (Tata, 2005). Chinese students are more likely to turn to avoidance, while their American counterparts tend to go for emotional support, which is mentally and physically much healthier than avoidance (Mortenson, 2006).

However, as reported by *Nature* in the year 2005, there was a protest by Chinese graduate students at Yale University to support a Chinese second-year graduate student for her complaint against Yale, “accusing the university of treating Chinese students unfairly” (Brumfiel, 2005, p.278). Previous research suggests Chinese students are “passive recipients and quiet learners” (Zhou, Knoke & Sakamoto, 2005, p.288), and they appear to be silent and tend to avoid troubles or conflicts. However, this protest suggests that Chinese students may also choose to take actions rather than being silent and passive. It would be worth looking into this issue to find out whether there is such a change among them or not and the reasons behind it. Their preferred solutions may not be just limited to explanations, and they might also appeal for grades, funding, and other opportunities in their study in the U.S. **Hypothesis 2**: Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges.

Social Support for Chinese Students and Hypothesis 3

“Not surprisingly, international students frequently report needing more social support than local students (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001, p.150).” Ward, Bochner & Furnham pointed out that research results show that international students understand that interactions with the host country nationals would both benefit them psychologically and provide them a social network. However, the interactions are still limited because international students tend to have more co-national friends as they find it more difficult to establish friendship with host country
nationals. This is also echoed by Ekachai, Greer & Hinchcliff-Pelias’s (1998) research on international students’ perceptions of Americans via U.S. media, in which they found that internationals students view friendship as a relationship gained through a developing process and should be long-lasting, while American students’ friendship is easy and quick to be formed and ended. In their study, international students’ perceptions about the U.S. and its people were obviously changed. They also gave one example that is very typical: Americans are more conservative than they are expected to be.

The most significant problems for internationals students, according to Ward, Bochner & Furnham, occur in the academic environment. “Student and teacher expectations, the patterns of classroom interaction, and even perceptions and definitions of intelligence, vary across cultures. (p.166)” Ward, Bochner & Furnham also stated that host country nationals’ support for international students are “tangible, instrumental assistance”, while support from co-nationals is “socio-emotional support”, and this difference in support makes international students rely more on co-nationals than on host country nationals.

As it is difficult for Chinese students to form long lasting friendships with American students or other international students, they rely on the Chinese community, either in reality or online, as their major social support source. In Wu’s study on the cyberspace and cultural identity of Chinese students, it is recorded that Chinese students use both English and Chinese publications and discussion groups to build their cyber-communities. They help each other to adapt to the life in the U.S. by providing laws, regulations and information concerning international students, visitors and immigrants. The content analysis conducted by Wu also showed that Chinese students “strongly identify themselves with Chinese culture in cyberspace” (p.87). And these cyberspace interactions provide support for them because of this identity.
Among all these variables studied in previous research, there is no result provided to show which problems are the most difficult for Chinese students. In some of the studies, the solutions of Chinese students or international students in solving these problems were discussed. Tseng & Newton’s study (2002) summarized eight strategies used by international students in adjusting to study abroad life. The sample in Ward, Bochner & Furnham’s study was composed of international students from different countries. The results indicated that international students tend to rely on their co-nationals for help and support. However, Chinese students are from a culture that is very different from European cultures or other Asian cultures, and Chinese students now form the second largest international students group by nationality. But no previous research was conducted on the specific help sources available to Chinese students, and no previous research has asked Chinese students themselves to identify the strongest social support to rely on in coping with these problems.

The availability of their co-national social connection, the same language and culture, similar situations and Chinese students’ strong identity as members of the Chinese culture can all become the reasons for the tendency for them to go to their co-nationals for help and support. However, this has not been tested by using Chinese students as the study sample. **Hypothesis 3:** Chinese students’ strongest social support is their co-nationals.

This chapter provided an overview of Chinese students in the U.S., and a literature review of research on the adaptation of Chinese students/international students in the U.S. Three hypotheses were proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Chinese students ask for help mostly from their co-nationals rather than from American people or agencies.
Hypothesis 2: Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and obedient when they face challenges.

Hypothesis 3: Chinese students’ strongest social support is their co-nationals.

In the next chapter, the methodology of this study, the design of the questionnaire, and the questions included in it will be introduced.
CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

This study examines Chinese students’ adaptation to studying on an American campus including the visa application process, their responses to possible social and academic challenges in the U.S., and the support they rely on in responding to those challenges. In the previous chapter, I proposed three hypotheses on Chinese students’ adaptation to U.S. campuses. This chapter outlines the design and methodology used in this research study.

Selection of Methodology

The study was designed to gather data from Chinese students to answer the following research questions and prove or disprove the hypotheses:

Research Question 1: What agencies/who do Chinese students ask for help when applying for visas to come to the U.S. to study?

Hypothesis 1: Chinese students ask for help mostly from their co-nationals rather than from American people or agencies.

Research Question 2: How do Chinese students respond to both academic and social challenges during their study in the U.S.?

Hypothesis 2: Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges.

Research Question 3: What do Chinese students consider as the strongest social support available for them to rely on during their study in the U.S.?

Hypothesis 3: Chinese students’ strongest social support is their co-nationals.

Because this research is about Chinese students who are studying in the U.S., the subjects of this study should be Chinese students who are already enrolled in American universities. However, it is not possible to contact all Chinese students in the U.S. So I decided to recruit
subjects in Bowling Green State University on a voluntary basis because it is not only convenient to get in touch with them but also should help strengthen the data in the aspects of return rate and reliability due to the established guanxi between me and my Chinese co-national friends.

“Guanxi is the intricate, pervasive network of personal relationships which every Chinese cultivates with energy and imagination (Burns, 1998, p.40)” As “[m]embers of guanxi networks value reciprocity, trust and implicit understanding between the two parties involved’, being one member of this network of Chinese students on BGSU campus, I may expect a higher return rate and less perfunctory answers than from subjects who have no established friendship or acquaintance with me.

There is a student organization named the Chinese students and Scholars Association (CSSA) in BGSU. According to CSSA Constitution and By-Laws (retrieved May 13, 2007), “[c]reated in 1987, CSSA aspires to be a home for Chinese students and scholars as well as an organization that promotes activities designed for non-Chinese to better understand China, Chinese people, and Chinese culture.” This organization uses Chinalist, a listproc provided by the university to serve as the communication tool for CSSA members, and more than 100 Chinese students and scholars are on the listproc now.

The design of this study was planned in March, 2007 and was approved on April 26th, 2007 by Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) of BGSU. This did not leave too much time for the study to be carried out before the end of the finals week, which is May 4th, 2007, when many Chinese students may leave campus. So there was only one week available for data collection.

As explained above, the following issues related to the situations of this research were considered: perceptions and behaviors of Chinese students, Chinese students in BGSU as the subjects, Chinalist as the communication tool, the end of the semester with the finals week
approaching. All these contributed to the selection of a questionnaire as the research methodology to conduct a cross-sectional research. And, the questionnaire also needed to contain only a limited number of questions in order to get a better return rate. Because, according to my previous experience in surveying Chinese, I know they do not like completing questionnaires.

This research study was designed to be a cross-sectional research, which means the data were collected at one point in time (Merrigan & Huston, 2004). It was designed to be a cross-sectional research because the aim is to find out Chinese students’ perceptions and behaviors, not the changes that occur over a certain period of time.

“Survey research is the appropriate mode of inquiry for making inferences about a large group of people based on data drawn from a relatively small number of individuals in that group (Marshall & Rossman, 2006. p. 125).” “This method of information gathering is useful to get ideas and opinions… (Porter & Coggin, 1995. p. 15)” The nature of this research, which is about people's perceptions or behaviors, led to the selection of a survey as the primary methodology.

The specific way of capturing this survey research data is the questionnaire because questionnaires are used “when the research requires responses from many people, perhaps with certain qualities, features, or experiences in common, or perhaps residing in a common geographic area (Porter & Coggin, 1995. p. 15)”. Chinese students are the subjects of this research study, and they share certain qualities such as nationality, language, and culture. Another reason for choosing the questionnaire is that it is the most efficient way to obtain responses on the same questions within a limited period of time (Davies & Mosdell, 2006).

As Daniel Murphy explained, “it is usually impossible to query every individual who could possibly be involved in the research inside or outside of an organizational setting” (2002,
Therefore, Chinese students in Bowling Green State University were selected as representatives of the larger group, Chinese students who are studying on American campuses.

This sampling of Chinese students studying in Bowling Green State University is also a matter of convenience. “Convenience sampling means that researcher questions the people that are convenient to him or her (Stacks & Hocking, 1999, p.212).” This sampling procedure was chosen because of limited time and limited access to the subjects. The BGSU sample was also convenient because of the established guanxi (relationship) between me and other Chinese on campus. This established relationship suggested that people would take time to complete and return the questionnaire because they understood its importance to my research. The research questions ask about Chinese students who are studying in the U.S. However, it is impossible to distribute this questionnaire to all Chinese students in the U.S. Therefore, as mentioned previously, Chinese students who are studying in Bowling Green State University were selected to be potential subjects.

As convenience sampling requires careful and cautious interpretation of the data collected (Stacks & Hocking, 1999), only a limited generalization of the results is reasonable and possible. Murphy (2002) also pointed out that a convenient sample may be used if information can be collected from individuals who are readily accessible; however, this does increase the possibility of sampling bias. As the sample I am using for this study is a convenience sample, Chinese students studying at BGSU, the results should not be generalized to all the Chinese students studying in American universities. However, generalization can be made to Chinese students who are studying with similar demographic backgrounds in similar Midwestern American universities.
The only data source for this study was obtained from the questionnaires completed by the subjects.

**Questionnaire Transmission & Return**

The questionnaire was distributed and collected through the electronic form only. For those who were members of the listproc the email with the questionnaire was sent to them through Chinalist. The subjects were recruited through an email (see Appendix I) with the questionnaire as an attachment sent out to the Chinese students through this list-proc. For some of the students who did not subscribe to the list-proc, the email was sent to them individually. This initial email was sent with the questionnaire as the attachment on April 28th, 2007.

The potential subjects were asked to download the questionnaire, complete it, save it, and then return the completed questionnaire by email. They were only given one week. At the end of the week, the questionnaires returned to me were gathered together and the data were input into a computer and processed.

This transmission method was adopted because it is the best way to communicate with most of the Chinese students in BGSU. It also helped to avoid the printing, distributing to individuals, and collecting of the questionnaires. Subjects were able to complete the questionnaires all by themselves without any researcher looking over their shoulders. This increased the validity of this study because the possible influence and pressure from the researcher on the subjects were eliminated. The convenience made possible by using emails also suggested a higher rate of return.

However, this questionnaire was sent out on Aril the 28th, 2007, which is during the finals week of the spring semester of the 2006 school year. Students were busy preparing for their final
examinations or assignments. Some chose not to spend time on this questionnaire. Some of them planned to but forgot and missed the one-week period for returning it.

A reminder email was sent to this list-proc at the end of the week. To provide potential respondents as much time as possible, late questionnaires were accepted before the final analysis of the results was conducted.

Questionnaire Design

There are two sections in this questionnaire: the demographics section and the information section. These two are “the two essential ingredients of all good questionnaires” (Davies & Mosdell, 2006, p.37). In the information section, multiple choice and likert-scale questions were employed. The demographic section was designed to gather information that “permits inferences regarding the extent to which the results of a research project are generalizable” (Peterson, 2000, p.84). As convenience sampling was used in this study, it is of vital importance to gather the demographic information of the participants in order to make inferences or generalizations.

This questionnaire had two versions: an English version and a Chinese version. Both of these versions are attached to the email (see Appendices II and III). There are certain reasons for providing it in both English and Chinese languages. The English proficiency levels of Chinese students are not the same. Some Chinese students told me that they would prefer a Chinese questionnaire to an English one because they feel more comfortable reading and responding in Chinese, although they are all English speakers. If only the English version was provided, some of the Chinese students might choose not to participate in this study. The Chinese version also met one of the Guidelines for Questionnaire Construction provided by Merrigan and Huston (2004). They suggested that the instructions and questions in questionnaires should be easy to
understand. The availability of these two versions may help increase the return rate of this questionnaire. Providing a Chinese version also gave the subjects a choice, which conveniently became one part of this research. I analyzed the ratio of the returned questionnaires in English and Chinese to find out whether there is a language preference for questionnaires among Chinese students whose English proficiency should enable them to understand and answer the English questionnaires without any difficulty. This analysis is presented in the next chapter with the discussions on the data from the questionnaires.

In cross-cultural survey research, there is a model called “Ask-the-Same-Question” (ASQ) (Harkness, 2003), which means the translated version of the questionnaire should ask the same questions as the original questionnaire. The original questionnaire of this study was designed by using English and then translated into Chinese. However, such translations create the possibility of presenting two different surveys if the translated questionnaire is not exact.

“Translators should be skilled practitioners who have received training on translation questionnaires (Harkness, 2003, p. 36).” I am a Chinese student with a Bachelor’s degree in English. I also have a translation certificate issued to me after training by Xi’an International Studies University, China, in translating various documents including questionnaires. My qualifications for working as a translator and my familiarity with this study ensured the accuracy and appropriateness of the translated version.

Harkness suggests “a translated question should linguistically and pragmatically ask the same question as the course question” (p. 37). So, the process of translation also helped me to revise and clarify the questions and answers. For question 4 in Part II (see Appendix II), the original choice C was “appeal”; however, there is no policy existing in the Chinese education system which allows for a grade appeal. In case that some Chinese student might not understand
the meaning of this word and the actions involved in the appeal procedures, choice C was changed to “I talk to the instructor about it” and translated into corresponding Chinese. Words or phrases like “BBS” were not translated into Chinese because they are directly borrowed from English and used in Chinese. Because written English and Chinese both have grammatical gender, the choices of related words were limited to gender-neutral ones wherever possible.

The Chinese language used for this translation is Mandarin Chinese, which is also called Standard Chinese and is the official language of China. Any Chinese who received formal education in Mainland China should be able to understand this translated version regardless of the dialects they may speak.

Long questionnaires are “fatiguing to individuals who may not complete certain items or who may decide not to complete the questionnaire at all because the task seems too demanding (Merrigan & Huston, 2004, p. 95)”. As questionnaires with a proper length may result in a better return rate, this questionnaire was designed to be concise with a reasonable number of questions so that the participants should be able to complete it in 10 to 15 minutes. There were altogether 28 questions: eight demographic questions and 20 questions in the information section (seven questions in Part I, six questions in Part II, and seven questions in Part III). Each of these three parts emphasizes one of the three research questions of this study. The demographic questions and the three parts of the information questions will be explained in the following section.

Questions Included

In the demographics section, the subjects were asked to fill out their basic information such as age, gender, and marital status. They were also asked to answer how long they had been staying in the U.S. and how many times they had been back to China. Another question is on whether they had obtained a degree in China before they came to the U.S. and what the major
was for that degree. Because students with different situations might respond to their new environment differently, I was interested to know whether there is a relation between the time the students stay in the U.S. and the frequencies of their visits to their home country with their adaptation to the American campus. Students with different academic backgrounds also indicate their possible exposures to English language and American history, which are also important variables to consider, because this could make them feel fewer difficulties in adjusting to study and life in the U.S.

In the information section, there are three parts which were designed to answer the three research questions:

Research Question 1: What agencies/who do Chinese students ask for help when applying for a visa to come to the U.S. to study?

Research Question 2: How do Chinese students respond to both academic and social challenges during their study in the U.S.?

Research Question 3: What do Chinese students consider as the strongest social support available for them to rely on during their study in the U.S.?

Although there are research studies on Chinese students’ adaptation to U.S. campuses, limited research has been done on their adaptation since the beginning of their coming to the U.S., which is the visa application process. But this is worth studying because of the potential visa application risks for Chinese students and the impacts on their frequencies of visiting their home country. It can be understood through the facts on visas: F1/M1 are student visas that expire one year after the issue date. When the visas expire, Chinese students will need to renew their visas if they want to go back to China to visit their families and come back to the U.S. to study. Therefore, there is a risk of not being able to finish their studies if their visa applications...
are denied. Even if their visa applications are checked, they might also miss several weeks of
classes and then lose their assistantships, which could also lead to failures to complete their study
or complete on time.

However, no recent research has been done to try to find out what social resources
Chinese students use to help them when applying for visas. Does this experience influence their
choice for help when they arrive in the U.S.? Part I in this questionnaire asks questions related to
this issue. The subjects were asked to choose the type of the visa they held when they entered the
U.S., how many times they had to apply for that visa, how they rated the difficulty or easiness in
obtaining that visa, and whether they asked others for help with that visa application (see
Appendix II).

The subjects were asked to rate the difficulty or easiness in obtaining the U.S. visas
because this difficulty or easiness in obtaining U.S. visas may influence their decisions on
whether to go home or not during breaks. As family is one of the important social supports one
can get, this possible difficulty might have affected respondents’ choices of family as one’s
important social support. If it is regarded as easy, then the students may choose to go back and
visit their family more than those who rated it as difficult. And this might influence their answers
in the third part when asked to choose the strongest social support.

A list of possible people or agencies was provided for them to choose all that they asked
for help and the ones from which they got the most or the least help. This list was compiled by
researching on online forums, news releases of the U.S. embassy in Beijing and news in Chinese
about students going abroad. Eleven possible choices were provided and in case there was any
left out, the last choice was ‘other’ and a blank with room given for the participants to provide
their own answers (see questions 5, 6 and 7 in Part I of Appendix II).
In Part II of this questionnaire, subjects were asked to answer questions related to their responses to the challenges they might have encountered in their study in the U.S. Previous research indicated that Chinese students are quiet and passive. However, recent news about Chinese students standing up for their benefits and rights on U.S. campuses posed the question for researchers in related fields such as education, psychology and communication studies. Are Chinese students still quiet? Or do they prefer to act as their American counterparts who appeal for their grades and interrupt professors? Questions with scenarios like difficulties and challenges in their academic study, grades received in courses, others’ misunderstanding about China or Chinese culture were asked to obtain answers from Chinese students themselves (see Part II of Appendix II).

The question about grades in courses (see question 4 in Part II of Appendix II), as explained in Questionnaire Design of this chapter, was modified to avoid using “appeal”, which does not exist in Chinese education system. The last two questions (see questions 5 and 6 in Part II of Appendix II) were both about whether they choose to correct or not if someone else shows misunderstanding of China or Chinese. However, the difference between these two questions is that in the first one that “someone” could be anybody, while the second question is focused on their professors. This could reveal whether Chinese students would try to correct their professors who are considered as authorities in Chinese culture.

The last part, Part III, is about the social support for Chinese students. The first question (see question 1 in Part III of Appendix II) repeats one question in Part II on whether there were difficulties in their study. This repetition was used to test validity of the answers. It also served as a screening question for the next question, which is about whom they would ask for help with academic difficulties.
Then the subjects were asked whether they had any non-academic difficulties. If they had, they were asked to choose from a list of types of difficulties and state which one is the biggest difficulty for them. They were then asked to choose whom they would ask for help with non-academic difficulties. The last question asked them to choose the strongest social support from a list (see question 7 in Part III of Appendix II). The Chinese-related choices were also designed to discover whether their Chinese relatives or friends are in the U.S. or in China.

This chapter has explained the reasons for selecting questionnaire as the survey instrument for this study. The design of this questionnaire and the specific questions asked are also discussed in detail to provide the relationship between the questions and the kinds of information they were seeking. The results and the discussion of this study are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter analyzes and reports the results of my study on Chinese students’ adaptation to a Midwestern university in the U.S. There are two sections in this chapter: 1) data collection and demographic background of participants, 2) interpretations and hypotheses. The second section is divided into three parts corresponding to the three hypotheses to present the results and my interpretations of the results.

Data Collection and Demographic Background of Participants

There is a student organization in Bowling Green State University (BGSU) named the Chinese students and Scholars Association (CSSA). According to the CSSA website (retrieved May 13, 2007), the major communication tool for the Chinese community of students, faculty members, their families, and others who are interested in this organization is a listproc (Chinalist) provided by BGSU. All the subscribers of this listproc can post and receive messages in the form of emails. These members are from different departments in the university. As this is the most efficient way available to reach most of the Chinese students and the sample selection method for this study is convenience sampling, Chinalist was selected as the major method for delivering the questionnaire used to gather data for this study. However, a few Chinese students were not subscribers to Chinalist. I talked to them individually about this research, and some of them agreed to complete the questionnaire, so emails were sent individually to these students.

The English and Chinese versions (see Appendices II and III) of the questionnaire for this study were sent out as attachments to an email (see Appendix I) to Chinalist on April 28th, 2007, the Saturday before the finals week of the spring semester of school year 2006. The last day for questionnaire return was May 8th, 2007. The time was limited because many of the students had already planned to leave campus right after the final exams and their access to the Internet could
be limited in traveling or the Internet service at their destinations could be of poor quality, so I
had to gather the data within the time the students would be available.

As the number of Chinese students enrolled at BGSU was estimated by CSSA to be about 100, I estimated that about 100 Chinese students received my email. Twenty-seven of them returned the questionnaires, but one of the questionnaires was only half finished. So I used 26 questionnaires. This makes the return rate about 26%. As the sampling method of this study was convenience sampling, the original sample size was limited to the CSSA members in BGSU. According to Denscombe, “there is no hard and fast rule about what constitutes an acceptable response rate,” (2003, p.20) but it would be good to find whether those who did not respond to the questionnaire “differed in any systematic and relevant fashion” (p.21) from those who responded. The return rate of this study was reduced due to the limited time, students’ busy schedule, and pressure caused by final exams. However, there is no explicit difference that can be detected between those who chose to participate and those who didn’t. So the interpretation of the results can be made to Chinese students in BGSU, and it can also be made to other Chinese students with similar demographic backgrounds.

There are two sections in this questionnaire: the demographics section and the information section. The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1. The information section of this questionnaire is demonstrated and discussed with correlations made with the demographic information in the next section of this chapter.
Table 1

*Participants’ Demographic Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23~25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26~29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30~33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39~42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Time in the U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Times to Visit China</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spouse in the U.S.)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(26.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spouse not in the U.S.)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(23.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Present Study/Research</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Master</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Doctorate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-doctorate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree in China</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants were all Chinese students. The mean age of these participants was 29 years with an age range of 23 to 42. Their average stay in the U.S. was two years and two months with the shortest stay being five months and the longest five years.

Before they came to the U.S., all of the 26 participants had received at least Bachelor’s degrees in China, and 22 of the participants specified their majors: Chemistry, Electronic Engineering, English, Biology, Economics, Statistics, Physics, Computer Science, International Trade, Material Engineering, Translation, and Accounting. Six of the participants majored in areas which should have an emphasis on English language or/and culture such as English Language & Culture, International Studies, Translation, and International Trade.

The questionnaire was sent out in two versions: English and Chinese. The questionnaire was originally designed in English; however, a Chinese version was used to bring comfort and convenience for the potential participants who are all Chinese students. The Chinese version was presumed to increase the return rate of the questionnaire. Because language difficulties were considered in the process of designing this questionnaire, the Chinese version could also increase the accuracy of the participants’ understanding of the questions and then the reliability of their answers. Although it cannot be concluded that the Chinese version did help in increasing the return rate because this study was not an experiment and there was not comparison data available, the Chinese version was indeed proved by the returned questionnaires to be a more preferred version than the English one. Eleven (42%) of the participants chose the English version, and 15 (58%) chose the Chinese version. However, this difference of preference was not as big as expected. There are multiple possible reasons why the difference was not greater, but none of them can be proved from this study. One possible reason is that the Chinese version of the questionnaire could not be opened and viewed on some of the computer systems on campus.
because the Chinese characters package was not installed in the operating systems on all the computers in BGSU.

Although the Chinese version was provided in case some of the Chinese students may have difficulties in comprehending English, the results showed that the Chinese version was selected not only by students majoring in the sciences such as Biology, Chemistry and Computer Science, but also by an English major. Six of the 15 participants who chose the Chinese version of this questionnaire identified later in the questionnaire that they experienced language difficulties in the study abroad experience in the U.S. It cannot be concluded that Chinese students strongly prefer Chinese versions of questionnaires to English versions; however, the returned results proved the necessity of providing a Chinese version for those who might have language difficulties or just prefer to read and respond in their native language due to comfort or convenience regardless of their language proficiency level.

Results, Interpretations and Hypotheses

The three parts of the information section of this questionnaire were designed to test the three hypotheses of this study:

1. Chinese students ask for help mostly from their co-nationals rather than from American people or agencies.

2. Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges.

3. Chinese students’ strongest social support is their co-nationals.

In this section, the results collected from the information section of this questionnaire are demonstrated in the form of tables, followed by interpretations of these results. The results and interpretations are organized into three parts in accordance to the three hypotheses.
Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: Chinese students ask for help mostly from their co-nationals rather than from American people or agencies. The questions in Part I of the questionnaire were designed to test Hypothesis 1.

The participants were first asked to answer the following four questions:

1. Which of the following visa types did you obtain when you first came to the U.S.?
   - F1
   - F2
   - J1
   - J2
   - B1 or B2
   - Another visa type

2. How many times did you apply for that U.S. visa?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4 and more

3. How would you rate the easiness or difficulty in obtaining that visa?
   (Please choose only one)
   - very easy
   - easy
   - neutral
   - difficult
   - very difficult

4. When you were getting prepared to apply for the visa to come to the U.S., did you ask someone or some agency for information, advice or help?
   - Yes — Please continue with question 5
   - No — Please go to Part II

The results of questions 1 to 4 in Part I can be found in Table 2.
Table 2

*Responses on Visa Application, Difficulty/Easiness and Need for Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions &amp; Answers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visa Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1/B2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another type</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visa Applications Time(s)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty/Easiness of Visa Application</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need for Information, Advice or Help in Visa Application</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>73.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These questions were included in this questionnaire because the visa application process is one of the early procedures for international students to come to the U.S. to study. In the literature review, I introduced articles introducing the situations for students who majored in areas such as Biology and Chemistry because they had a higher risk of being denied or checked especially in the post “911” period when more visa restrictions were implemented on international students (Brumfiel, 2002; Dawson, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2004; Liu, 2003; Xue, 2003). Therefore, the science majors were expected to have more difficulty in applying for visas, and they were expected to perceive more difficulties in the visa application process than humanities and social science majors.

Variables such as the types of visa and times of application for their first visas were also considered in order to find out whether these variables had influenced the perceived level of difficulty or easiness by the participants.

The difficulty or easiness question required the participants to rate by using a likert-scale. Nineteen (73.08%) of the participants chose that they asked someone or some agency for information or advice when applying for the U.S. visas; seven (26.92%) of them did not. One of these seven participants indicated the visa application process as “difficult”; and two of them applied twice.

The participants came to the U.S. on these different types of visas: F-1 (student visa), J-1 (exchange visitor visa) and F-2 (dependent of F-1 student). Most (22) of the participants came to the U.S. on F-1/J-1 visas. None of the participants who came on F-2 or J1 visas needed to apply more than once. Among the 21 participants who chose “easy” or “very easy”, only one applied twice and the remaining 20 participants all obtained their visas on the first application. One of the two participants who chose “neutral” applied twice and the other applied once. Five of the
participants applied for the visa more than once and they were all F-1 students. Four of them and another F-1 student who applied once chose “difficult” or “very difficult”. These results showed that the times of applying for visas influenced the participants’ perception of the difficulty or easiness of this process: the more times the students had to apply for the visas, the more difficult they perceive the visa application process to be. Certainly, failures in the visa application process increase the perceived difficulty of the visa application. However, because the first experiences dealing with the process of moving to and studying in a new country could affect students’ attitudes about the remainder of their time in the country, their perceived difficulties in their future study might also be increased because of failures in the visa application process. This correlation was not tested in this study because all the participants had started their study in the U.S. by the time of this research; therefore, their perceptions about future difficulties in the U.S. cannot be obtained.

The five participants who rated the visa application as “difficult” or “very difficult” were two Biology majors, two Chemistry majors, and one International Trade major. According to the length of stay in the U.S. stated in the demographic information section, all of these five participants applied for their visas and came to the U.S. after “911”. Both of the participants who rated the visa application as “very difficult” came to the U.S. about four year ago, right after more visa restrictions were implemented on international students in the post “911” period.

Although only five of the participants rated the visa application as “difficult” or “very difficult”, 19 out of the 26 participants did state that they had a need for help or information from other people or agencies. In Petress’s interviews (1995) with Chinese students who were preparing to come to the U.S. to study, the respondents all said that they did not get any help in getting visas. The reasons Petress (1995, Procedures section, para. 18) provided in explaining
this result of the interviews he conducted are “(1) a reluctance by response to admit receiving such sensitive help; (2) an isolation from influence of permit granting officials; or (3) a reluctance to ask for, offer, or accept help in this arena due to its political sensitivity and potential disastrous effects for one's future, one's family, or one’s home school.”

The results of my research study show that the Chinese students are no longer reluctant to admit receiving help in the visa application process because study-abroad is no longer a sensitive issue in China. The “isolation” effect that Petress introduced in his study no longer exists due to the improvement of the communication methods and the rapid and steady increase of the number of Chinese students applying to foreign institutes. The answers given by the participants in my study showed that they did not have an issue like the “potential disastrous effects for one's future, one's family, or one’s home school”. As one of the Chinese students studying in the States and also the researcher of this study, I myself have never heard any of these “disastrous effects” mentioned by Petress. Although this is only anecdotal, I have heard about Chinese students going abroad seeking help within their own or their family’s guanxi (relationship) network to get the permits from the Chinese side as the first step of obtaining the visa to the U.S. Petress’s interpretations were possibly affected by these two factors: the time period in which he conducted his research, which was around 1990 and his identity as a “foreigner” studying Chinese students. Travel between the U.S. and China has become more common and easier since the time period when Petress interviewed those Chinese students, and Chinese students may not share their experience completely with a foreigner because they are not sure what information or interpretations the foreigner might include in the research. However, my identity as both the researcher of this study and one member of the group of people being studied provided me opportunities to both conduct the research on Chinese
students and interpret the results with my own experiences as one of them. This researcher and insider identity also made it possible for me to design the questions and answers with all-sides consideration. For example, the list of available help sources in visa application (see question 5 in Part II of Appendix II) was compiled with my own and my other Chinese friends’ experiences.

The 19 participants who stated that they asked for help or information in the visa application process were asked to answer question 5 “Whom did you ask for information, advice or help?” by checking one or more of the provided choices on help sources. The provided 12 choices contained both the co-national people or agencies and American people or agencies. The results are listed in Table 3. This was a multiple choice question that allowed each participant to select more than one answer. The numbers for the selected choices shown in the table reflect the frequency of these choices being selected. Therefore, the total number of the selected choices is not 26, the number of the participants.
### Table 3

**Responses on Information or Help Sources for Visa Application**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People or agencies for visa application information or help (multiple choices)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends or classmates who were also applying</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends who were already studying or had studied in the U.S.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online forums/BBS established for Chinese students who want to study in the U.S.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some published materials (books)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some study abroad agencies/companies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relatives who were already in the US</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advisor of the academic program that I was to join</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Chinese students in the academic program that I was to join</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSA (Chinese Students and Scholars Association) or a similar student organization of that university</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Center for International programs in the university that I was to attend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American embassy/consulates (their offices, hotlines, websites)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Please specify</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although there were eight co-national choices and only three American choices, the results showed that the provided choices covered most of the possibilities because only one participant selected “Other. Please specify”. This also tells us that there were more co-national help sources than American ones available to Chinese students. So, it would not be surprising to find out that the frequency of these co-national choices being selected was much higher than the American choices, which was 58 to eight.

However, higher frequency only is not enough to argue that these co-national help sources provided more help and information to the participants. The helpfulness of these help sources was tested by asking participants to choose the most helpful and least helpful people or agency in their visa application process. The questions that appeared on the questionnaire were “which of those you have chosen gave you the **most** help or information you needed? (Please check only one)” and “which of those you have chosen gave you the **least** help or information you needed? (Please check only one)”.

As 19 of the 26 participants of this study stated that they had a need for help or information from other people or agencies, only these 19 participants were asked to rate the most and least helpful sources. Sixteen selected the answers for these two questions. The results of these two questions are listed in Table 4.
Table 4

Responses on Most Helpful and Least Helpful Help Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People or agencies for visa application information or help (multiple choices)</th>
<th>Most Helpful</th>
<th>Least Helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends or classmates who were also applying</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends who were already studying or had studied in the U.S.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online forums/BBS established for Chinese students who want to study in the U.S.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some published materials (books)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some study abroad agencies/companies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relatives who were already in the U.S.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advisor of the academic program that I was to join</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Chinese students in the academic program that I was to join</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSA (Chinese Students and Scholars Association) or a similar student organization of that university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Center for International programs in the university that I was to attend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American embassy/consulates (their offices, hotlines, websites)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In China, there are forums and BBS (Bulletin Board System) established for students seeking study-abroad opportunities to share their experience and information on applying to foreign institutes and communicating with the advisors. Some also provide templates of different documents for school applications and visa applications. The choice “the online forums/BBS established for Chinese students who want to study in the U.S.” was the most selected one (37.50%) as the most helpful information source, and it was not selected by any of the participants as the least helpful information source. This suggests that the Internet plays a very important role in helping Chinese students applying for U.S. visas by providing both official information from various agencies and anecdotal information from the experiences of those who have gone through the visa application process.

The next most helpful sources are “my Chinese friends who were already studying or had studied in the U.S.” (18.75%) and “my Chinese friends who were also applying” (18.75%). However, these two were also selected as the top two least helpful sources. As the sample size of this study was very small (only 26), it is difficult to draw conclusions on results like these.

Among all the seven selected most helpful sources, six were Chinese co-national people or agencies (93.75%), and only one help source was American, which is “the advisor of the academic program that I was to join”, and it was selected by one of the participants (6.25%) who was majoring in Biology. As the offers made to students in the sciences such as Biology were usually decided by their future advisors in the programs they were to join, some students had already been contacting their advisors before they arrived in the U.S. This made it very possible for them to receive help on different issues from their advisors, especially those who had experience recruiting and working with international students. Such contacts also can create a
relationship of trust between the students and their advisors which results in students seeking both academic and social support from them.

Among the least helpful sources, “the Center for International Programs (CIP)” was the only American source. It was not selected by any of the participants as the most helpful one, although the CIP and the U.S. embassy or consulates are the only two official help sources available for Chinese students applying for U.S. visas.

Hypothesis 1 was supported because the participants’ answers showed that when they need information or help they would choose to ask their co-national people or agencies much more than American ones. From the data collected from these questions, I conclude that most of the available sources for Chinese students to ask for help or information in the visa application process are their co-nationals, which are Chinese people or agencies. Although the participants of this study were all issued visas to come to the U.S. to study, their perception of the difficulty and available help from their co-nationals or American people or agencies in the visa application process while they were still in China may influence their choices of asking for help or advice after they start their study in the U.S.

Hypothesis 2

Chinese students, as any other group of international students studying in a country other than their own, face challenges during their study in the U.S. Liu (2001) grouped these challenges/problems into three categories: academic problems, social problems, and financial problems. However, what challenges are identified by Chinese students themselves and how they cope with these challenges were the questions explored in this study. For example, do Chinese students still act like “passive recipients and quiet learners” (Zhou, Knoke & Sakamoto, 2005, p.288)? Or do they choose to be more assertive like the Chinese student who filed a
complaint against Yale, accusing the University of treating Chinese students unfairly (Brumfiel, 2005, p.278)?

The questions in Part II of the questionnaire were designed to test Hypothesis 2: Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges.

The participants were asked whether they had difficulty in understanding course materials and their choices of solution if they had such difficulties. The next two questions were about their responses on assignment scores or course grades. The last two questions were designed to see if there is a difference in their responses if the challenges were about misunderstandings of China or Chinese culture. It was designed also to find out whether the students would correct their professors as they would correct other people, because teachers are highly respected as authorities under the influence of Confucian pedagogies in Chinese culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

The results of these questions are listed in Table 5.
Table 5

*Responses on Academic and Social Challenges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions &amp; Answers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty in understanding course materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked my instructor for help</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worked hard by myself</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked other students in my class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not try anything.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Please specify</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions about the scores</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will ask the instructor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will ask other Chinese students in the class if available</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will ask American/other international students in the class</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>61.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will do nothing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action to take about an unfair grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know what I can do or how it can be done</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I accept it as it is</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I talk to the instructor about it</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correct someone’s misunderstanding of China, Chinese or Chinese culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correct your professor’s misunderstanding of China, Chinese or Chinese culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The academic challenges were represented by questions 1 to 6 (see Table 5). Eighteen (69.23%) of the participants responded that they had difficulty in understanding course materials. This was also echoed by the mistakes made by some of the participants in following the instructions on answering this questionnaire. Some of these mistakes were caused by the design of one question, but the rest of them were either due to the participants’ carelessness in answering the questions or inability to follow the instructions. The participants’ understanding of the course materials mentioned in the question may have included lectures, as Chinese students do have English academic listening difficulties (Huang, 1996, 553).

When the participants had difficulties in understanding the course materials, only three (9.68%) chose to ask the instructor; four (12.90%) chose to ask other Chinese students (if available); and 19 chose to ask American or other international students in the class. This might be caused by the Chinese mianzi (face) issue. Chinese students may consider that inquiring about scores might hurt both their instructors’ and their own mianzi. And it is worth noticing that there were five answers on “I will do nothing,” which showed these participants as “passive recipients and quiet learners” (Zhou, Knoke & Sakamoto, 2005, p.288). However, the majority of the answers suggest that the participants would take actions to ask about the scores.

When facing a presumed unfair grade, only two (8.70%) of the 23 participants who answered this question selected the choice to talk to the instructor about it. Seventeen of them would just accept it as it is, and four of them did not know what they can do or how to do it. The same mianzi issue might have caused this result among Chinese students. The “appeal” policy does not even exist in the Chinese education system and the instructors’ decisions are considered as the final decisions, so it would not be difficult to interpret the participants’ choices as based on cultural practices and understandings.
The majority of the participating Chinese students chose to accept the presumed unfair grade, but all of them said that they would correct others if they had misunderstandings about China, Chinese, or Chinese culture. Only one student chose not to correct others if they are his/her professors. The authority of professors and the mianzi issue seem not to affect the participants’ answers in these two questions. So when the challenges are considered as more important than mianzi, Chinese students may choose to take active moves. In the last two questions, the situations were about misunderstandings of China or Chinese culture, which were considered more serious issues than mianzi, then the mianzi issue was ignored in these situations, and even authority of professors was put aside.

Therefore Hypothesis 2 was partly supported. Chinese students tend to take actions rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges only when the mianzi and guanxi issues are considered as less important than the need for clarity in the situation. This difference in reactions to different levels of challenges has not been researched before in other studies that I found, so it needs to be a continuing issue for research.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: Chinese students’ strongest social support is their co-nationals.

This part of the research was designed to test who was/were identified as the providers of the strongest social support to Chinese students.

The results on testing this hypothesis are shown in Table 6.
Table 6

Responses on Academic and Non-Academic Difficulties and Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions &amp; Answers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty in academic study in the U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>76.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Whom to ask for help with academic difficulties</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Chinese students in my program (if available)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/ other international students in my program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Please specify</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Non-Academic difficulties in the U.S.</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Whom to ask with non-academic difficulties</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My American friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese Friends</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other international students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Please specify</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty (76.92%) of the 26 participants selected that they had difficulties in their academic study. This was first tested by the screening question of “Have you had any difficulty in understanding the course materials during your study in the U.S.?” in Part II of the questionnaire. The results of both of these questions echoed each other in proving that Chinese students do have difficulties in academic study. Twenty-four (92.31%) of the 26 participants selected that they had non-academic difficulties. This shows that the participants had even more difficulties in adapting to their non-academic life than to academic study. It is also interesting to find that the participants rely more on their academic advisors in solving their academic difficulties or problems than on other Chinese students in their programs. Eleven participants (47.83%) stated that they relied more on their advisors than on their Chinese friends (39.13%) on academic difficulties. Although the results show that Chinese students ask their academic advisors for help when they have non-academic difficulties, there are still about half of the participants who chose Chinese friends or other students. This may also indicates that academic advisors do not know all of Chinese students’ academic difficulties.

On non-academic difficulties, the participants chose to rely much more on their Chinese friends (78.26%) than on any other people. The following are the possible reasons for this result: 1) their Chinese friends speak the same language and share the same culture and customs with them; 2) Chinese are more flexible with time and no appointment is needed when asking for help; 3) the availability of their Chinese students is much higher than other people because Chinese students tend to choose Chinese roommates or live near to other Chinese students.

The participants who said that they had non-academic difficulties were asked to identify the difficulties they had experienced by selecting one or more answers among the listed, and if their answer was not listed, they could choose to specify these difficulties in the choice “Other.
Please specify__.” by themselves (see questions 4 and 5 in Part II of Appendix II). They were also asked to identify the most difficult non-academic difficulty they had in the U.S.

Table 7

Responses on Types of Non-Academic Difficulties and the Most Difficult One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of non-academic difficulties</th>
<th>All that apply</th>
<th>The most difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional needs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support needs (hard to establish long term friendship)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/health care</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others. Please specify</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently selected non-academic difficulties were “transportation,” “language,” “social support needs,” “Emotional needs,” and “food.” In a small Midwestern town like Bowling Green, transportation is almost solely by private vehicles. The university only offers shuttle buses to certain destinations on campus and a few local places. As the major transportation in China, especially in the cities, is public transportation systems, Chinese students do have difficulties in this. “Transportation” was also the most selected choice as the most difficult problem.
However, I would think that the transportation difficulty might be the one among the most frequently selected choices in the list that can be solved, at least for some Chinese students, if they do have enough money to purchase and support a car. But only two students identified that they had financial difficulties, which means that most of the participants could have solved the transportation difficulty. The reason why Chinese students chose transportation as the most difficult challenge but claimed they had no financial difficulties might be the differences in understanding financial difficulties. The participants may believe that only people who are in debt or broke have financial difficulties. Another reason for these seemingly not compatible answers on “transportation” and “financial difficulty” might also be the mianzi issue which prevents Chinese people revealing their financial status to others in case of being looked down upon.

Ten participants identified that they have social support difficulties, and eight of them also identified transportation difficulties. As transportation difficulties can sometimes be temporarily solved by help from the social support providers, this lack of social support may have been selected because no or limited offers of help were available in their social network.

Language difficulties were expected when the research plan was designed, language difficulties were included in the list of non-academic difficulties. The participants majored in different areas in their previous study in China. Therefore, it was also expected that their English proficiency would vary due to different English language requirements for different majors. As expected, those participants who majored in English or related areas did not select language difficulties, which means that their previous study in China did prepare them well at least for the language to study and live in the U.S. “Language” was selected as the second most difficult problem, and 11 of these 12 participants who had language difficulties stated in a previous
question (see question 1 in Part III of Appendix III) that they had academic difficulties in a previous question. Four of these 12 participants stated in a previous question (see question 1 in Part II of Appendix II) that they had difficulties in understanding course materials, which means students who have language obstacles may also have difficulties in their academic study.

Nine of these 12 participants who said they had language difficulties chose the Chinese version of the questionnaire. This indicates that nine of the 15 participants who chose the Chinese version had language difficulties, which proved the necessity of providing this translated version. As the sample of this study is small, no other correlations were found about the participants with language difficulties.

Only four of the participants selected medical/health care as one of their difficulties in adjusting to study in the U.S. The mean age of these participants was 29 years, which indicated that they were not in an age range that is associated with health problems. However, it is worth noticing that two of these four participants chose medical/health care as the most difficult problem. They might have experienced difficulties in seeking medical/health care, and this may mean that once health becomes an issue, it is very possible to become the most difficult one for Chinese students to deal with. The possible explanations for this might be that medical care in the U.S. is very expensive and their insurance plans do not cover enough expenses. Another reason might be that some of them may prefer traditional Chinese medicine in treating certain diseases, but it is not available in this area.

The difficulties were identified, but their choices of solutions to these difficulties were not asked in this questionnaire because it would have increased the number of questions included and therefore could have decreased the return rate both because it would lengthen the
questionnaire and because possible questions could be considered too intrusive by the respondents.

However, the participants were asked to identify the strongest social support in their life in the U.S. when answering the last question of this questionnaire (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Responses on the Strongest Social Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions &amp; Answers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongest social support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family (they are in China)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are staying with me in the U.S.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(They are staying with me in the U.S.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My significant other (S/he is in China)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S/he is staying with me in the U.S.)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S/he is staying with me in the U.S.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends (in China)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in the U.S.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in the U.S.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My American friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic advisor/supervisor, or the person I work for</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CIP-Center for International Programs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the 26 participants chose their co-nationals as their strongest social support. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. Chinese students do consider their co-nationals (family, significant others, and friends) as their strongest social support. Family and significant others are
the most selected choices; although for some of the participants, these supports are their families or their significant others were in China.

In this chapter, the results of the study were analyzed. Hypotheses 1 and 3 are supported by the results, and Hypothesis 2 is partly supported. Interpretations of these results are presented in the next chapter with recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This research study probed Chinese students’ adaptation to a Midwestern U.S. university. This study retested previous research results such as the availability and importance of co-national support for international students by using Chinese students as the sample. Chinese students’ need for help in the visa application process was retested.

As the sampling method employed in this study is convenience sampling, the results can be only generalized to a population of similar demographic background studying in a Midwestern U.S. university. However, this study helps us to learn more about the challenges that Chinese students may face in their study-abroad experience in the U.S.

Most Chinese students ask for help in the visa application process when they pursue their study in the U.S. There are more co-national help sources than American ones available to Chinese students. Chinese students prefer to ask their co-nationals rather than American people or agencies when they need help or information regarding the visa application process. The most helpful information source for them is the online forums/BBS established for them to post, receive, and share information about the visa application process. The availability of these help sources indicates a great need for information about the visa application process among Chinese students. It could also suggest that the information provided by official agencies is not as sufficient or accessible as needed. Failures in the visa application process increase the perceived difficulty of visa application among Chinese students. Those who experienced more difficulties in the visa application process tend to reduce their trips to visit their home country so that they do not need to apply for visas to go back to the U.S. and finish their study.
Most Chinese students choose to ask other students (both co-nationals and others) if they have questions about the scores they receive on papers or tests. However, the majority of them choose to accept presumed unfair scores rather than to appeal. We can tentatively conclude that this is because of cultural ideas about the mianzi (face) of the instructors or their guanxi (relationship). However, when the situation appears to involve issues like misunderstanding of China, Chinese, or Chinese culture, they choose to correct others without considering the mianzi and guanxi.

Chinese students have both academic and non-academic difficulties in their study in the U.S. When they have academic difficulties, they choose to consult their academic advisors; for non-academic ones, they rely more on their Chinese friends. As shown by the results, there are more non-academic difficulties than academic difficulties for them. Some of the biggest non-academic difficulties for Chinese students are transportation, language, social support needs, emotional needs, and food. Although health problems are not very serious issues for Chinese students, once they have health related problems, these may become the most difficult ones, which is understandable because health affects quality of life and work. Chinese students do consider their co-nationals (family, significant other and friends) as their strongest social support even when their family or significant other is far away from them.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In this research study, the questionnaire was selected as the research method to survey Chinese students on a Midwestern university campus. The sample was selected by convenience, and this convenience sampling limited the generalization of the results. While this approach provided important results for answering the research questions and providing evidence for the hypotheses, it was still very much limited. The results can only be generalized with caution to
Chinese students who are studying in similar Midwestern American universities with similar demographic backgrounds. Future research should use a sample that can be generalized to a larger population.

This study is also cross-sectional research, which only reflects what perceptions are like at the time when the research was conducted. This is not a limitation on this study; however, if it is possible to obtain data from a larger population of Chinese students on their adaptation process, future studies can be designed as longitudinal research studies. For example, if a future research study can start surveying Chinese students in the visa application process and before they come to the U.S. and survey them again after they start their study, it will be possible to make the correlation of the experienced difficulty in visa application and the perceived difficulties in their study.

Although the participants in this study were all issued visas to come to the U.S. to study, their perception of the difficulty and available help from their co-nationals or American people or agencies in the visa application process while they were still in China may have influenced their choices of asking for help or advice after they started their study in the U.S. I found no previous research on the correlation between the difficulties in the visa application and perceived difficulties in the study in the U.S. The sample size of this study is too small to be used to conclude on this correlation. Future research with a larger sample size may study this correlation. A future study could survey the participants on the difficulties in their visa application process and then survey them on their perceived difficulties in their future study before they come to the U.S. Then it is possible to find out whether their experienced difficulties in the visa application process may influence their perception on difficulties in their future study.
The questions included in this questionnaire are all multiple choice questions. No open-ended questions were asked. This limited the participants in supplying answers which “reflect the exact facts or true feelings”, and this may even have frustrated the participants because they were not allowed to “express their views fully” (Denscombe, 2003, p.156). Although this was later proved to be a correct decision as the questionnaire was distributed in the finals’ week and some of the returned questionnaires did show that the participants did not want to spend more time writing than selecting from available answers, future research should also include open-ended questions, in-depth interviews, or focus group interviews if more detailed data is desired.

In this research study, language difficulties were grouped into non-academic difficulties; however, I would recommend language difficulties be divided into academic language difficulties and social communication language difficulties in future research. By doing so, the relationship between actual academic difficulties and academic language difficulties can be shown more clearly; and the relationship between non-academic difficulties and social communication language difficulties can also be revealed more explicitly.

Chinese students tend to take action rather than being quiet and passive when they face challenges only when the mianzi and guanxi issues are considered as less important in the situation. This difference in reactions to different levels of challenges has not been researched before in other studies I found, so replications of research are needed to retest this conclusion with a different sample or population.

Recommendations for Applying Results of Research

The following recommendations are compiled to be possible applications for the results of this study. Hopefully, these can contribute to the internationalization of higher education institutes and help Chinese students better adapt to their study abroad life in the U.S.
These recommendations are intended for three groups of audience: administrators in American universities who work with international students, American university professors/academic advisors/international program specialists, and Chinese students studying in or planning to study in the U.S.

**Recommendations for Administrators at American Universities**

1. Universities should encourage and support co-national student organizations for Chinese or other international students. As their co-nationals are identified as the providers of the strongest support in this study, student organizations are communities for them to meet and know their co-national people on campus and thus build up their relationship network, which is considered very important in Chinese and similar cultures.

2. Universities should also consider starting shuttle service(s), extending the present shuttle service(s), or adding new shuttle routes in order to help international students in solving their transportation difficulties as well as those of American students’ so that they might experience less stress, fewer worries and less anxiety about transportation.

3. Universities should also provide more opportunities for Chinese students and other international students to practice their English and learn about American culture. Such programs may include language partners, language exchange programs, and cultural clubs. This can also help them to establish long term friendships with American or other international students.

4. Orientation programs should be compulsory for international students. BGSU has had this for international students. However, certain information on solving issues such as “appeal for grades” should be included in the orientation. American students and international students from some other countries or areas may be very familiar with
issues like this; however, for students from China and some other countries, policies like “appeal” could be totally new.

Recommendation for Professors, Advisors, and International Programs Specialists

1. Professors, academic advisors, and international programs specialists should get to know the cultural elements like guanxi (relationship) and mianzi (face) when they teach or advise Chinese students.

2. Professors, academic advisors, and international programs specialists should also be aware that Chinese students do have difficulties with languages, which means that their high scores in quizzes, assignments or exams may not necessarily mean that they can communicate orally in English as they are expected. Chinese students may choose not to talk about some issues, but this does not mean that they do not have questions. They may simply remain silent to protect their instructors or their own mianzi (face) so that the guanxi (relationship) will not be hurt.

Recommendations for Chinese students

1. Chinese students who are seeking to, or are studying in American universities should expand their guanxi network to people other than their co-nationals. They should understand the academic study is only one part of their study in the U.S. In universities like Bowling Green State University, the number of Chinese students is about 100, which is not large as compared to some other universities, but big enough to establish friendships. However, Chinese students should know that there is much more to discover in this study-abroad experience than just speaking Chinese, cooking Chinese food, and making Chinese friends.
2. Chinese students should also maintain frequent communication with their academic advisors. They should get to understand school policies on different issues and the right people to consult in order to deal with these issues or provide correct advice for other Chinese students who may ask them for help.

3. Chinese students should explain their special cultural elements such as guanxi (relationship) and mianzi (face) to others in order to share and better international understanding of uniquely Chinese culture.

Study-abroad experiences do not only provide people academic training and research opportunities; their experiences also build lasting conclusions about countries they stayed in and peoples they met. Visiting other countries, studying or working in other countries, sharing our own cultures or conducting cultural studies research could all contribute to the understanding of different cultures. There will always be a need to learn from others, and many people are working on promoting understanding among different cultures. This thesis is intended to lend itself to the continuation of that study.
WORKS CITED


Civic discourse: Multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and global communication (pp.297-310). Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Pub. Corp.


Hi Dear all,

My name is Wu Dan. I am a graduate student in the Scientific and Technical Communication program.

The recent research project I am working on is for the completion of my thesis. The research method I use is a questionnaire survey, which will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Chinese students have become the second largest group of international students on US campuses. This study will try to find out the challenges Chinese students have in our study-abroad experience in the US and our responses to that. The results of this study will provide university professors, academic advisors and administrative personnel with updated information on the difficulties and challenges Chinese students face and our choices of solutions. It is also important to find out who can give us the support we want and whom we tend to ask for the support.

I am inviting volunteers to help me with this research project by completing a questionnaire. By completing and returning the attached questionnaire, you give your consent to me in participating in this project. Please read the following statement before you complete and return the questionnaire. Thank you!

You are invited to be in a research study on Chinese students’ adaptation to one UA campus.

I. Purpose/Benefits
My name is Wu Dan. I am a graduate student in the Scientific and Technical Communication Program in English Department, Bowling Green State University (BGSU).

This research project is for my completion of the thesis requirement of the MA (Master of Arts) program in Scientific and Technical Communication program.

This case study will use the data collected from a questionnaire survey completed by Chinese students enrolled in BGSU to find out how Chinese students respond to the challenges in the study-abroad experience in the US.

II. Procedure/Time required

This is a voluntary study. Only Chinese student who are enrolled at BGSU will be selected to participate in this study. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire. There are both Chinese and English versions. You can choose either of these two versions to complete. I estimate your participation will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

III. Risks

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

IV. Participant’s rights as a subject

This questionnaire you complete will be collected. The original data will be only accessible by me and my advisor. The data that is going to be used in my thesis, future conference presentations, or papers, etc. will be used anonymously. Each completed questionnaire and the email to which the questionnaire is attached to will be printed out and stapled together. Then the email with the attachment will be deleted from my email inbox. The printed questionnaires will be kept by me and my advisor in a locked file cabinet in 309 East Hall, BGSU for two years and destroyed by May 2009. I will protect the confidentiality of you as a respondent and your responses throughout the study and publication of study results. Your
identity will not be revealed in any published results unless you specifically request it in the email you send back to me with the completed questionnaire.

This is a voluntary study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you can refrain from answering any questions without penalty or explanation. Your deciding to participate or not will not impact grades/class standing/relationship to the institution. If you decide to participate and change your mind later, please send an email to me before my thesis is submitted to withdraw your completed questionnaire from this study without penalty or explanation.

I will answer your questions concerning this study. You may request a summary or copy of the results of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, please print a copy of this email for your files.

Please understand that email is not 100% secure so anyone tries intercepting the response email would see your survey responses; however, I will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality as much as possible.

V. Contact information

If you have questions about the study itself before or during or after the study, please contact me:

Wu Dan, 419-372-7552, wudan@bgsu.edu

or you can also contact my advisor

Dr. Bill Coggin, 419-372-7552, bcoggin@bgsu.edu

If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu)
Thank you!

Wu Dan
Teaching Assistant
Scientific and Technical Communication
English Department 309
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH43403
APPENDIX II

Questionnaire (English Version)

Please check the corresponding boxes of your answers or input your answers where appropriate.

Please fill out some basic information about you.

1. Age

2. Gender

3. How long have you been in the US? years months

4. How many times have you gone back to China after you started your study here?

5. Please choose your marital status
   - Single
   - Married and my spouse is staying with me in the US
   - Married and my spouse is not staying with me in the US
   - Prefer not to answer

6. Level of your present academic study/research
   - Undergraduate
   - Graduate master
   - Graduate doctorate
   - Postdoc

7. Did you get a degree in China?
   - Yes—please answer question 8 and then start the questionnaire
   - No---please start the questionnaire
8. If yes, what was your major?

Part I

1. Which of the following visa types did you obtain when you first came to the US?
   - [ ] F1
   - [ ] F2
   - [ ] J1
   - [ ] J2
   - [ ] B1 or B2
   - [ ] Another visa type

2. How many times did you apply for that US visa?
   - [ ] 1
   - [ ] 2
   - [ ] 3
   - [ ] 4 and more

3. How would you rate the easiness or difficulty in obtaining that visa?
   (Please choose only one)
   - [ ] very easy
   - [ ] easy
   - [ ] neutral
   - [ ] difficult
   - [ ] very difficult
4. When you were getting prepared to apply for the visa to come to the US, did you ask someone or some agency for information, advice or help?

Yes □ --- Please continue with question 5

No □ --- Please go to Part II

For questions 5, 6 and 7, please check the corresponding boxes in the table below.

5. If yes, whom did you ask for information, advice or help? (Please check all that apply)

6. Which of those you have chosen gave you the most help or information you needed?  
   (Please check only one)

7. Which of those you have chosen gave you the least help or information you needed?  
   (Please check only one)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends or classmates who were also applying</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My Chinese friends who were already studying or had studied in the US</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The online forums/BBS established for Chinese students who want to study in the US</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some published materials (books)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some study abroad agencies/companies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My relatives who were already in the US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The advisor of the academic program that I was to join</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Chinese students in the academic program that I was to join</td>
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</table>
CSSA (Chinese Students and Scholars Association) or a similar student organization of that university

The Center for International programs in the university that I was to attend

American embassy/consulates (their offices, hotlines, websites)

Other. Please specify

<p>| | | |</p>
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</table>

**Part II**

1. Have you had any difficulty in understanding the course materials during your study in the US?

Yes □—Please continue with question 2

No □—Please continue with question 3

2. If you have, how did you try to solve it?

☐I asked my instructor for help

☐I worked hard by myself

☐I asked other students in my class

☐I did not try anything.

☐Other. Please specify

3. When you have questions about the scores of one assignment or the final grade of some course, what action do you tend to take?

☐I will ask the instructor

☐I will ask other Chinese students in the class if available
I will ask American/other international students in the class

I will do nothing

4. If you believe that the grade you got was unfair, what actions do you tend to take?

I don’t know what I can do or how it can be done

I accept it as it is

I talk to the instructor about it

5. If you hear someone say anything that shows his/her lack of understanding or misunderstanding of China, Chinese or Chinese culture, do you try to correct them?

Yes

No

6. If one of your professors shows any misunderstanding of China, Chinese, or Chinese culture in the lectures, do you try to correct them?

Yes

No

Part III

1. Have you ever had difficulties in your academic study in the US?

Yes—Please continue with question 2

No—Please continue with question 3
2. If you have, which one of these would you choose to ask for help?

(Please check only one)

☐ My academic advisor

☐ Other Chinese students in my program (if available)

☐ American/other international students in my program

☐ Other. Please specify

3. Have you ever had non-academic difficulties in the US?

Yes ☐ — Please continue with question 4

No ☐ — Please continue with question 7

For question 4 and 5, please check the corresponding boxes in the table below.

4. If you have, what kind of difficulties have you had? (Please check all that apply)

5. Which of them do you think is the most difficult one for you? (Please check only one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional needs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support needs (hard to establish long term friendship)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/health care</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. If you have, which one of these would you choose to ask for help?

☐ My American friends
☐ My Chinese friends
☐ Other international students
☐ Other. Please specify

7. Which of the following do you consider as the strongest social support for you in the US?

(Please check only one)

☐ My family (they are staying with me in the US)
  ☐ They are in China
  ☐ They are staying with me in the US

☐ My significant other (wife/husband, fiancé, boy/girl friend)
  ☐ S/he is in China
  ☐ S/he is staying with me in the US

☐ My Chinese friends
  ☐ In China
  ☐ In the US

☐ My American friends

☐ My academic advisor/supervisor, or the person I work for

☐ The CIP (Center for International Programs)

You have now completed this questionnaire.
Please save it as a word file and send it back to me as an attachment.

My email address is wudan@bgsu.edu.

Thank you very much!
APPENDIX III

Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

请选择您的答案并在相应的方框中标记(□)。需要填写的问题，请把答案填写在相应的灰色空格(      )中。您可以选择使用中文或英文填写答案。

请填写您的基本信息

1. 年龄

2. 性别

3. 至今在美国多久了？       年       月

4. 来美国学习至今，回国次数     次

5. 请选择您的婚姻状况

   □单身

   □已婚，配偶和我都在美国

   □已婚，配偶不在美国

   □我选择不回答这个问题

6. 您现在的学习、研究属于以下哪个阶段

   □本科

   □硕士研究生

   □博士研究生

   □博士后
7. 您在中国是否获得过本科学位

是□——请回答问题 8 然后开始问卷调查

否□——请开始问卷调查

8. 如果您在中国获得过本科学位，您当时的专业是

第一部分

1. 您此次来美学习过程中，第一次赴美签证属于以下哪种？

□ F1
□ F2
□ J1
□ J2
□ B1 or B2
□ Another visa type

2. 当时申请签证时，您总共申请了几次才获得签证的？

□ 1 次
□ 2 次
□ 3 次
□ 4 次或更多
3. 请评估当时您申请签证时的难易程度，并在 1 至 5 中选择相应的数字标记您的答案

- 非常简单
- 简单
- 一般
- 困难
- 非常困难

4. 当时您准备申请签证时，是否因为需要一些信息、建议或帮助而向别人或者一些机构询问有关情况？

- 是——请从问题 5 继续本问卷
- 否——请从第二部分继续本问卷

问题 5－7 的答案请在表格 I 中选择，请注意问题 5 为多选，6 和 7 为单选。请在表格相应的空格中标记。

5. 您当时向下列那些人或机构询问过信息、建议或帮助？（可以多选）

6. 哪个人或机构给您提供了最有效的帮助？（仅限单选）

7. 哪个人或机构给您提供的帮助最没有效用？（仅限单选）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>选项</th>
<th>5(多选)</th>
<th>6(单选)</th>
<th>7(单选)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>当时和我一起申请的中国朋友或同学</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>当时已经在美国学习或完成学习的中国朋友或同学</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>一些网站上关于赴美留学的 BBS 论坛</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出版物（书籍等）</td>
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</table>
第二部分

1. 在美国学习期间，您是否在理解课程内容时有过任何困难？
   
   有□——请从问题 2 继续本问卷
   没有□——请从问题 3 继续本问卷

2. 如果您有过困难，是怎样解决的呢？
   
   □请教任课老师
   □自己努力搞明白
   □问班上其他学生
   □我什么都没做
   □其他
3. 如果对某次作业或某门课程的分数有疑问，您会怎么办？

- [ ] 问一下老师
- [ ] 问班上其他中国学生（如果有的话）
- [ ] 问班上美国学生，或其他国际学生
- [ ] 什么都不做

4. 如果认为自己得到的分数不公平，您会怎么办？

- [ ] 我不知道能做什么
- [ ] 就这样吧，算了
- [ ] 去跟老师谈一谈这个问题

5. 如果听到有人谈及中国时缺乏对中国，中国人或中国文化的了解或者存在误解时，您会试图纠正么？

   - [ ] 我会
   - [ ] 我不会

6. 如果您的一位教授对中国，中国人或中国文化存在误解，您会试图纠正么？

   - [ ] 我会
   - [ ] 我不会

第三部分
1. 您在美国的学习是否有过任何困难？
   - 有过□——请从问题 2 继续本问卷
   - 没有□——请从问题 3 继续本问卷

2. 如果有过学习方面的困难，您会选择下列选项中的哪个来请教？
   (限选一项)
   - □我的学业导师（advisor）
   - □同一个专业的中国学生(如果有的话)
   - □同一个专业的美国学生或其他国际学生
   - □其他人。请说明

3. 您在美国的生活中(不包括学习)是否有过任何困难？
   - 有过□——请从问题 4 开始继续本问卷
   - 没有□——请从问题 7 开始继续本问卷

问题 4 和 5 的答案请在下列表格中选择。

4. 您认为困难主要来自哪些方面？（可以多选）

5. 哪个对于您个人来讲是最大的困难？（仅限单选）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>困难</th>
<th>4(多选)</th>
<th>5(单选)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>经济困难</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>语言困难</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. 如果需要别人的帮助，您会选择向以下哪些人寻求帮助？（仅限单选）

- [ ] 我的美国朋友
- [ ] 我的中国朋友
- [ ] 其他国际学生
- [ ] 其他 请说明

7. 以下哪个（哪些）是您在美国学习过程中对您支持最大的？（仅限单选）

- [ ] 我的家庭
  - [ ] 在中国
  - [ ] 在美国
- [ ] 我的另一半（先生、太太、未婚夫、未婚妻、男朋友、女朋友）
  - [ ] 在中国
  - [ ] 在美国
您已经完成本问卷调查！

请把本问卷调查及您的答案存储为文档并电邮至wudan@bgsu.edu

真诚感谢您的参与！