"Liu Xuesheng: An ethnography of the socialization of Chinese students attending college in the United States"

by

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# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. 3

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 4

CHAPTER 1: SOCIALIZATION ......................................................................................................... 8
  BASIC DEFINITION ....................................................................................................................... 8
  PRIMARY SOCIALIZATION ........................................................................................................... 10
  SECONDARY SOCIALIZATION ..................................................................................................... 13
  ACCULTURATION ......................................................................................................................... 14
  BROAD AND NARROW SOCIALIZATION .................................................................................... 17
  CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 21

CHAPTER 2: THE THREE GENERATIONS ....................................................................................... 23
  THE FIRST GENERATION OF STUDENTS .................................................................................... 24
  THE SECOND GENERATION OF STUDENTS ................................................................................. 35
  THE THIRD GENERATION OF STUDENTS ................................................................................... 39
  CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 42

CHAPTER 3: CONTACT WITH THE WEST ...................................................................................... 45
  TRAVEL EXPERIENCE ................................................................................................................ 45
  TECHNOLOGY AND ENTERTAINMENT ...................................................................................... 53
  NEWS MEDIA ............................................................................................................................. 60
  CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 65

CHAPTER 4: CHANGE IN CHINA .................................................................................................... 67
  HIGH SCHOOL ............................................................................................................................. 67
  LANGUAGE ACQUISITION .......................................................................................................... 73
  REVISION OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS ....................................................................................... 74
  CULTURAL AMNESIA ................................................................................................................... 75
  POLITICAL CHANGES .................................................................................................................. 76
  CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY STRUCTURE ............................................................. 79
  ONE CHILD POLICY .................................................................................................................... 80
  CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 83

CONCLUDING REMARKS ............................................................................................................. 84

INTERVIEW INDEX ....................................................................................................................... 87
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Introduction

The rapid growth and changes in 21st century China have had immense effect on various aspects of life for the Chinese. This thesis presents my research on the socialization of Chinese international students, or liu xuesheng, in the United States and examines my finding that contemporary Chinese students are socializing more successfully than students who came earlier. In this thesis I also offer explanations for why socialization has improved and how China’s growth and change have affected the socialization of Chinese students at Wesleyan University.

The idea for this thesis comes from my personal experiences at Wesleyan University and in China. It was through observations of the behaviors of international students on the Wesleyan campus and time spent at Yunnan Normal University in China that I initially became interested in the way Asian international students, particularly the Chinese, interact and socialize with Americans. From my coursework in East Asian Studies at Wesleyan, I was learning about China’s rapid growth in the last five to ten years and the visible and substantial changes in the economic, political, and social conditions in China. I wondered what impact these societal changes could have on the socialization of my classmates at Wesleyan. I wanted to understand the socialization process, how it has changed with societal changes, and how it continues to evolve. From coursework in anthropology, I had learned about participant observation as a research method. Thus I found a theoretical methodology to help me understand and draw conclusions about the way Chinese students integrate themselves into American society. Used to define the way children learn to behave in their society (Ochs 1988) the theoretical concept of socialization has since been
applied in many contexts. Here I use it to analyze the changing ways by which Chinese students adjust to life at American universities.

The research used for this thesis is based on a series of interviews using socialization as the basis for conversation in order to learn about the experiences of Chinese students attending college in the United States. With one exception, the interviewees are all past and present Wesleyan students. The background of the non-Wesleyan student is typical of what I will later identify as the second generation, and thus her experiences can be appropriately applied to this study. Although the conclusions that I make in this thesis may not represent all Chinese students in the United States, the evidence is consistent within the Wesleyan community and perhaps representative of a broader Chinese population in America.

While certain features of Wesleyan University, such as the Freeman Scholarship, differentiate Wesleyan from other colleges and universities in the country, these differences do not explain why today’s Chinese students at Wesleyan are socializing better than their predecessors. I argue that the factors facilitating socialization are not unique to Wesleyan, but instead reflect the evolution of the Chinese state and society. Chinese students today are socializing better in America than their predecessors because of China’s transformation into a modern and Westernizing country. The goal of this thesis is not to find solutions to how Chinese students could become successful

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1 The Wesleyan Freeman Asian Scholarship Program provides expenses for a four-year course of study toward a bachelor’s degree for up to eleven exceptionally able Asian students annually from these countries and regions: the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Scholarship is unique to Wesleyan and it is rare to find other schools that provide full scholarships to Asian students. The Scholarship has the effect of bringing to Wesleyan talented students from less metropolitan areas that might not have had the means to afford U.S. college tuition.
at socializing, but to look more closely at the conditions and process of their socialization in order to raise issues and identify sensitizing topics that give insight into their social world and social process (Holloway 1997: 144).

Chapter 1 provides a definition of socialization and examines the way Elinor Ochs (1988) and other scholars have treated socialization. Ochs’ use of socialization is useful for my study because she examines the ways socialization can be used to represent differences in societies. A review of literature provides an understanding of the conditions required for an individual to socialize successfully and shows how socialization varies among societies. An understanding of socialization concepts is important to this study which will focus on what the process of socialization can reveal about people’s lives and how it relates to changes in their societies. In particular, how has socialization changed over time for Chinese international students and what do these changes tell us about China and China’s relationship with the rest of the world.

Chapter 2 traces the recent history of Chinese students studying abroad in the United States for college. In order to examine how students today are socializing and compare their experiences with those of earlier students, it was necessary to identify a group of students for comparison. Several important events in recent Chinese history significantly divide the students into three different generations for this study. The first generation comprises students coming to the U.S between 1978 and 1989, the second generation from 1989 to 2001, and the third generation thereafter. Furthermore, it is important to understand how these historical events that divide the generations also act to shape Chinese society and impact socialization.
Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to discussion of factors that have aided the socialization of Chinese students. The chapters are separated according to whether the factors originate from influences external to China (Chapter 3) or are internal changes (Chapter 4). It is in these chapters that I identify the main findings of my research. I conclude with a discussion exploring the significance of the project. I also make predictions about what lies in the future in regards to the socialization of Chinese students.

Socialization provides a window into the relationship between two societies. It is my hope that through discussion of the socialization of Chinese liu xuesheng in the United States, this thesis will provide a picture of China’s changing landscape and raise awareness of its relationship to the modern Western world. The Wesleyan community can also use these findings to gain an understanding of the current generation of Chinese students on campus, including why they appear to be socializing better today than they did in the past.
Chapter 1: Socialization

The process of socialization must be understood in order to examine how and why students in the third generation are socializing more successfully than past generations. In this chapter I will outline basic terms and concepts of socialization as used by several scholars and researchers who have studied socialization in order to formulate a composite working definition of socialization for my current study. As applied to this study of students leaving China to attend college in the United States, socialization helps to explain how well the different generations of students adapt to their new environment and provides explanations for their different levels of success. Terms such as secondary socialization and acculturation are useful in the context of this study, as are the concepts of broad versus narrow socialization. We will examine how changes in the methods of primary socialization in China have made the process of socialization different for different generations of students. With each successive generation the differences have made it easier for students to work in U.S. university environments. We will establish the conditions that should exist for a Chinese student to socialize effectively into American culture. An understanding of the terms introduced in this chapter will help us to understand better why some students socialize more completely than others.

Basic Definition

“Socialization….refer(s) to the process by which one becomes a competent member of society” (Ochs 1988: 5). Socialization requires an individual to: (1) know and understand the behavioral requisites of a certain society; (2) be competent and
skilled in their use and application; and (3) be committed to following them as guides for action (Long and Hadden 1985: 43). To be socialized into a society, an individual must not only know how to behave as expected but also work to uphold the organization of that society. According to Cicourel, “conventional introductory texts in sociology (Broom and Selznick, 1963) view the socialization of the child in standardized ways as basis for social control and the emergence of human society or social order” (1974: 42). Together these different but related ideas begin to form a working definition of socialization for the subject of this thesis. Further discussion with an examination of additional terms will broaden our understanding.

Whereas enculturation refers solely to the transmission of knowledge within one’s primary culture, socialization requires that those being socialized recognize how the culture that they are trying to learn is different from their own primary culture. They must also understand that learning the new culture will enable them to become contributing members of that society.

In order to understand how socialization is achieved, the following question must be answered: How does one become a competent member of a different society? According to Arnett, the process of socialization must fulfill three goals: “(1) impulse control, including the development of a conscience, (2) role preparation and performance, including occupational roles, gender roles, and roles in institutions such as marriage and parenthood, and (3) the cultivation of sources of meaning – that is, what is important, what is to be valued, what is to be lived for” (Arnett 1995: 618). For example, during the era of Mao the Communist Party held tight control over China and anyone who denounced or criticized the party was considered an enemy of the state, people learned that their role in society was to obey Mao’s command and
support his policies. In contrast, Americans are free and even encouraged to tell their political leaders what they think. Like role preparation and performance, the cultivation of sources of meaning also varies among societies. For a person growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966-76 the answer to what was most important in life might have related to the advancement of China as a whole. For an American of the same time period, the answer would likely have included personal goals related to individual success and happiness. The different answers reflect differences in socialization between the two societies and what was meaningful for their people. Socialization is specific to each society and teaches individuals how to behave as competent members in their particular society. Throughout the past half century, socialization in China has been changing and students in China are being socialized into a society that is becoming increasingly similar to U.S. society.

**Primary Socialization**

Socialization is a life-long process. Elinor Ochs writes that, “throughout our lives, we are socializing and being socialized by those we encounter” (Ochs 1988: 6). Socialization functions as a lifelong process that can be divided into two stages: primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization generally occurs during childhood, and it is during this time that a child develops a conscience and learns the desired behavioral norms of society. Secondary socialization occurs when an individual enters a new environment and must then learn the cultural norms and behaviors of the new society.

Socialization, during both the primary and secondary stages, has an impact on intangible things such as what to fear, what and how to love, how and when to feel
When the first generation of students entered America, they found it very difficult to adopt the types of values common to American society. For example, their American classmates had grown up believing that personal freedoms and rights were inalienable. On the other hand, the Chinese students had been socialized to believe that personal freedom was dangerous and violated the Communist doctrine. Consequently, Chinese students found it very difficult to learn to be individualistic. However, for the third generation of Chinese students, the values that they had learned during primary socialization are not so different from values taught to their American classmates. Therefore, the contemporary Chinese students do not need to learn a completely new set of values when they arrive in the United States.

Elinor Ochs (1988) links socialization to linguistics by stating that the learning of a language reflects the desired behavior of its particular culture. For example, Chinese children are taught the phrase “bu hao yisi” which literally means “not a good meaning.” However, this phrase has many hidden connotations that reflect Chinese society and customs. The term is generally used in situations that are embarrassing, but it can also be a way of saying thank-you to someone. Gift giving is an important custom in Chinese society for building relationships. When someone receives a gift that they cannot immediately reciprocate, they will usually respond by saying “bu hao yisi” which, in this context, means “thank you for the gift and I’m sorry that I cannot return the favor.” By learning this phrase, Chinese children are also learning the elaborate system of relationships, or guanxi, that exists in China. If a Chinese student were to use a literal translation of “bu hao yisi” in English, an American would not understand the underlying meaning. Thus, parts of the Chinese language that are
particular to Chinese culture are no longer useful for Chinese students in the United States, and it becomes necessary to learn phrases and idioms in the English language.

Children learn the nuances of socialization in different ways. Sometimes they are told explicitly what to do. At other times they learn behavior by observing others and drawing their own conclusions about acceptable versus prohibited behaviors in different situations. A young child seeing her brother or sister being constantly scolded for eating before others get to the dinner table will learn to wait until everyone is seated before starting to eat. Children socialized in China and in the United States are both taught basic concepts of impulse regulation. This is true for students fifty years ago and it is true for students today. Children in both societies know to control instincts to do inappropriate things in public. However, with respect to role preparation and cultural customs, what children learn in the two societies is very different. Traditionally in China, elders are supreme and children are taught to always respect their elders. The first generation of students grew up in China serving the elders in their families and suppressing their own wants and desires. Chinese youth were at the bottom of society in terms of status. They were generally not given praise from others and consequently lacked high levels of confidence. On the other hand, their American classmates were raised much differently with parents who may have spoiled them with lavish attention. For the first generation of Chinese students coming to America, it was difficult to understand the hierarchical structure of “children first” because the concept is so different from their own. Later in this thesis I will explore the idea that Chinese cultural customs today no longer differ greatly from those of Americans and that, as a result, socialization of contemporary Chinese
students into American society is no longer difficult in the way that it was for past
generations.

**Secondary Socialization**

When Chinese students arrive in the United States, they have already completed
primary socialization, but in their new environment they need to begin secondary
socialization. Theoretically, secondary socialization involves the cultivation of
cultural norms and behaviors. Instead of starting on a clean slate and being taught
what to do as in primary socialization, the students must learn on their own how to
make themselves into competent members of the new society. The students have
already been trained in daily life skills through their primary socialization in China,
but they need to go through another stage of socialization in which they must learn
the new customs and a different set of appropriate behaviors. Secondary socialization
is usually learned by observation and from interactions with members of the new
society.

Secondary socialization does not only pertain to people who move to a new
geographic location among new people. Those who remain in one society during their
entire lifetime will continue to be socialized throughout adulthood. Socialization
occurs continually because as people get older, they assume different roles in society,
such as becoming a mother after the birth of a child. Over time societies also evolve,
and people in these societies must continually socialize to learn new cultural norms
and behaviors. For example, the huge technology boom in the past decade with cell
phones and computers has necessitated that people learn how to adapt socially to the
fast pace of a technology driven world.
It is also important to note that secondary socialization does not just occur during adulthood. The Chinese students who come to the United States have almost all experienced some form of secondary socialization before arriving in the U.S. For students of the first generation, Maoist reform had required secondary socialization on communes. For some students in later generations, entering high school represented a huge change that required them to learn to adapt to a new environment. These students may not have left their hometowns but nonetheless their role in society had changed from children with little responsibility to high schoolers expected to focus active and diligent attention on schoolwork. Other students spent time abroad before coming to the U.S. for college and experienced secondary socialization in new geographic locations.

At this point in my study, I am mainly concerned with the second and third goals of socialization: to learn role preparation and performance and the cultivation of sources of meaning. Socialization’s first goal, impulse regulation, is similar across cultures and has already been accomplished during primary socialization. Secondary socialization, a broadly encompassing term, refers simply to any socialization a person experiences after having initially learned how to be a member of a society through primary socialization.

**Acculturation**

Acculturation, a form of secondary socialization, occurs when people first leave their homes. It is defined as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry 2006: 542). It may occur under different circumstances,
and studying abroad is only one of many possible situations that lead to acculturation. For example, people forced out of their homes due to some kind of natural disaster would have no choice but to relocate and therefore acculturate. Entering a new environment requires that the individual learn appropriate customs and language in order to become a member of the new society. Acculturation is different from enculturation, which takes place in one’s primary culture. In acculturation, knowledge and culture are transmitted when an individual or group learns from people or institutions not part of their own culture (Berry 2006: 546). Acculturation may thus be viewed as a form of socialization whose ultimate goal is to make people competent members of a new society.

The process of acculturation consists of two parts: culture shedding and culture learning. “Culture shedding refers to the gradual process of losing some features of one’s culture (such as attitude, beliefs, and values), as well as some behavioral competencies (such as language knowledge and use)” (Berry 2006: 547). Culture shedding does not have to be deliberate and may naturally happen to many students because they spend so much time immersed in American culture that they lack opportunity to retain some of the things from their Chinese culture. For example, one student talked about how she finds it difficult to relate to her family and friends at home. Old friends who now attend Chinese universities basically still live the same lifestyles that they previously shared together at their boarding high school. This student said that she cannot relate to them anymore because her life in the United States is so different. She has grown accustomed to living in U.S style dormitories, choosing her own course of study, and doing things that she wants like attending dance performances on the weekends. It is hard when she tries to communicate with
her friends at home because now that she has embraced her new lifestyle, her
everyday habits and values have changed. She finds it difficult to imagine going back
to the type of lifestyle she lived during high school. Since arriving in the U.S, she has
shed many of her old social customs and is consequently unable now to imagine
herself living in her former environment.

Culture learning, the second part of acculturation, is the acquisition of a new
culture that may replace old beliefs and values. However, most often, acculturation
just adds to old culture (Berry 2006: 547). The student discussed above was not
familiar with college dormitory culture when she first arrived in the United States but
she was able to learn it through experience and interactions with classmates. When
Chinese students arrive in the U.S. they have to learn not only new living and eating
habits but also new social behaviors. Fifty years ago the social scenes in China and
the United States were indisputably very different but even today with China’s rapid
modernization and increasing contact with Western culture, there are still many
notable differences in youth culture.

The way American students socialize with each other is difficult for Chinese
students to understand. Current students at Wesleyan have commented on their
amazement about the extent to which Americans value meeting new people and
cultivating relationships. It is surprising for the Chinese to see the number of social
groups that American students join and the large emphasis they put on social
networking. It is not to say that Chinese students do not care about their appearance
and reputation, but they do not try to befriend as many people as many Americans do.
One student explained that in China, a student typically has a group of fifteen to
twenty friends who do things together like go to restaurants and karaoke bars. These
friend groups typically spend most of their time within their own social group and do not branch out to join other groups. In contrast, Americans hold large parties and also party differently than Chinese do. Chinese students say that Americans have a more “physical” way of partying and there are also many more people that attend any specific social event. Most Chinese students experience a substantial shock when they attend their first party in the United States.

**Broad and Narrow Socialization**

Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett divides socialization into two categories: broad and narrow socialization. Arnett writes that, “in cultures characterized by broad socialization, socialization is intended to promote independence, individualism, and self expressionism. In contrast, cultures with narrow socialization hold obedience and conformity as their highest values” (Arnett 1995: 617). Humans can go through broad and narrow socialization during both primary and secondary socialization. By tracing the way children are socialized in China and the United States starting in the 1960s and leading up till today, it is evident that the U.S. has followed a broad form of socialization and China a narrow form. However, in the past decade or so, socialization in China has become increasingly broad and this change has helped current Chinese students socialize better.

Dating is another culture that Chinese students must learn. Dating in China is very different from the typical American college-dating scene. In America, many people casually date and/or “hook up” without necessarily being boyfriend and girlfriend. Open relationships are common and it often takes a long time to establish an official
relationship. In China dating does not work the same way. Chinese students at Wesleyan explained that a couple will often “officially” establish a serious relationship first and then start spending time together. One student described relationships in China as less passionate than relationships in America. In China, it is common to establish a boyfriend or girlfriend for the sake of enhancing public image. Furthermore, college couples are treated like married couples, so when two people are seen together their relationship is always regarded as serious. In order to acculturate more fluidly, the Chinese students have to learn the new culture of American universities and understand the differences from their own primary culture.

When Arnett published his theory about broad and narrow socialization, he wrote about the different sources of socialization and how those contribute to making a culture follow either broad or narrow socialization. I will discuss a few of these sources using examples to demonstrate how the U.S. and China fall into the categories of broad and narrow socialization. One of the first sources of socialization that Arnett discusses is family. Societies with narrow socialization “demand obedience and conformity from their children” (1995: 619). The first and second generation of students in China were all taught to follow the rules and do what was expected of them. Their parents could not give them an alternative to that norm because there did not exist a wide variety of opportunities in the still highly centralized society. In comparison, in cultures with broad socialization, “parents are generally allowed to a greater extent to modify the general cultural pattern according to their own personalities and preferences” (1995: 619). Many parents in the U.S encourage their children to attend high school and college as the normative way to seek success in

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2 This type of relationship also exists in the United States, but the Chinese students
American society. However, there are also parents who encourage their children to pursue dreams in alternative ways such as becoming a musician if that is what they really want to do. This different outlook regarding career choice that children learn from their parents exemplifies the differences between Chinese and American cultures that existed to a greater extent for the first two generations of students and which are much less apparent today.

Arnett describes schools as another important source of socialization with the differences in the ways schools operate leading to different forms of socialization. Arnett uses the school systems in Japan and the United States as examples of narrow versus broad socialization. In some respects, the school system in China resembles the stricter schools of Japan, which he categorizes as using narrow socialization. Traditionally, China’s system of schooling is very rigid with no room for failure. Success is defined by the score on a standardized test where answers are clearly define so there is no reward for subjectivity or creative thinking. Children who go through narrow socialization “are socialized into obedience, responsibility, and self-denial as the highest values” (1996: 621). On the other hand, many schools in the U.S try to build individual talent and spark intellectual interests in students. Students are constantly encouraged and supported by teachers and parents in reflection of a broad form of socialization. Later chapters of this thesis will explore how schooling in China has become less rigid, thereby bringing China’s narrow form of socialization closer to the broader American form. This shift from obedience and conformity to independence and individualism helps the students coming from China today to socialize more successfully.

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seem to think that it is more common in China.
The system of beliefs within a culture as another source for socialization. For the first and second generations of students from China, cultural beliefs led to narrow socialization. When these students grew up under Communist Party ideals, communist beliefs promoted “values such as self-restraint, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and conformity to a particular way of thinking and behaving” (Arnett 1996: 623). Individualism and self-expression were scorned and disallowed; instead students were forced to focus on working to benefit China as a whole. The cultural belief system present in American society differed greatly from this norm for the Chinese students and, as a result, the first generation found socializing in the U.S. to be very difficult. Now, in the 21st century, the cultural belief systems in China and the U.S are becoming increasingly similar, thereby helping Chinese students socialize into the U.S society in greater depth and at a faster rate.

While the discussion above categorizes socialization in China as being generally narrow and in the United States as generally broad, not everything is so clear-cut. As Arnett writes, there are a number of sources of socialization, and while most of the forms in China have traditionally been narrow, there are some that can be seen as broad. Arnett points to peers as a source of socialization and he states that the influence of peers on socialization is usually more prominent in industrialized cultures (1996: 620). During the 1960s China was viewed as a preindustrial country but peers played a rather large role in socialization. Young Chinese teenagers were sent from their homes and to the countryside to work at communes. They were put into contact with other people their age, and it was at this time that teenagers began picking friends based on personal compatibility. In this way, peers served as a source of broad socialization for the Chinese youth. Nevertheless, the other sources of
narrow socialization were so strong that even though forms of broad socialization existed, narrow socialization made a greater impact upon the students, especially intellectuals and those who came to the United States.

It is logical that a student coming from a society with narrow socialization would have trouble adjusting to the ideals and values of a society with broad socialization. The first and second generations of students grew up in China under narrow primary socialization and found secondary socialization in the U.S. to be difficult. Socialization for the third generation in China is becoming broader. With exposure to ideas of individualism and independence, the third-generation students are finding that their transition to the United States is not as drastic as it was for the earlier students. Later in this paper I will discuss why and how China is slowly becoming a society with broad socialization because an understanding of the reasons for the gradual shift from narrow to broad socialization will in turn help to explain why Chinese students today are socializing better than they did in the past.

**Conclusion**

Socialization is an effective framework to use in trying to understand the changes in the experiences of Chinese students in the United States. It helps to explain how political, economic and social changes in China have affected Chinese students in China and outside of China. As a powerful lens, socialization helps to see how the three generations had such different outcomes in their cross-cultural travel. This understanding is important as it raises awareness of issues that greatly affect the youth generation in China.
This chapter provided a working definition of socialization as well as terms within the field of socialization, such as primary and secondary socialization, acculturation, and broad and narrow socialization, that relate to the topic at hand. The definitions for these terms help to explain the conditions that may affect the ability of Chinese students to socialize in the United States and the difficulty of their task. While this chapter has focused mainly on conditions that lead to success or failure of socialization, the rest of this thesis will examine reasons why third-generation students are achieving socialization at a much faster rate and in greater depth than their predecessors. I will explore current social conditions in China that facilitate secondary socialization abroad.
Chapter 2: The Three Generations

The three generations of modern Chinese students have been largely shaped by significant historical events. The death of Mao Zedong, the Tiananmen Square protest, and China’s entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 have made lasting impacts on the Chinese people. This chapter will provide a background on the first two generations of students coming to the United States since China and the United States established diplomatic relations at the end of 1978. It will also briefly describe defining characteristics of the third generation of students.

The first group consists of students coming between 1978 and 1989. These students grew up in China during the era of Mao Zedong and were the first group of students to come to the United States after Mao’s death in 1976. The second generation of students came to the United States after the incident at Tiananmen Square in June 1989. Their experiences growing up and socializing into Chinese society are quite different from those of the first generation, and their lives after 1989 are colored with the memory of Tiananmen Square. It is important to note that China became more open to Western culture during the 1990s, giving the second generation of students much more access and exposure to the United States. The date separating the second and third generations is harder to define, but is still quite noticeable. The symbolic importance of China’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 gives it standing to mark the transition between the second and third generations. It was at this time that China began its radical shift from a country deeply rooted in old Communist tradition to a modern nation ready to assume world superpower. The Chinese students coming to the United States since 2001 make up the third generation. Their everyday lives are drastically different from those of the first two
generations. The defining characteristics of this generation will be outlined, including the effects of China joining the WTO in 2001 and Hu Jintao succeeding Jiang Zemin as the President of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 2003.

This chapter will explore the differences in socialization between the first two generations, by putting differences in a historical context and examining the experiences of several students part of these generations. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to contrast with the third generation of students, which is the main focus of this thesis.

**The First Generation of Students**

There was not much to help us psychologically, emotionally…I don’t see that. We had so few students on campus…[Americans] just started to know Chinese students so they didn’t know how to take care of us. We didn’t realize that either. The most difficult thing for me was that back in China we were college students from good families and we had a relatively better life than the general people. We were kind of confident and had a kind of identity there. But here we started with nothing and had to really establish everything.  [Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010]

This is the reflection of a female student, Mei, who came to the United States in 1983 to pursue a masters degree in Anthropology at Wesleyan University when there were very few Chinese students on campus. Her memory is a representative of how she and her Chinese cohort felt about their experiences. This student can be characterized as a member of the group of students who left China for America in the late 1970s and 1980s after China established diplomatic relations with the United States in 1978. These students represent a new generation of Chinese – the first group growing up in the Mao era to come to the United States – whose experiences are the most different from those of the current third generation of Chinese students in America. This section will examine how Mei came to the United States and her
experience upon arriving. Her story is typical for students attending college in the United States after the opening of China to the West, but before the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Mei from Beijing directly felt the effects of the Cultural Revolution on the education system in China. In 1966, her academic study was cut short abruptly after her third year of secondary school. She completed junior high but never made it to senior high. While most people at the time thought it was a disaster for the youth to be forced to discontinue their studies prematurely, some students were actually quite happy. In the years preceding the Cultural Revolution, advanced studies had brought added pressure throughout senior high school as students prepared for college entrance exams and college. For students who were not excited to go down this path, an interruption of their studies became a relief. Instead of going through normal schooling, Mei and her classmates were sent to the countryside where the Beijing lifestyle that they were accustomed to living was uprooted. As it turned out, time in the countryside was actually very educational. Mei recalls, “The toughness of life definitely makes you grow up faster and understand things better.” Being forced to adapt to different conditions eventually helped when she arrived to the United States. In addition to experiencing first-hand the process of radical secondary socialization, the students of her generation learned what it was like to endure hardship and they learned to know two different lifestyles: one of a city academic and another of a peasant in the countryside. However, later in the United States, Mei and similar students found that Americans did not understand the social changes that they had lived through in China or how they became their current selves.

3 Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010
After returning from the countryside, Mei began to teach English at a vocational school until 1978 when academic schools in China reopened and she started her undergraduate studies at Beijing Normal University. There she studied English Literature through a special program organized by the Board of Education for English teachers who had not attended college. Mei graduated from Beijing Normal in 1982 and immediately started applying to universities in the United States for graduate school. During the period of Mao’s leadership, traveling to the U.S. for college was a very foreign concept for the Chinese, even for those who lived in large cities like Beijing. It was only after 1978, when the United States started normal diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China, that Chinese students started going to the United States again to study abroad. 4 Since studying in the United States was uncommon and few people knew how to gain access to an American education, it was often the case that those who did go abroad had help from Americans or other Chinese who were knowledgeable about the system. Mei had two foreign instructors at Beijing Normal, an Australian woman and her American husband, who encouraged her to continue her studies abroad because her fluency in English was very good.

Furthermore, one result of the recent Cultural Revolution was that not many graduate schools were available to her in China, so going abroad seemed like a good option. Because she did not have the financial means to pay for an American education, she wrote many letters to different colleges explaining her situation and asking for admission with financial assistance. Wesleyan University was the first to respond and offered her a full scholarship to study in the Anthropology Department.

4 After the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, no students from Mainland China went to America for thirty years (Qian 2002: xviii).
When Mei arrived at Wesleyan there were very few Chinese students on campus. She remembers that the University did a good job welcoming her onto campus and she was very satisfied with the living arrangements that they had made for her. There was a staff member who helped international students adjust, taking them shopping for essential belongings like toiletries and kitchen supplies. However shopping for those items proved to be very difficult. Mei has a vivid memory of being at a supermarket for the first time to pick out some basic things like towels and shampoo. She recalled being shocked that the store had so much to offer. She remembered, “I was so overwhelmed because I had never seen that many choices. If we had one type [in China] that’s pretty good. I simply couldn’t decide.”

Growing up in Communist China, Mei and her classmates were not used to the consumer culture in the United States. It was extremely difficult adjusting to the lifestyle of a typical American. Chinese students came to the United States without ever having experienced the type of consumerism where needs and wants could both be satisfied through a multitude of choices. During the Cultural Revolution when consumerism and materialism were deemed counterrevolutionary and inappropriate, the Chinese people had been forced to destroy items that signified wealth, including rare and precious antiques. Chinese students at that time had no interest in fashion because everyone wore unisex worker uniforms. Spending money on personal items was condemned because everything was supposed to be shared by all Chinese citizens. This was the mentality that the Communist Party indoctrinated into the Chinese starting in 1949 and it is no wonder that upon arriving in the United States, these students felt lost in the consumer world.

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5 Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 01/27/2010
Liu Zongren is another Chinese student who came to the United States in 1980, soon after Mei. He too was shocked and confused by the materialism that existed in the United States. He told an interviewer that he was upset to see how many lights Americans used because it struck him as very wasteful. Zongren was also appalled to hear that Americans would spend up to $100 on metal detectors. He was quoted as saying, “A hundred dollars to buy a machine to look for pennies! How strange these Americans are” (Chang, 2003: 317). Like Mei, Zongren could not understand the excessive consumerism and materialism that made it almost impossible for him to socialize. It is part of the culture in the U.S. to buy or aspire to buy luxury goods that satisfy wants and to indulge in things that one might not need. People do this perhaps to make themselves or others happy or to signify wealth. In China during the 1970s and 1980s, in a practice reflecting traditional Chinese culture, Chinese people customarily saved their money. Zongren could not move past his Chinese culture of spending only for necessities and therefore he could not understand why Americans were so fascinated with consumerism. This lack of understanding hindered socialization.

Like Mei, Zongren felt that his American classmates could not understand him. Iris Chang writes:

Despite or because of the abundance in his host country, Liu did not feel he could ever become an American. In 1982, shortly before returning to the PRC, Liu saw *E.T.*, Steven Spielberg’s blockbuster film about an extraterrestrial who befriends a little boy while trapped on earth. “I liked *E.T.* for a reason that most American kids might not think of: E.T. wanted to go home,” he later wrote. Many of his friends in the United States were like E.T.’s friends: “They helped me in every way they could to understand American life. But few of them really understood me or knew why I couldn’t feel comfortable among Americans, why I preferred to live a poorer or simpler life in China” (Chang 2003:318).
Another issue that caused problems for Chinese students was their financial situation. The Chinese government enacted a currency exchange policy whereby students coming to the United States were prohibited from bringing with them more than US$50. Therefore, all of the Chinese arriving in the United States had at most only fifty dollars in their pockets. The policy itself kept the students from coming with enough money to sustain a comfortable living but there were also other problems. Mei said, “But at the same time, even if we were allowed to get more money, we didn’t have it…nowadays people can bring a lot of money and even pay for tuition. We couldn’t imagine that anyone could do that.”

In addition, as foreigners without work permits, Mei and the other Chinese students were only allowed to work low-paying jobs on campus. When campus job earnings were insufficient to cover expenses, students often worked illegally at Chinese restaurants near campus in order to make enough money to sustain themselves. These students were always worrying about their financial situation, and long hours spent working illegally contributed to their inability to immerse themselves in American culture.

Even though there were not many of them on campus, Chinese students tended to socialize primarily among themselves. Mei remembers that the faculty, staff and her classmates were all very welcoming and nice, but they did not understand her. Although many Americans had good intentions, the cultural differences were so great that they were not able to relate to their new Chinese classmates, who had lived through events such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. To be part of a culture means understanding the people in the culture. Unfortunately, the

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6 Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010
Chinese students and the Americans in their community were unable to understand each other’s cultures. As a result, the Chinese students were not able to socialize.

The Chinese students also found it difficult to accept help from their American classmates. The system of exchange is much different in China than in the United States. Mei said, “If someone helps you too much we would think you are not respecting the person as independent and capable of handling things. It’s a totally different concept. I don’t think that we were used to that so that was a hard thing. It’s an exchange thing not a one time thing.”

This relates back to the system of exchange, known as guanxi, mentioned in Chapter 1. There is always a hidden meaning behind giving a gift or lending someone a hand. If one receives a gift, it is expected and required that they reciprocate in the appropriate manner. In addition, it is inappropriate to give a gift that is too big or too small. In Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village, Yunxiang Yan explains that this system of exchange was set in place to help people build and establish relationships (Yan 1996). This is the way exchange has traditionally worked in China and it is no wonder that the students coming to America had a difficult time getting used to the Western system of exchange where philanthropy and volunteerism are common.

Consequently, they often did not take the help and socializing became even more difficult without it.

Another problem lay in the fact that the Chinese students had no means to gain exposure to the United States before they actually arrived for school. In China they did not watch American movies and television shows or listen to Western music. American fast food restaurants like KFC and McDonald’s did not yet exist in China.

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7 Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010
Few had experience traveling abroad since they grew up in a society that stressed austerity, and traveling was considered too great of a luxury. When these students arrived in the United States they experienced culture shock. Without personal experience or knowledge acquired through the media, the first generation of Chinese students did not know what to expect when they arrived in the United States.

In the 1970s, Chinese people, especially those who had political reasons, started to migrate to Hong Kong, Canada and the United States in search of freedom and to escape from Communism. Many Chinese believed that America was a place of opportunity where dreams came true and quality of life was greater. Unfortunately, it was often the case that life although different was not much better in the States, and families moving to the U.S. suffered many problems. There were economic strains and some Americans did not welcome Asians living among them. The 1980s proved especially difficult for the Chinese in America. The recession at the beginning of the decade was blamed by many on Asian countries, such as Japan, which were seen as stealing American jobs and leading to an increased budget deficit (Chang 2003:319). Many Americans did not distinguish between Japanese and other East Asians so, consequently, all East Asians, including the Chinese, suffered the same racism. Americans affected by the recession made no effort to hide their dislike for Asians. Complete socialization of these Chinese students required U.S. culture to accept

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8 One of my great great grandfathers traveled from China to Malaysia in his youth and eventually developed a rubber plantation there that generated enough wealth to enable his son, my great grandfather, to become an industrialist and philanthropist in China. After the Communist takeover in 1949 members of my great grandfather’s family, including my grandmother, left Mainland China. They first relocated to Hong Kong and later immigrated to the United States.
them, but throughout the 1980s economic conditions made racial acceptance very difficult.

There were other reasons why it was socially hard for Mei and the students of her generation to adjust. The Chinese students were not used to the recreational activities of American students. In the United States competitive sports and a wide array of extracurricular activities, ranging from debate to hobby groups, were extremely popular, but the Chinese students were not so heavily involved in these activities. They were also unaware of the extent to which American students used drugs and alcohol and engaged in sexual activity. Chinese students did not understand and could not adopt the American college lifestyle.

The amount of freedom enjoyed by American students was also difficult for the Chinese to comprehend. Everything was closely monitored in China during the Cultural Revolution and no one could act freely. Anyone who disagreed with the Communist Party was arrested, often had to endure public denunciation, and was used as a public example of an enemy of China. On the other end of the spectrum, the period leading up to the 1970s in the United States was a time of intense political action and rebellion, and that culture continued into the 1970s. The younger generation, in particular, expressed their freedoms and opinions vociferously and often challenged the government over issues such as the Vietnam War and segregation. Some American students also had strong feelings of hatred toward President Ronald Reagan. Many of these students attended small liberal arts colleges like Wesleyan, and it was dissonant for the Chinese to see so many people openly disapproving of their leader. Growing up in Communist China, Mao Zedong was seen as a god-like figure and people did not dare speak out against him in fear that they
would be persecuted. The political cultures of China and the United States could not have been more different.

The adjustment to academics also caused problems. The American style of learning was difficult for Mei to adapt because she had not taken any seminar style classes in China. The structure of education was still very traditional, with teachers lecturing in large classrooms where students learned by rote memorization and repetition. However, the issue that made things hardest was the language barrier. Although her English was considered very good in China and it was one of the reasons why she was recommended to study abroad, Mei found herself unable to follow along in her classes. She said that she was a “very active student in China but I was so silent when I was in America. I couldn’t ask any questions…I was just so lost. That was the feeling I had in the very beginning.”

The language barrier not only hindered students in the classroom but also made it difficult for them to learn the social customs in American society. It was hard for them to understand idiomatic parts of everyday speech. It was easier to talk exclusively to the other Chinese students. This retreat to the familiar resulted in Mei and her Chinese classmates spending most of their time together.

Mei had a lot of difficulty adjusting and it took her longer than normal to finish her degree, but she managed and did not suffer through mental health issues or need to return home during the period of her study. However, not all of the students from her generation were as lucky. Mei remembered one undergraduate who was unable to handle the pressure and stress during the final examination period. The student panicked during the examination period and could not take care of herself. When a

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Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010
professor heard about the situation she rushed the student to the health center where
the student was prescribed medicine to “make her feel better.” This student happened
to be married and pregnant, both of which were conditions not uncommon for
Chinese students of the time. In fact, half of all of the Chinese students at Wesleyan,
graduate and undergraduate, were married when they arrived in the U.S. The
combination of the new style of learning and her sense of being lost in her isolated
social network caused this student to completely break down.

Overall, Mei and her generation of Chinese students experienced a loss of identity
upon arriving in the United States. Mei said, “Sometimes I wondered why I was here
because I was so lost and it was so difficult that way. The living situation was fine…it
was just the feeling of being lost was really the most difficult thing to deal with.”

She and her classmates excelled in school in China where they felt like real leaders,
but when they got to the United States they were stripped of their old identities. There
were also very few of them so it was hard to build a strong support network. As the
first generation of Chinese students to come to the U.S. in thirty years, they had no
contact with any students who had gone through the experience before them, so
everything in their new surroundings came to them as a surprise. The cultural
differences and language barrier were so great that it was almost impossible for the
students to assimilate in American culture.

The combination of all these problems, including cultural and political differences,
financial hardships, racial biases, and limited support networks, seriously hindered
the socialization of these Chinese students. The majority of the students in the first
generation failed to socialize, and even those who succeeded to some degree needed a

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10 Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/27/2010
long time to do so. In comparison to the two succeeding generations, this group had the most difficulty socializing.

**The Second Generation of Students**

The second generation of students studying abroad consists of the students who arrived in the United States in the years between 1989 and 2001. The incident at Tiananmen Square on June 4th 1989 dramatically changed China and serves as a symbol for the birth of a new generation. The demonstrations leading up to Tiananmen represent the growing dissatisfaction that the youth in China felt towards the ruling Communist regime and their commitment to establish democracy and abolish corruption within the Chinese government. The youth population’s shift towards Western culture and values signals their rejection of Communist ideals and their hope for a fair government.

The Tiananmen Square incident had a huge effect on the youth culture in China as it led to students learning how to become part of the modern world. In a study on the youth generation after Tiananmen, Yijiang Ding writes:

“Many have noticed the rising individualism and materialism and the decline of collectivism and idealism in Chinese society. The Chinese people today, especially young people, are said to be much more self-interested than older people, and to attach more importance to material benefits and less importance to spiritual elements such as personal loyalty, social status, prestige, and even family ties in interpersonal relations. Similarly, they are said to emphasize material gains for the present over ideals for the future. In short, contemporary Chinese culture is reported to be increasingly individualist, materialistic, and hedonistic (Ding 2002: 102).

These new values match well with those of Western culture, and the fact that Chinese students became exposed to them before going abroad made it easier for them to
socialize when compared to the first generation of students. Unlike the students in the 1980s, these post-Tiananmen students were beginning to understand the culture behind consumerism and were starting to care more about personal advancement than China as a nation.

This social change developed because events at Tiananmen created a feeling of disillusionment and Chinese people started feeling hopeless regarding whether the political changes that they had been seeking before Tiananmen would still be possible. The youth in China no longer had faith in its government and, as a result, they also loss faith in Communist ideals. This sense of loss of their own values caused them to start believing and practicing ideals from the West along with its concepts of individualism and materialism. Ding wrote about the rising popularity of these values in 2002. Thus the conditions in Chinese society that ensued as one result of post-Tiananmen disillusionment would soon affect the second generation’s ability to socialize in the United States.

In addition to the political climate, China’s economic reforms had great influence on shaping the second generation of students. Starting with Deng Xiaoping’s Southern Tour of China in 1992, the Chinese economy grew during the 1990s, propelling China’s steady evolution into a consumer society. The opening of the economy brought increased exposure to Western culture as China adjusted to modern forms of technology and entertainment. Hua, a student from the second generation who came to study at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1994, was still at school in Shanghai during this time of social change. Shanghai is situated on the east

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11 During January and February of 1992, Deng made stops at a number of cities in Southern China, most notably Shenzhen, delivering speeches promoting his economic reform plan which called for continuous growth and an open economy (Zhao 1993).
coast as one of the prime trading ports in China. Living in Shanghai enabled Hua to be among the first group of people to experience China’s economic transformation. She vividly remembers her first time eating at a Kentucky Fried Chicken in 1991 because “it was a symbol of western culture so I felt very curious and wanted to try it.”

In addition to fast food restaurants, Hua remembers Japanese manufactured Sony Walkmans being very popular. Japan at the time was very modernized for an Asian country, and its proximity to China enabled China to absorb a lot of new technology from her next-door neighbor.

Even though new technology and culture were flooding into China, the Chinese populace was still far from modernity. A friend of Hua’s received audio tapes from a high school classmate who had narrated her experiences while studying abroad in Japan. Hua recalls eagerly gathering around with her classmates to listen to the tapes, with one memory striking her in particular. At the time the only women’s hygiene products available in China were paper pads. However, the girl in Japan talked on her tapes about all the different varieties of feminine hygiene products that existed in Japan. Hua and her classmates in China were fascinated and envious. Hua said, “Those kind of material things in your life start to enter but still at a very slow pace.”

Throughout the 1990s the people in China were starting to learn about products used in the West, and this knowledge would help them later to socialize abroad better than students in the first generation. However, they were not fully exposed to a great extent of Western culture and still found themselves amazed and shocked upon arriving in the United States. Hua also noted that even though these foreign products were imported to China and people were becoming familiar with

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12 Interviewee #5 to Amy Lum, 01/28/2010
them, the economic condition of most Chinese did not allow them to actually afford these products. Hua said that of course every family wanted to sign their child up for things like piano lessons but the reality of the situation was that no one could afford those kinds of luxuries.

The Chinese students of the second generation also started watching American movies and television shows and listening to American music. Most cities had local radio stations that played Western pop music and students listened to the songs frequently. Hua was at Fudan University in the early 1990s, where the school occasionally showed American television series like James Bond 007. There were usually no subtitles and it was hard for most students to completely understand what was going on, but it was still helpful for listening comprehension. Classic Hollywood films that had won Academy Awards were very popular as well and Hua said, “Worlds in movies are very different from Shanghai and of course movies are exaggerated and we understand real life isn’t like that, but it still creates some kind of fantasy and imagination that is very different from Shanghai life.”

Movies provided the Chinese with images to help them formulate their thoughts about the West. In the past, knowledge about the West came from word of mouth or books, but by the 1990s people in China were starting to see images of the Western world on a daily basis. This helped Chinese youth adjust to the West much faster than before.

The second generation of students grew up in a time of transition. They were breaking away from the culture and tradition that defined China in the 1960s and 1970s and were starting to understand the lifestyle typical for Westerners. An acceptance of materialism and individualism helped these students better socialize in

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13 Interviewee #5 to Amy Lum, 01/28/2010
a capitalist society, but there were still many obstacles that prevented the students from being able to fully socialize. China’s economy was growing, but it was not yet at a point that allowed the Chinese to live the consumer lifestyles typical of Americans attending the same colleges. Socialization for this group of students was a slow or incomplete process and it would not be until the beginning of the 21st century that Chinese students could feel the full influence of the West while still living in their home country and consequently become able to fully socialize into American society.

**The Third Generation of Students**

The students of the third generation are the contemporary Chinese youth born in the mid to late 1980s. They attend college in the 21st century and are growing up in a China that is much different from the one known to previous generations. Unlike the past two generations that had definitive historical moments to mark the start of their generations, the end of the Cultural Revolution for the first generation and Tiananmen Square for the second generation, the third generation does not have as pivotal an event. This section will briefly explore some events and conditions of the 21st century and characteristics that can be used to define these students of the third generation. The issues discussed in this section will show how contemporary students are distinct from the earlier generations of students and the subsequent chapters will explain how these issues have allowed students to socialize into American society better than the previous generations.

14 Interviewee #5 to author, 01/28/2010
What we call the third generation of students comes of age after 2001 when China was officially accepted into the World Trade Organization, an event symbolic of China entering the stage as a major global superpower. “China's ascension into the World Trade Organization (WTO) is consistent with China's avowed commitment to transform its entire economy from a controlled autarchy or closed, planned economy into an open, more market-oriented economy, i.e., a socialist market economy” (Coldwell 2004: 364). The openness of the economy enabled increased trade, causing economic growth and globalization.

This economic growth has had many implications on Chinese growing up in the 21st century. “As the economy has expanded, personal incomes have also increased greatly: between 1989 and 2005 [annual] urban incomes rose from ¥1,374 to ¥10,493, while rural incomes, though well behind, grew from ¥602 to ¥ 3,255” (Fewsmith 2008: 213). Furthermore, “A majority of the population (more than 63 percent) indicated that their income has increased “somewhat” or “greatly” over the past five years” (2008: 214). Chinese traditionally save their money but today, families are finding that they have money to spend on items such music lessons for their children and computers for the household. Consumerism is rapidly increasing and participation in this phenomenon is not limited to just the richest families. Even Chinese living in less industrialized areas are spending time in shopping malls filled with luxury items. The students of the third generation grew up in China as consumers and materialists. While students studying abroad in the past could not comprehend consumerism, the students of the third generation are well socialized to it.
One student who is scheduled to graduate from Wesleyan in 2012 and comes from Shenyang in Liaoning Province, an industrialized city in northeast China, said that shopping is her favorite activity. She enjoys going to the multistoried shopping malls in China. When she arrived in the United States she was homesick until she discovered how to get to a large shopping center near campus. She enjoys trying to pick out the newest trends and gladly spends entire afternoons at the mall. While students in the past felt uncomfortable with American consumerism, students today are already part of that lifestyle when they arrive. Chinese students became more accustomed to consumerism during the 1990s, but have, in the 21st century, reached comparable levels of buying as consumers in the United States and other Western countries.

In addition to China’s entrance to the WTO, Hu Jintao’s rise to power and his presidential succession in 2003 can be seen as a defining feature of 21st century China. His succession of Jiang marks a new generation of leadership in China that has had a great impact on Chinese society. Hu Jintao is known for emphasizing soft power, culture and ideas to help China rise in a peaceful manner (Lam 2006:273). He has tried to increase China’s global appeal, which has had the effect of increased foreign presence in China and the study of Chinese language and Chinese culture in other countries (2006: 274). As the Chinese economy has become increasingly open, Western countries have turned to China as a center for business, bringing Western culture in the process.

Hu Jintao has done much to improve international relations and glorify China but he has done this in a way much different than past leaders. He can be classified as a technocrat because he was trained as an engineer and therefore looks for solutions
that will “work”. He grew up during the Cultural Revolution and witnessed the events at Tiananmen Square. Hu and his cohort have refused to get caught up in revolutionary idealism and instead have formed a new type of elite politics based on reason and practicality (Li 2001:26). Although many of his political policies are much different from those of Western leaders, he marks a change from old Communist revolutionaries to a younger and more pragmatic generation of leaders. Students in China today are therefore growing up in a world with less emphasis on Communism, resulting in an easier transition to better relations with the United States. Hu’s predecessor, Jiang Zemin, had some of these same ideals, but he did not act upon them to the same extent that Hu has done. Hu has continued Jiang’s work to reform the Chinese economy but he has also devoted time and effort to more global issues such as health and the environment. The youth in China growing up under the rule of Hu Jintao are living in a world quite different from students growing up only ten years earlier.

The third-generation students are coming of age in a China that is steadily transforming from a traditional Communist state to a global super power. Although there is no defining moment identifying their cohort, China’s increased international presence and growing economy paint a general picture of the third generation that shows how different they are from the previous two generations.

Conclusion

The main focus of this chapter is to provide backgrounds for the three different generations of Chinese students so that they can be compared to one another. It is important to see what their lives were like in China to understand how they will
socialize in the United States. The first generation of students grew up during the Cultural Revolution and went through primary socialization in a relatively closed society brimming with the ideals of Communism. The identities of these students were formed by their experiences while growing up under these conditions. Even though they arrived in the U.S. between the years of 1978 and 1989, the events that really define these students happened during the 1960s and early 1970s. The second generation of students had much more exposure to Western culture while growing up but often felt a sense of disillusionment with their country due to the incident at Tiananmen Square. For them, the period of their upbringing was not as influential as the events that were happening when they were arriving in the U.S. Many of these students were well into their teenage years when the events at Tiananmen Square occurred. Although it is hard to find a definitive point in time where the second generation ends and the third generation begins, it is evident that the students of the third generation are growing up in a much different world. These students are able to reap the benefits of China’s entry into the WTO and they experience more freedom in their everyday lives. The acculturation of these students has been influenced by events during their childhoods as well as current experiences. For all three generations, primary socialization of students in China affects their secondary socialization in the U.S. These effects determine the speed and depth of socialization. The most important conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that in comparing the generations, the students of the third generation are socializing the fastest and reaching the most successful stages of socialization.

This chapter examined how some factors made it difficult for the first two generations of students to socialize upon arrival in the United States. However, it was
also noted that the second generation of students were starting to socialize better than the first. This is important to establish an understanding about what kinds of events and conditions affect socialization and allow some students to achieve socialization faster and more successfully. The remaining chapters of this thesis will go into more depth about the issues that have aided the third generation of students in socialization.
Chapter 3: Contact with the West

The first chapter gave a working definition of socialization and established the necessary conditions for a Chinese student to socialize successfully in the United States. This chapter examines how availability of contact with the West prior to studying abroad has helped students in the process of socialization. We will explore how travel experience, technology, entertainment and the media have affected the socialization of Chinese students in the United States. As established in the previous chapter, China’s growing economy has provided Chinese citizens with a new set of resources and this chapter makes evident how these resources have enabled Chinese students to socialize better.

Travel Experience

Before the 21st century, the majority of Chinese did not have the luxury of traveling. Starting in 1958, China’s household registration (hukou) system controlled the movement of the Chinese population and sought to keep rural people out of urban areas. This system virtually prevented people from moving and they were forced to stay on the land that they were born onto (Mackenzie 2002: 305). The massive forced migration of urban Chinese into the countryside during the Cultural Revolution mobilized the population, but instead of moving from rural to urban areas, the migration worked in the reverse direction. People in China were traveling, but it was almost exclusively in-country and even that was a seen as a privilege. There was no real concept of leisure travel and few students were traveling to the United States or other capitalist countries until the eighties. This dearth of travel experience made it
extremely difficult for students of the first generation to socialize upon arrival in the United States. The only world that they knew was quite different from life on a college campus in the U.S. With the majority of students having had no previous exposure and experience in a Western country, it was very difficult for the Chinese students to gain an understanding of American culture during their time of study.

Even for the students of the second generation, travel was uncommon. China was opening up on the international level but not many Chinese were leaving the country and experiencing other cultures firsthand. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some students who began to study abroad in Japan returned with second hand-stories that enabled others to learn about life in a more modernized country outside China. However, even though China’s economy was starting to grow, it was still not at the financial point where families could afford to send their children abroad for formal schooling or vacation. Therefore, few of the students who came to the United States for college arrived with any previous travel experience.

In just a matter of ten years the number of students with travel experience before coming to the United States has grown exponentially. The government is less strict in the 21st century and students today find that the limitations that prevented previous generations from leaving the country no longer exist. For today’s students, it is not difficult to acquire a passport and visa to study abroad because Chinese foreign relations with the rest of the world have improved. The growth of the Chinese economy in the years since it entered the WTO has been tremendous. As established in the previous chapter, Chinese people today are much wealthier than they were ten to fifteen years ago so people now have financial resources to travel and spend substantial amounts of time in other countries. The combination of having more
money and time has given many students of the third generation the opportunity to spend time in Western countries before attending college in the United States. Their experiences abroad vary from attending international schools to leisure travel. Regardless of the reasons they go abroad, the fact that the students today have spent time in other countries has made it easier for them to socialize at American universities.

College admissions indirectly influences pre-college travel. The way students gain admittance to universities in China is different from the way they get admitted to elite universities in the United States. In China students are accepted to elite universities based solely on their performance on an examination known as the *gaokao*. As a result, the method of educational instruction in China is very different from the method used in the United States. In Chinese high schools curricula are focused on this exam and students are trained to think in ways that will help them to excel on it. Because the high school curriculum is heavily geared towards the *gaokao*, it does not make sense for students who expect to attend college outside China to go through the Chinese school system. Moreover, for these students planning to study abroad, a Chinese high school education is not necessarily the best way to prepare for admittance to a college in the United States.

Whereas Chinese universities rely exclusively on *gaokao* scores to determine admissions results, most U.S. colleges take a more holistic approach to the admissions process. They look at scores on the ACT or SAT, which most resembles the *gaokao*, but also consider high school transcripts, recommendations, extracurricular activities, and personal essays. Comparatively speaking, American colleges look for well-rounded students, and attending international schools helps
Chinese students build stronger, well-rounded resumes. Therefore, being at school in America or an international school in another country gives these students an advantage when applying to U.S. colleges.

There are some students who spend their entire high school careers abroad at boarding schools in the U.S. or other Western countries. Usually these students expect to attend college in the United States and see no advantage to attending high school in China. Attending school outside of China not only helps students get accepted to colleges, but also aids in socialization.

One student, who will be graduating from Wesleyan in 2011, knew before starting high school that she would be applying to colleges in the United States so she attended high school at an international high school. Choosing a school in Chile was a logical step because her father did business there. Attending high school in Chile not only helped this student gain admittance to U.S. colleges, but also enabled her to adjust more easily once she got to the United States. Because she had already experienced the struggle of transitioning to a new environment in Chile, she did not have difficulty adjusting upon arriving in the U.S. This informant remembers that the language barrier and cultural differences were the biggest obstacles for her. She also remarked that Chilean society is much more open than the United States, so when she got to Wesleyan it was not much of a problem for her to adjust to the liberal culture, even though it took her a long time to transition in Chile, as it wasn’t until around her senior year of high school that she felt comfortable. As a result of her Chilean high school experience, she was already socialized to Western culture by the time she got to Wesleyan.
Time spent in Chile not only allowed this student to socialize readily to culture in the United States, but also made socialization in the academic sphere easier. She said that the “education system is similar so I knew what people were talking about when they mentioned SATs, APs, etc.”

The school in Chile was an American international school so she had also become accustomed to the style of schooling in America. Chapter 1 discussed how Jeffery Arnett (1995) cited schooling as a form of socialization and for this student schooling in Chile provided a broad form of socialization. Students from past generations had only attended high school in China and therefore their form of socialization was narrow. It is easy to see how a student with prior experience in a culture providing opportunity for broad socialization would find it easier to adjust to colleges in the United States where socialization is categorized as broad.

While the above informant spent her entire high school career abroad, some students have shorter study abroad experiences before college. There are a number of students who enroll in high schools outside of China for only a year or two. Another Wesleyan student in the class of 2011 graduated from high school in China, but spent his junior year of high school abroad in Germany. His father works for a travel agency and was assigned to a temporary position there. This student said that it was hard for him to adjust to the lifestyle in Germany but his time and experience there made coming to the United States “OK” for him. In addition to spending an entire year in Germany, this student had also traveled to a number of other places such as Japan and Thailand. Socially he did not have much trouble adjusting in the U.S. and has made friends with both international and American students. This experience of

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15 Interviewee #7 to Amy Lum, 10/09/2009
living in a Western country, even for only a short period of time, made transitioning in the United States relatively simple.

Another student spent a year abroad in Germany through an exchange program. This particular student from Shenyang was the first student in her school to participate in such a program. For her, being in Germany was definitely difficult at first because she noticed, “people think differently, it’s not just the way they speak and act.”\(^{16}\) Since she was in Germany for an entire year she was able to observe the differences and learned how to “express herself in a way that would be interesting for her classmates to listen to.” Reflecting different values, Westerners act very differently from the way people do in China. Chapter 1 explained how the Chinese and American social and party scenes are a lot different, so being in Germany for a year allowed this student to get used to a culture where most people smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol.

This student also believes that her year in Germany taught her not to judge people by their different lifestyle. At first she was really turned off by all of the cigarettes and alcohol that people consumed in Germany and believed that by choosing to indulge in these vices, they must be bad students. However, she discovered that her generalization was not always the case and she learned not to “judge people based on that kind of behavior because what really counts is whether they are a good person or not.”\(^{17}\) She noticed that some of her classmates would go out and get really drunk, but in school they were good students and nice people. This change to a more flexible mindset has helped her make American friends in college. When she first arrived at Wesleyan she was taken aback by the amount of marijuana use on campus, but after

\(^{16}\) Interviewee #9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010
just one semester she got used to it. Had she not come to the realization while in Germany that behavioral patterns and what they suggest regarding character are not so clear-cut, this student would have had a hard time making friends with American students. Her time abroad in high school gave her the opportunity to reflect on the way she views people, especially from different cultures, and this insight has allowed her to accept American culture more easily and to socialize to life at Wesleyan.

Studying overseas during high school helps students socialize in a number of different ways. The first experience of socializing into a new culture is the most difficult. For students who have already gone through the process of socializing to a new environment during high school, it is easier to navigate secondary socialization again in the U.S. Not only do they know how to adapt to a new environment, but also most of them have socialized to Western cultures that more closely resemble the environment of the United States. As a result, they do not need extensive socialization upon arriving in the U.S. Compared to students of the first two generations, today’s students with pre-college travel opportunities have, as a result, a greater understanding of Americans and American society before college even begins. Today’s students are thus at an advantage when it comes to socialization.

In addition to enrolling at foreign high schools, many Chinese students now also have the opportunity to travel outside of China during their high school years through organized programs. Extracurricular programs such as Model United Nations are starting to gain popularity in China, and for students in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai who attend prestigious high schools, these programs are starting to feel like normal and established activities. In recent years these types of activities have started

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17 Interviewee #9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010
to spread to elite high schools in smaller cities and towns. The student from Shenyang discussed above traveled to the United States during her senior year of high school for a Model UN trip. The organization had started at her school only a few years earlier as an extracurricular. The students on the trip traveled to Boston and New York City over a period of five days. This trip gave the students first-hand experience with American culture.

The number of students traveling abroad before college has rapidly increased but it is not just the students’ personal travels that aid socialization. Chinese people in general are traveling more and even if a student has not been abroad, there is a very good chance that another family member or a friend has spent time abroad. It was rare in the past to know people who had traveled to Western countries, but the students coming abroad now almost all have had contact with experienced travelers. Even without direct experience, it is useful for these students to hear about life in the West as preparation before their first time in the United States.

A different student from Shenyang had never traveled to the United States before coming to college but her father had traveled to a number of different countries, including the U.S. This student ended up applying to American colleges because her father believed that the United States had the most to offer her. Even though this student had not traveled abroad before college, hearing from her father about what it was actually like to be abroad in Western countries gave her an idea of what to expect when she arrived in the U.S.

Students in China today have relatively easy access to experienced travelers when compared to the older generations. This is beneficial for socialization because frequent exposure to experienced travelers allows a student to develop a more
accurate concept of what life is like in America. The students of the third generation are much more knowledgeable about the U.S. than the first two generations.

**Technology and Entertainment**

The rise of cell phones, computers and the internet has caused major changes in modern day society. Within the last decade they have become a staple of everyday life and even in newly developing countries like China, they are ubiquitous. The internet allows people to access information from all over the world almost instantaneously from any location with internet access. The internet also provides a social networking system that connects all different kinds of people and ideas. Chinese students find themselves constantly using computers as early as middle school, and this use of technology has helped them socialize better when they go abroad. The role that computers play not only helps with adjustment upon arrival in the United States, but also serves as a way for students to find channels of access to get to the U.S..

Although the Chinese government has tightened security and increased internet blocking in the past year, the amount of information available on the Web now is still infinitely more than what was available for the first and second generations. The students of the first generation did not even have access to computers and if there were students in the second generation that did, it was rare.

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, many students now have previous travel experience abroad and/or connections with people knowledgeable about the college admissions process. However, for those students without these kinds of resources, the internet is an easy way to find out about different colleges and
the opportunities available for scholarships. A student from Gansu Province guided his own college application process without the benefit of previous travel experience or the help from a college counselor. He conducted his college search almost entirely online, starting by looking at all of the colleges on the U.S. News and World Report’s top colleges list. From there he was able to identify Wesleyan University and get information about the Freeman Scholarship. General college websites and the official websites for individual colleges and universities are easy to access and include extensive information that provide windows into colleges in the United States.

The college admissions process has become a topic of obsession for some people in the United States and the information available to students, parents and counselors in the U.S. is also available to students in China through the internet. Reading through reviews of schools gives a somewhat accurate representation about what life there will actually be like. On college websites there are also many photographs of the college campuses and students at the schools. In the past few years, there has been an increase in the use of videos on college websites that either provide interviews with current students or showcase everyday activities that occur on campus. These types of resources were not available ten years ago, but for Chinese students now, it is easy to get an idea of what life would be like in America and at specific institutions.

The internet also enables people to communicate and exchange ideas with strangers about different topics. Online forums serve as a popular way to find other people interested in similar topics. A student from Xinjiang went through the entire college process in China and was accepted to Qinghua University. However, when he arrived on campus before classes started he realized that it was not the right place for him. He did not have a counselor or advisor to consult so he was forced to go about
the international college search process all by himself. To do this he turned to online forums designed for students who want to attend school outside China. The forums list colleges and universities where Chinese students are studying and this information makes it easier for prospective students to find schools that are good matches. Before he arrived in Beijing, this student had no idea that there were ways to get to the United States and believed that only powerful families in Beijing and Shanghai had the means to send their children abroad. However, after talking to some people in Beijing and looking through the forums, he learned about scholarships and financial aid resources, which he did not know existed. This student, a member of the Wesleyan class of 2010, said that in the year he applied to colleges abroad, almost every student who eventually went abroad to the United States for college had gotten their information on this forum. With even more resources nowadays, such as college review websites, online forums are not the only way to access information. The forums and other resources help with the college search process and furthermore allow students to understand the culture at American schools.

The student from Urumqi in Xinjiang Province did not have much experience with Western culture before college started. Urumqi is mostly undeveloped. Unlike the students from cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, this student from Urumqi had little exposure to Western culture before arriving at Wesleyan. Although he had participated in a brief exchange program in Australia, the program was strictly organized and did not give him the chance to explore on his own. Thus, without much prior Western exposure, he experienced great culture shock upon arrival in the U.S. He was unfamiliar with the everyday aspects of American life such as the language on the ATM machine and the extent to which Americans use ketchup. He was also
struck by social differences expressing amazement at “how much attention American students pay to socializing” and how “physically wild students party.” He recalled the first time he went to a fraternity party that “it was physically terrifying because I’m not much of a drinker so being around a bunch of crazy drunk college kids was a bit of a culture shock.”

However, despite these unsettling experiences, this student said that transitioning was not too terrible overall because he had access to one important tool: Facebook. He said, “Facebook allowed me to stalk a bunch of people and observe how they lived their lives. It prepared me in a weird way because before freshman year I just friended a bunch of random people in the Wesleyan network.” Facebook can provide a wealth of information about an individual such as what kinds of movies, music, TV shows and books the person likes. From all of this information it is possible to create a pretty accurate idea of what this person would be like. Facebook also gives users access to photos people post and since young people today often carry portable cameras with them, it is very easy to follow someone’s life through Facebook photos. With the ability to tap into this resource even before they arrive in the United States, today’s Chinese students are finding it easier to adjust to the culture in the U.S. By the time the student from Urumqi arrived at Wesleyan, he already had a good idea about what to expect because he had seen examples of campus life on Facebook.

This particular student is a member of the graduating class of 2010 so he was able to access Facebook before he came to the United States. However, Facebook is and has been blocked in China since the spring of 2009 so the current incoming students

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18 Interviewee #3 to Amy Lum, 12/06/2009
cannot access Facebook before they get to college. While this may have given students who came to the U.S. between the years of 2005 and 2008 an advantage over students coming today, the current students can still reap the benefits of social networking sites.\(^{20}\) Other Chinese networking sites like xiaonei.com and renren.com are popular within China and Chinese students can start accessing Facebook as soon as they arrive in the U.S. Facebook can still be a valuable resource even if only used in the U.S. It is also important to note that the students from the first two generations had none of these resources available in China or the U.S. Therefore, when placed in a larger perspective, the blocking of Facebook in China presents only a minor hindrance to socialization.

The rise of Facebook would not have been possible if students did not have easy access to computers. Ten to fifteen years ago computers were still very new and even in the United States not everyone owned one. Today in China, computers are popular to have in the household but even if a student does not have access to one at home, internet cafes are extremely popular and students spend a lot of time online at these public places because the fee to use the computers is relatively inexpensive.

While on computers students not only use the internet to access information and social networking websites, but they can also gain access to various forms of entertainment. Many students watch American movies and TV shows online. Watching American TV shows and movies is one of the best ways for Chinese students to visualize American culture and hear the English language. In the past, people had to go to the movie theaters, buy films on videotapes or DVDs, or find

\(^{19}\) Interviewee #3 to Amy Lum, 12/06/2009
\(^{20}\) Facebook was launched in 2004 but gained large popularity between the years of 2005 and 2006.
ways to catch TV shows on the actual television. Today all of this can be accessed through the internet. It is quick and easy and the majority of students know how to use it. Watching television series is especially popular, and although students acknowledge that the shows are not an accurate representation of life in the United States, listening to English frequently really helps improve their language skills. Many students said that they had watched numerous seasons of the TV show “Friends” before arriving in the U.S. Other television series popular in China include “Prison Break” and “Heroes”. All of these resources help to facilitate the socialization of Chinese students. Unless they can communicate effectively in the U.S., they will not be able to become a competent member of American society. A strong command of the English language is necessary for socialization and the ready access to English language resources through the internet is a boon for the current generation.

In addition to watching movies and TV shows online, many students buy DVDs or watch movies and TV shows at organized screenings. Students can go to watch movies at local movie theaters and many schools offer screenings of English language movies. One student attending a boarding school in China said that every Friday night the school would put on an American movie as a form of entertainment. The origin of this can be traced back to the 1990s when schools started to play classic Hollywood films. The students of the nineties may have watched movies and TV shows, but not to the extent that students do today.

21 “Friends” is a popular American sitcom about six friends living in Manhattan that ran from 1994 to 2004. “Prison Break” is a drama created in 2005 that centers on a man who devises an elaborate plan to get his brother out of jail for a crime he did not commit. “Heroes” is a science fiction drama about ordinary people who discover they have superpowers, and how these powers affect their lives.
There has also been an increase in the amount of American music available to Chinese students. One student remembers that his first two CD purchases were a Boys 2 Men album and a Michael Bolton album. He attributes his strong listening skills to all of the American music that he has enjoyed. The English taught at most Chinese high schools is very formal so listening to pop music allows Chinese students to hear English slang. This familiarity with the vernacular becomes very helpful when students get to America and hear the informal speech that many Americans use. It does not matter that a lot of American music popular with Chinese listeners, such as failed boy bands, is not necessarily representative of American pop culture. Just the fact that they are listening to songs sung in English is extremely helpful.

Computers, movies and music usually come to mind when thinking about forms of entertainment, but social spaces also provide entertainment for young students. In the past decade fast food restaurants in China have become increasingly popular and they provide insight for Chinese students to other forms of American culture. The widespread popularity of fast food restaurants in China reflects growing consumerism and the increasing power of Chinese youths. Fast food restaurants such as McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken entered the Chinese market in the early 1990s and quickly picked up speed and popularity from that point on. These restaurants reflect the increasing power of Chinese youths because their real significance doesn’t lie in their existence as a restaurant but in their existence as a social space (Yan 2000: 201).

Whereas in the past restaurants served as social spaces for elders to interact, the fast food restaurants provide a place where people of different ages, genders and social classes can eat together. This is particularly appealing to young people because
they feel comfortable and free to act as they please at these venues where they do not feel constrained by their elders. Having this freedom instills a sense of confidence and imparts skills to become more adaptable in different life situations, such as going abroad to the U.S. In past decades fast food restaurants were not as readily available and students had fewer opportunities to learn how to behave in social situations in public places on their own terms. Now, with the availability of these venues for “hanging out,” students understand what it is like to be in a social space where they are free to decide for themselves how they should behave. The social space gives them an opportunity to shift from narrow to broader socialization.

These forms of entertainment and technology that are booming in China have made the everyday life of a student in China increasingly similar to the everyday life of an American. Chinese students have access to so many resources that not only give insight into what life is like in America, but actually allow them to experience the American lifestyle before they arrive in the United States. Students can now easily gain an understanding of youth culture in the U.S., and consequently they are better equipped to make themselves part of that culture. It is important to note that these technological advances have all occurred during the 21st century. The students of the first two generations did not have access to these resources. It thus follows that students of the third generation are empowered to socialize into their new environments in ways that were unavailable to students of the past.

News Media

Students are also able to access images of American culture through news media. The media provides channels of communication for Chinese to learn about what is
happening in other parts of China and throughout the rest of the world. According to Baum (2008), all forms of media in China have substantially expanded since 1978 and this rapid growth can be attributed to four developments:

(a) *the loosening of ideological restrictions on content*, which has allowed the media to present more varied and interesting stories;
(b) *fiscal and administrative decentralization*, which has introduced local managerial discretion, responsibility-based accounting, and performance-based incentives in media units;
(c) *commercialization*, which has tied operational success and survival to bottom-line performance in the media marketplace; and
(d) *new technologies of electronic communication*, which have exponentially increased both the amount and the flow rate of spontaneous, unscripted information in China (Baum 2008:162).

Baum discusses the various forms of media that have emerged in recent years to allow Chinese increased access to the international landscape. Since Mao’s death, the number of newspapers and magazines published in China has increased tenfold and readership has tripled (2008: 162). The popularity of print media has experienced a downturn since 2005, but this can be attributed to the sudden rise of the internet.

There were 167 million internet users in China as of 2007 and the users tend to comprise of younger, better-educated and urban Chinese (2008: 167). For the internet users in China, access to the news is the most popular use of the medium (2008: 167).

Throughout the past few decades television has become an increasingly popular form of media and following Deng’s 1992 “southern tour” of China, even more television stations have been established totaling 3,200 in 2006. (2008: 165) Three hundred forty million households in China own televisions and there are fifty-one satellite channels that broadcast international programming from stations such as Star-TV, Phoenix, and MTV (2008: 165). Phoenix-TV, a Hong Kong based station that reaches 140 million people in China, often provides real-time coverage of important events that are happening in the United States, such as the September 11 terrorist attacks.
CCTV also provides access to global media and broadcasts American television dramas (2008: 166).

Through these various forms of media students are easily able to read about and see what life is like in the United States, thus making it very unlikely that prospective students would be ignorant about life in America when they arrive for college. This makes socialization a less difficult process and enables the students to make themselves become competent members of their new society relatively quickly.

Although China is known for having strict censorship policies, people are still able to access a plethora of information. Students are constantly flooded with images of the United States and Western pop culture. A different student from Shenyang reported that she had never been outside of the country before coming to the United States but was not very shocked when she arrived. She was not nervous about coming to a new environment and instead was “excited because I had seen so much fancy information about the United States from the media in China.”22 She basically knew what to expect and attributed this foreknowledge to “verbal common sense.” By talking to people and picking up information from the media, she was able to construct a fairly accurate picture of the U.S. before she even arrived.

Another student had similar thoughts about her first time in the U.S. She said, “the United States fits into every single stereotype.”23 In China, U.S. culture is almost visible everywhere. For example, she said that if you turn on the TV there will always be footage of the United States or if you open a newspaper there will always be articles about the U.S. The United States is seen as a financial and political powerhouse and the Chinese have become somewhat obsessed with American

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22 Interviewee #6 to Amy Lum, 01/22/2010
culture. The Chinese pay close attention to what goes on in the United States because they believe that if they can master American culture, they might someday become as powerful. This intense interest in things American puts the U.S. in the forefront in Chinese media and provides students with constant exposure to its culture.

People can read and watch the news in newspapers, magazines, on the internet and on television. However these are not the only forms of media that have helped Chinese students get a feel of what life is like in the U.S. There are many books available in China that document the American college experience. The most famous one is entitled “Harvard Girl Liu Yiting.” Published in 2000, the book was written by Liu Yiting’s parents and documents how the parents groomed their daughter to get accepted to Harvard University (Liu and Zhang 2000). They stressed the importance of making their daughter live a rigorous lifestyle and develop strong character traits. When it was published the book became an immediate hit with parents and students all around China eager to read the book in hopes that they too would be able to gain acceptance to a top-tier university in the United States (Marshall 2003). What used to be only a remote dream now seemed like an achievable reality for students. People were learning more about what it is like to attend college in the United States and this familiarity allowed the Chinese students who actually went abroad to get a preview of their own experience before arriving in the U.S.

The “Harvard Girl” book also led to an increase in the number of students interested in going to the United States for college, so the concept of studying abroad became less foreign. People started getting familiar with the application process and exchanged information with others who were also applying or had previously done

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23 Interviewee # 9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010
so. One student in the Class of 2013 said, “when I was nine years old I read ‘Harvard Girl’ and it inspired me and opened up another opportunity for me.” While some students do not decide to pursue college outside of China until they get to high school, this student and others like her had gotten the study abroad idea from this book long before high school. This student was set on coming to the United States from an early age so she had plenty of time to prepare herself mentally for the trip. The media in China has without a doubt helped students socialize to American culture but it should be noted that the media in the United States has also helped to connect Chinese students with both their homes and their new environments. Students in past generations often felt homesick and disconnected from their home country. They felt lost in their new environment and struggled to adjust to life in the U.S. It was hard for them to contact friends and family in China and they missed getting news from home. This is not the case today. Students do miss their friends, family, and authentic Chinese food, but most students report that they do not feel as if they are isolated from China. One student from Shanghai said, “At Wesleyan I still feel connected to China because all I have to do is go online and read the news to see what is going on.” In the past, feelings of isolation among students were sometimes so strong that they would overcome the students and prevent them from success in starting a new life in the U.S. Today, students feel rather comfortable in spite of being so far away from home because it is easy to get news both ways. Instead of worrying about being disconnected from China, today’s students can focus on their experience in the U.S. and even share them in real time with families and friends in China.

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24 Interviewee #9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010
25 Interviewee #8 to Amy Lum, 10/22/2009
Knowledge of Western news and the immediacy of the media create a feeling in Chinese students that they already know the United States before they come here. This was not the case for students of the first two generations, and their unfamiliarity with American culture often prevented them from socializing. Now, students in China know U.S. culture through the media, and this knowledge makes socialization a much easier and more attainable process. Having the ability to identify societal values is one of the key components of socialization. By gaining understanding of American pop culture through media exposure, Chinese students become capable of drawing conclusions about some of the values in American society. For example, by looking at pictures of American students on Facebook, a Chinese student can infer what is socially important for these American students. These media-supplied resources are invaluable for socialization and it is clearly evident that these new resources are enabling students in the third generation to socialize better.

**Conclusion**

The process of socialization for students today is much easier than it was for students ten to fifteen years ago and much of this change can be attributed to increased contact that the Chinese now have with the West. The rise of the Chinese economy coinciding with the boom in technology in the past few years has provided numerous resources for Chinese students that were not previously available. The luxury of travel experience gives students first-hand knowledge about life in the U.S. When students have already spent time in the U.S. or another Western country, they are not surprised by what they encounter when they get to college and will usually have the skills to adapt to their new environment. Technology, especially computers
and the internet, have created numerous tools to aid Chinese students in the process of socialization. One tool in particular, online social networking, has only become popular in recent years but provides immense help for Chinese students in many ways. The increased popularity of Western entertainment in China has helped students learn more about Western culture and master the English language. Finally, the extensive coverage that the Chinese media places on the United States has provided Chinese students with a constant resource detailing everyday occurrences in the U.S. Students who have never traveled abroad before college reported that they experienced minimal culture shock, if at all, because they were already so familiar with the U.S. from its coverage by the media.

The combination of all of these factors has made it easy for students today to socialize to life in the United States. Some students have benefited more than others from these resources. However, exposure to the West, regardless of its extent, has aided the third generation of students to socialize in the U.S. This chapter focused on factors related directly to Western presence, but the next chapter will look at how internal changes in China have aided socialization.
Chapter 4: Change in China

Many of the internal changes occurring in China during the 21st century involve the modernization and Westernization of Chinese society. The results of these changes help to familiarize Chinese students with the types of conditions that exist at universities in the United States, thereby aiding their socialization. The first evolving sector in China is education, where one apparent change is that the high school experience for today’s Chinese student is starting to resemble that of an American student. Teaching methods are becoming less rigid and students are starting to develop their own ideas in the classroom. Another area of change that impacts Chinese society relates to the measures that the Chinese government has taken to teach high school students a world history and not Chinese history. Instead of dwelling on the past, the government wants today’s generation to build up the necessary skills for life in a modern world. A third aspect of modernity in China is the changing political and social atmosphere, which has been revolutionized by economic reforms and China’s shift toward a free market economy during the 21st century. These changes have not only transformed contemporary Chinese society, but they have also impacted the way that Chinese students are socializing in the United States.

High School

China is traditionally known for its rigid educational system. As mentioned in Chapter 3 the gaokao system of college admissions forces students to go through very rigorous preparation in high school so that they can score well on the exam. Generally speaking, schooling in China puts a huge constraint on the social lives of students and
in comparison to their American counterparts. Chinese students spend substantially more hours in school. They have more class periods in a day, their days run longer, they attend school on the weekends, and they have much shorter vacation breaks. Being in school for such a long amount of time prevents Chinese students from having as much free time as American students. With less available time to socialize, Chinese students become socially mature at a much slower rate than American students. They devote so much of their time to school that they do not have time to develop the skills needed to become poised and effective communicators.

It has also been observed that the work ethic of Chinese students differs from that of American students. Coming from a strict school system, Chinese students are very well trained to handle large amounts of work and generally tend to put more effort into their studies. It is hard for them to understand why so many American students skip classes or exert minimal effort. When Chinese students are thrown into the U.S. educational system it is difficult for them to adjust to the more relaxed atmosphere where students have substantial control over their studies. From these observations, Arnett (1995) would categorize schooling in China as narrow and schooling in the U.S. as broad.

These generalizations about the Chinese school system are based on observations and interactions with students at high schools in China, general reading, and conversation with my interviewees for this thesis. Some of these generalizations may be applicable to students in the third generation, but they mostly apply to students in the first two generations.

In comparison, American students experience more freedom in the classroom during secondary schooling and consequently tend to be more individualistic and
creative than their Chinese classmates. In the United States, students are encouraged to think for themselves and this encouragement of individuality reaches beyond the classroom. American students tend to be more open-minded and expressive. In China, the *gaokao* has also inculcated a mentality of learning for the sake of excelling on a standardized test. One student from the class of 2012 said that in China, “no one likes academic subjects. The education system in China suppresses any interests a student might have.” In the United States, the culture of academic freedom and emphasis on individuality produces a diversity of students. While some American students do solely focus on grades and test scores, there are others who have further motivations for learning and study for the sake of enjoyment and curiosity. The latter type of students is especially prevalent at liberal arts colleges such as Wesleyan University.

The amount of time spent in school and the structure of the Chinese college admissions system left no time or incentive for students to participate in extracurricular activities. Under the Chinese college admissions system, students are better off spending their time studying for the *gaokao* than pursuing outside activities. In the United States a typical student divides time between studies and extracurricular activities. The outside activities help them develop outside interests as well as build an extracurricular resume. In contrast, first and second generation Chinese typically did not place a very large emphasis on clubs and hobbies because they did not have the time, resources, or incentives to do so.

The picture of the Chinese educational system depicted above remains generally true for the third generation of students, but there have been changes in the

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26 Interviewee #10 to Amy Lum, 12/03/2009
methodology and quality of Chinese high schools that have affected a number of different aspects of Chinese education. Students in the first two generations struggled with the academic freedom they were given when they came to the U.S. and often reported that it was difficult to manage the amount of required writing and reading and participation expected in the classroom. Although most Chinese students today do not express their views voluntarily and have to be called on to speak in class, they do not face the same obstacles that hindered the earlier generations. As discussed in Chapter 3, many students have studied at American or international schools and know what to expect in an American classroom.

One student who had never left China before college ran into some difficulties during her freshman year. She had trouble managing her time and now wishes that she had taken advantage sooner of the resources available on campus such as talking to her professors and other classmates. Now, as a sophomore, she feels that she has finally found the right balance between her academics and personal life. She has found that, “academically speaking, in some ways the U.S. system is more flexible but overall the lectures are basically the same, minus the fact that the classes are smaller in the U.S.”

For this student, it only took a year for her to understand the system and adjust to it. Socialization takes time. For earlier generations socialization took a very long time or did not happen at all. For the current generation of students, socialization may not be instantaneous, but it is occurring much faster than in the past.

One of the reasons why students are having an easier time socializing is that schools in China have become less strict in recent years. Students still dedicate more

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27 Interviewee #6 to Amy Lum, 1/22/2010
time to academics than Americans, but it seems that the workload has gotten less demanding. One student from Shanghai attended a rather progressive high school and described a more experimental approach where instead of getting substantial mandatory homework, students are only recommended to do readings and homework assignments. This type of academic atmosphere resembles more the academic environment at American colleges. Consequently, when this student arrived in the U.S., she easily adapted to the freedom that she had over her education. Not all high schools in China are as progressive as the one described above, but there appears to be a general trend of students feeling that schools in China are not as strict as they once were.

The recent revisions of Chinese textbooks are also changing the ways in which material is presented to Chinese students. I will go into further discussion about textbook revisions later in the chapter but here I discuss how the new textbooks are changing the style in which students are learning. Zhu Xueqin, a historian at Shanghai University, explained that there is progress in “the way that the textbooks were written and edited, which I think broke through the mold of top-down inculcation and rote memorization. [The new books] have several lessons and modules that allow for participation. For example, there are the sea voyages of explorer Zheng He. You can see this lesson in a boxed-off section on the page, where it discusses the various reasons behind his explorations. Was it to find the Jian Wen emperor? What do you think? Have you heard of any other reasons? And so forth…” (Chen 2006). It is clear from this example that the method of instruction in China is becoming less rigid and students are starting to be more critical and generate their own ideas. This is the type of work that is expected from students in American colleges so it is helpful that
Chinese students are starting to be exposed to it in high school. Academics serve as the basis of college life so if a student cannot adjust to academics, it is almost impossible for them to socialize into U.S. society.

In addition to being less strict, Chinese teachers are actively giving their students more encouragement. In the past, teachers were extremely stern and students were often scolded if they did something wrong. Because students were expected to perform well, they did not receive recognition even when they succeeded. However, there have been recent changes. One student explained that students are praised in today’s classrooms. He thinks this is extremely important because he feels that the praise has made the students of his generation become more confident. In the past students were often very shy and reserved, but now students are receiving encouragement from their teachers and this helps to shape their personalities. The Chinese students who are in the U.S. today feel comfortable in conversation with others and are able to carry themselves with poise in a variety of social situations. Having this skill set is necessary for students to socialize, and some students attribute their confidence to the praise that they received throughout high school.

Not only are academic standards changing in Chinese high schools, but the range of resources provided for students at schools is also expanding. Before this century it was uncommon for students to participate in extracurricular activities during high school. For students in the larger cities, extracurricular activities gained momentum at the turn of the century and are now becoming staple activities. Furthermore, extracurricular activities are starting to spread to the less populous cities as well. The student from Shenyang who traveled to the U.S. through her Model UN club said, “Model UN started at my school three years ago. This stuff is very new for us and
people in Beijing and Shanghai are just getting used to it.”\textsuperscript{28} These extracurricular activities have been beneficial for students because they provide them with opportunities to pursue outside interests and improve their communication and social skills.

**Language Acquisition**

For the students of the first and second generations, the language barrier proved to be a huge obstacle that prevented them from socializing with Americans. Keeping up in class was almost impossible because everyone spoke too fast and used unfamiliar vocabulary. Reading was also hard. Mei recalled, “It took the Chinese students twice the amount of time to do our work than our American classmates.”\textsuperscript{29} Today however, students arrive in the U.S. with much better English language skills. This improvement can be attributed partly to factors discussed in Chapter 3, such as increased availability of English-language media and entertainment, but it is also attributable to improvement in the quality of English language instruction in Chinese high schools.

Most third-generation students are entering the United States with better English skills, but the students coming in the past two to three years in particular are even better equipped to become members of an English-speaking world. One student in the class of 2010 said that he feels threatened by the new students in the classes of 2012 and 2013 who come from China, saying, “they are better than me in everyway

\textsuperscript{28} Interviewee # 9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010
\textsuperscript{29} Interviewee #4 to Amy Lum, 1/227/2010
because they have more money and their English is better.” Most of today’s students from China come from big cities like Beijing and Shanghai where English instruction at high schools is very strong. Mastery of the English language is one of the main requirements for socialization into American society. The fact that students today do not need as much time or support to learn the nuances of the English language is a huge aid to socialization.

**Revision of History Textbooks**

Starting in the fall of 2006, high school students in Shanghai began using a new set of history textbooks in school. There were major revisions in the textbooks that created a new history curriculum for high school students. Instead of presenting a comprehensive history of China, including major events in modern China, the new textbooks leave out many key events and wars in Chinese history in favor of focusing on “ideas and buzzwords that dominate the state-run media and official discourse: economic growth, innovation, foreign trade, political stability, respect for diverse cultures and social harmony” (Kahn 2006). The books emphasize world history instead of Chinese history, and this global framework provides very helpful knowledge for students when they socialize in the United States.

An associate professor of education at the University of Hong Kong, Gerald A. Postiglione, spoke about the new high school curriculum being better suited for the needs of current students in China. He said, “The emphasis is on producing

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30 Interviewee #3 to Amy Lum 10/16/2009
innovative thinking and preparing students for a global discourse. It is natural that they would ask whether a history textbook that talks so much about Chinese suffering during the colonial era is really creating the kind of sophisticated talent they want for today’s Shanghai” (Kahn 2006).

The students under the new curriculum are able to socialize better because they are learning about the history and culture of the modern world. They acquire a better understanding of Western culture and thus one of the key requirements for socialization. Instead of learning about the Red Turban Rebellion and the fall of the Yuan Dynasty, students read lessons about how neckties became fashionable (Kahn 2006). Being acquainted with little details like sartorial trends is one part of the knowledge base important for socialization. Although students no longer learn their complete history, the new history lessons are of greater use to students who study abroad for college.

**Cultural Amnesia**

Chinese society has not gone so far as to completely erase its cultural past, but it is important to note that the revision of Chinese textbooks reflects the changing values of Chinese society. When asked if she and her Chinese classmates are aware of what happened in China during the Communist era, a student in the Wesleyan class of 2013 responded by saying:

“This generation, because we buried all the stuff under the ground, I would say is very ignorant about what happened in the 1960’s and

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31 These textbook revisions have not spread to the rest of China yet, but they represent an ideological change that contributes to the aiding of socialization. Shanghai is also one of the cities in China that sends the largest number of students to the U.S.
1970’s. And they don’t care even if they know. I don’t want to say the young people are corrupted and consumed with computer games, but they are. Most of them just don’t care and it’s understandable. China right now has a booming economy and they are trying to make money so people are just trying to provide for themselves. What happened happened and it’s in the past so we just have to let it be” [Interviewee #9 to Amy Lum, 1/24/2010].

Chinese history is slowly being washed away and students today are focusing on what is happening now on the global level. Ancient history is left out of popular discourse but it is even more surprising how much of China’s more recent history is neglected. In the new textbooks, events and people in the 20th century such as Mao Zedong, The Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square are mentioned, but only briefly, and their importance to Chinese history is played down (Kahn 2006). These events defined the first and second generation of students. As was explored in Chapter 2, the cultural identities of these students were formed as direct results of these historical events, and it was their cultural differences that often prevented them from successfully socializing. The third generation of students, however, are growing up in an environment where events that plagued the earlier generations and prevented them from socializing are almost never discussed. Due to this sheltering, students today come to the United States without the historical cultural background that can prevent socialization into U.S. culture.

**Political Changes**

Throughout the era of Mao Zedong, China remained committed to the ideals of Communism, and the lives of Chinese citizens were directly impacted by political policies enacted by the Communist Party. The political discourse of Chairman Mao differed drastically from that in the United States. The discussion in Chapter 2
examined more thoroughly how Communism in China prevented the students of the first two generations from socializing in the U.S. When the reform era began in the late 1970s and early 1980s China gradually began to loosen Mao’s strict political policies, but it was not until the start of the 21st century that substantial change in China’s political atmosphere eased constraints on socialization. The shift was gradual and is still continuing today as China is continuing to assert itself on the international stage.

Although the Communist party still has tight control over Chinese society, there has been liberalization in China during the 21st century, and this liberalization has allowed students to better socialize into American society. The preceding section of this chapter briefly discussed the current political atmosphere, and it is evident that Communist philosophy and ancient Chinese traditions weigh little in the everyday lives of Chinese students. China’s retreat from both its own history and Communist philosophy can be largely attributed to its increased international presence fueled by economic reform.

During the era of Mao, capitalist ideology was highly criticized and the Chinese government strictly followed the tenets of Communism. However, after Mao’s death the government began to shift gears, and politics in China came to be dominated by economic policies and reform. The new leaders in China, under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping, sought to maintain China’s Communist beliefs while simultaneously modernizing the Chinese economy. However, the establishment of a modern economy has led China to adopt many characteristics of a capitalist society. For example, whereas during the Mao era all property was collectivized and owned by the
state, in the year 2005, 70% of China’s GDP belonged to the private sector (BusinessWeek 2005).

In order to establish this strong and modern economy, China has opened up its borders on the international level. This has had great implications for socialization as students of the third generation have grown up in a society that is much closer politically and economically to American society than the society under which the students of the first two generations lived. In order to maintain its presence as a major economic contender on the international level, China has had to loosen some of its political policies in order to gain the respect and cooperation of Western countries. While the changes have not made the societies identical, the degree of similarity today between Chinese and American societies is enough to aid socialization substantially. Chinese citizens are given more personal freedoms and political ideologies have also become more liberal. Therefore, there is less adjustment required when students of the third generation go from China to the United States and this increases the rate of socialization.

The government has shifted policies in other aspects of Chinese society as well. Its decision to have the Chinese press support itself financially has had great implications for freedom of the press in China (Jernow 1994: 32). The discussion in Chapter 3 demonstrated the increased role the media is playing in the daily lives of Chinese citizens. People are affected not only by increased access to the press and other media, but also by the content of what is being produced. Although the Chinese government still has strict control over what may be accessed and printed by Chinese journalists, the amount of freedom possessed by the media today is substantially greater than what it had between the years of 1949 and 2000. The liberalization of the
press in China allows young people, who are the main readers of magazines and news websites, to exchange more ideas and therefore gain a greater understanding of Western life and culture.

**Changes in Household and Family Structure**

The changes in household composition in China have given young people a lot more freedom and have greatly affected social relations in China. Young couples during the 1970s and 1980s were set back by the financial failures that occurred when urban youth were sent to the countryside and access to post-secondary education was reduced (Davis 2000: 247). Couples could not set up independent households and many couples were forced to maintain the traditional familial housing structure where the young couple moved in with the groom’s parents and shared the housing space with multiple generations of the groom’s family. In this structure, young couples were given minimal privacy and more importantly lived under the control and influence of their parents and grandparents. Most of the students of the first and second generations grew up in this type of household unit, which contributed to the restriction of their freedom and privacy.

The formation of households with only mother, father, and child started in the early 1990s and is important to socialization. By living on their own, young couples have more freedom and privacy (Davis 2000: 250). The Chinese government began to encourage ownership of private property during the 1990s and the rising income of youth in China allowed young couples to purchase homes. The conjugal unit also
provides an environment where children are the most important members of the household as opposed to the elders. The students of the third generation are also growing up in houses or apartments where they have private space and this has implications for socialization because privacy makes them more independent. They have the ability to make choices for themselves and unlike students in the past, they are not restrained by the desires of their elder family members. This conjugal unit structure for the third generation of students resembles the structure that exists in the United States. Although not identical, Chinese students now have a household upbringing that is more similar to that of an American child. This common familial structure gives the students greater insight into one of the foundations of American society, thereby making the students better equipped to socialize into it.

**One Child Policy**

The one-child policy was initiated in 1979 and restricted each couple to having only one child. It has been one of the main contributing factors propelling children to the forefront of Chinese society. The policy was partially enacted as a way to control China’s rising population but it was also used as a method to “accelerate China’s transformation into a wealthy, modern global power” (Greenhalgh 2008: 2). The heart of the one-child policy “is about the nation’s dreams for transforming a poor downtrodden nation into a prosperous, modern, global power through selective absorption of Western science and technology” (2008: 3).

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32 Yan (2003) refers to this type of household structure as a conjugal until; however, Davis (2000) refers to it as a nuclear household. I use Yan’s terminology in this paper.
While the effects and motivations of the one-child policy are debatable, it has definitely changed the familial structure in China and the full effects of the policy are being felt by the third generation of students. The first generation of students were already past the adolescent stage and going to college by the time the policy was enacted so it had no real effect on them except in their having children. For the second generation of students, some were only-children while others had siblings. The interviewee from the second generation described the change as “very fast and by the 1980s all of the children growing up at the time were only-children.” The only-children of the second generation were starting to reap the benefits of having all the family resources directed at them, but it was not until the third generation of students that the one-child policy emerged as an important factor in successful socialization.

As mentioned above, one of the goals of the policy is to better the lives of Chinese citizens, as manifested in the slogan of the policy: *you sheng you yu* (give birth to fewer children, but give them better care and education.) “The underlying rationale is that more resources at the national, community, and household levels will be available for children and that children with fewer siblings will garner more resources and be better off in physical and intellectual development” (Yang 2007: 471).

The aiding of socialization through the one-child policy largely coincides with the rapid growth of China’s economy in the 21st century. Today, families have the financial resources to prepare their children for cross-cultural understanding. A student explained that she and her classmates were starting to travel outside China during high school because their parents finally had enough money to pay for programs and expenses of living abroad. Personal incomes are rising and, as a result,

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33 Interviewee #5 to Amy Lum, 1/28/2010
students are able to travel and participate in extracurricular activities. This allows them to experience lifestyles typical to American students, especially students at Wesleyan University. The second-generation interviewee explained how the financial situation during her time prevented students from gaining the full benefits of the one-child policy. She said, “when I grew up the social economic condition was not that great and even though my family was fine, they could not afford to buy me a piano. Since there were economic limitations of the era, even if you wanted to spoil your kid, you didn’t have the resources to do it. Kids born in the 1980s are different because parents are becoming richer and can spoil them.”

Now that families have the money and more schools and organizations are sponsoring cross-cultural learning experiences, Chinese students are beginning to gain access to the Western world.

The stable financial situation of Chinese families and the one-child policy not only aid socialization by preparing students for their time abroad, but also continue to help them in the United States. The first generation of students had a hard time living the “typical” life of a college student because they had to spend a lot of time working at jobs to pay for their expenses. Not having adequate financial means makes becoming a competent member of society extremely difficult. For the majority of the students coming today, their families can direct all their resources to them and families are able to save enough so their children do not have to worry about working long hours every week. While many students do have campus jobs, their financial situation is not so dire that they cannot live a life with a schedule that is similar to most of their American classmates.

34 Interviewee #5 to Amy Lum, 1/28/2010
Conclusion

China has gone through drastic change in the past decade that has altered the social upbringing of Chinese students. The students today are consequently better prepared for life in the United States and many are reaching the goals of socialization. Factors such as shifting political ideology, a less rigid high school experience, the re-emphasis on globalization, and the one-child policy have all contributed to the formation of a new generation of students. These students are better equipped to make themselves members of American society and therefore are socializing better than students in past generations.
Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have tried to provide a framework for understanding how the Chinese students coming to the United States for college have evolved since the late 1970s. I divide these students into three generations and examine differences among them through the perspective of socialization. This focus not only enables us to analyze how students are integrating themselves in American society, but also to see how changes in China society have affected their integration. Through a series of interviews and research, I have found that the students of the third generation, i.e., students who have come to the United States since 2001, are socializing into American society more thoroughly and faster than their predecessors in the first and second generations. While the differences in socialization between the first two generations and the third have been substantial, the changes have occurred gradually and are still at work today.

China’s rapid growth in the past ten to twenty years has directly affected the socialization of Chinese students in the United States. For the first generation of students who started coming in 1978, I found that their primary socialization in China caused substantial obstacles to socialization in the U.S. The society in which they grew up differed so greatly from American society that the few years spent by these students at a university in the U.S were not enough time to enable them to learn to become competent members of American society. However, throughout the 1980s China began to feel the effects of joining the world community and, by the 1990s, Western culture and ideas had made their way into China. For the students of the second generation, socialization was easier, but they still ran into difficulties because
there were still many aspects of life in Chinese society that differed significantly from life in America.

I found that third-generation students are able to socialize better because they have been exposed to or have actually experienced aspects of American culture prior to arriving in the United States. China has undergone many changes during the 21st century that have brought it closer to western norms, and this evolution helps with the socialization of Chinese students because now there are fewer aspects of American society that are unfamiliar to them. The factors that have aided socialization can be divided into two categories: Chinese contact with the West and internal changes in China. These factors are making the backgrounds of Chinese students increasingly similar to the backgrounds of their American counterparts. In this thesis I have tried to examine how political, economic and social changes in China have created for the current generation of Chinese students a social world that resembles their environment in the U.S.

As China continues to transform itself into a world superpower, the socialization of Chinese students in the United States can be expected to continue to change as well, as socialization continues throughout one’s lifetime. Current events in China, such as the blocking of Google and the controversy over ethnic minorities could conceivably have the power to alter China’s course in modern history in a way similar to how Mao’s death, Tiananmen, and WTO developments had affected China in the past. It is possible that such events could hinder socialization, but it is unlikely that there will arise significant new obstacles to socialization. Determined to establish itself as a major international contender, China can reasonably be expected to
continue to move closer to Western culture, thus inevitably enabling Chinese students to continue to reach the goals of successful socialization.

This thesis can be used as a valuable resource for various college constituents including, but not limited to, college deans, admissions staff, administrators, and faculty and staff who work with international students, as well as the students themselves. There has been an increased interest in foreign students so it is important to do research to understand how these students adjust. Furthermore, the discussion of the theoretical framework of socialization and the issues regarding change in contemporary China could help suggest ways for increased cross-cultural understanding on a broader scale than simply that of Chinese students in the U.S. In other words, the issues regarding China that are introduced in this thesis need not be limited to the study of Chinese students in the U.S. The ideas can be extended for use in another study such as one on ways to use cross-cultural understanding to strengthen U.S.-China relations on a business level or even on a state level.
Interview Index

Interviewee #1
Hometown: Yinchuan, Ningxia Province
Location of High School: Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province
Class Year: 2010
Freeman Scholar: Yes
Date(s) interviewed: 10/05/2009

Interviewee #2
Hometown: Shanghai
Location of High School: Shanghai
Class Year: 2012
Freeman Scholar: No
Date(s) interviewed: 10/23/2009

Interviewee #3
Hometown: Urumqi, Xinjiang Province
Location of High School: Urumqi Province
Class Year: 2010
Freeman Scholar: Yes
Date(s) interviewed: 10/16/2009, 12/06/2009

Interviewee #4 (Mei)**
Hometown: Beijing
*Graduate student, M.A at Wesleyan University, arrived 1983
Date(s) interviewed: 10/09/2009, 1/27/2010

Interviewee #5 (Hua)**
Hometown: Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province
Undergraduate Institution: Fudan University, B.A in 1992
*Graduate student, PhD at University of California, Los Angeles, arrived 1996
Date(s) interviewed: 9/28/2009, 1/28/2010

Interviewee #6
Hometown: Shenyang, Liaoning Province
Location of High School: Shenyang, Liaoning Province
Class Year: 2012
Freeman Scholar: No
Date(s) interviewed: 1/22/2010

Interviewee #7
Hometown: Changchun, Jilin Province
Location of High School: Chile
Class Year: 2011
Freeman Scholar: No
Date(s) interviewed: 10/09/2009
Interviewee #8
Hometown: Shanghai
Location of High School: Shanghai, 1 year in Germany
Class Year: 2011
Freeman Scholar: Yes
Date(s) interviewed: 10/22/2009

Interviewee #9
Hometown: Shenyang, Liaoning Province
Location of High School: Shenyang, Liaoning Province, 1 year in Germany
Class Year: 2013
Freeman Scholar: No
Date(s) interviewed: 1/24/2010

Interviewee #10
Hometown: Wuwei, Gansu Province
Location of High School: Wuwei, Gansu Province
Class Year: 2012
Freeman Scholar: Yes
Date(s) interviewed: 12/03/2009

** Pseudonym used in this paper to protect the privacy of this individual.**
Bibliography


