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## Higher Education as an Immigration Path for Chinese Students and Scholars

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## Higher Education as an Immigration Path for Chinese Students and Scholars

### Abstract

The purposes of this study were to identify and describe the factors that influenced the choices made by mainland Chinese students and scholars to come to the United States, to identify and describe the factors that influenced their settlement in the United States, and to identify and describe the role that higher education played in this process. An explanatory multiple case study design was used as the basic strategy for the study. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted to describe, from the participants perspective, the factors that influenced their successful immigration to the United States. The participants were a convenience sample of 10 Chinese immigrants from mainland China selected from several Chinese professional and social organizations in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. The participants were of different genders, professions, and ages.

### Keywords

Higher Education, Chinese Immigration, Chinese Students and Scholars

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## **Higher Education as an Immigration Path for Chinese Students and Scholars**

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*The purposes of this study were to identify and describe the factors that influenced the choices made by mainland Chinese students and scholars to come to the United States, to identify and describe the factors that influenced their settlement in the United States, and to identify and describe the role that higher education played in this process. An explanatory multiple case study design was used as the basic strategy for the study. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted to describe, from the participant's perspective, the factors that influenced their successful immigration to the United States. The participants were a convenience sample of 10 Chinese immigrants from mainland China selected from several Chinese professional and social organizations in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. The participants were of different genders, professions, and ages. Key words: Higher Education, Chinese Immigration, Chinese Students and Scholars*

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Consistent with earlier findings, the participants in this study were highly qualified students and scholars from the top educational institutions in China. Factors influencing their decisions to immigrate to the United States included lack of professional opportunities, recurrent intrusion of the state into individuals' lives, the residual mistrust of intellectuals, and related political instability. For most of the participants the immigration process was long, difficult, and stressful. The participants faced many difficulties and hardships, including financial, emotional, social, and academic. Many changed their majors or took multiple degrees to enhance their prospects of finding a job that would enable them to stay in the United States.

Immigration has been a vital element in the development of the history of the United States. The fact that the United States continues to receive substantial inflows of immigrants remains a feature that distinguishes this nation from all other countries of the world. In the 1970's and early 1980's, the United States legally admitted twice as many immigrants in absolute numbers as did all of the remaining nations of the world combined (Briggs, 1984). During the last decade, the Chinese-American community increased by almost 800,000 nationwide due to a continuous stream of immigration. Many of these immigrants were professionals, students, and scholars.

Since the late 1970's, sending students and scholars abroad to earn degrees and conduct research has been an integral part of China's policy of upgrading its educational systems and obtaining the professional manpower necessary to meet the goals of modernization. More than ever before, large numbers of students and scholars were sent to Western Europe, Japan, and the United States for advanced studies and training (Guangming

Daily, Sept. 22, 1989). In the early years, candidates tended to be middle-aged or older, and were drawn mainly from national-echelon higher education institutions, the best quality institutions in China. Later, more and younger graduates, as well as undergraduate students were sent.

The United States has consistently been the country of choice in China's practice of studying abroad, and three quarters of the total Chinese students overseas were believed to be in the United States (Reed, 1985). Many tens of thousands of students and scholars poured into the United States in a period of less than a decade. Many students sought to stay in the United States, and many of these were the top of the line scholars, selected for foreign study by China's most prestigious scientific, academic, and government institutions (Orleans, 1988). For those, who studied or were still studying in the United States and other foreign countries, various means were sought to extend their stays or to seek permanent residency in the host countries. Factors that influenced Chinese students to remain in the United States included low incomes, poor living standards, and lack of professional opportunities in China. Other factors included the recurrent intrusion of the state into individuals' lives, the residual mistrust of intellectuals, and related political instability (Orleans, 1988).

The new path of immigration for mainland Chinese (beginning with the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978) has been higher education. Of about 80,000 Chinese students and scholars, who came to the United States and other Western countries between 1979 and 1989, only 26,000 returned to China (Orleans, 1989a). In 1994 alone, 49,000 mainland Chinese were given permanent resident status by the United States government under the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992 (Zweig & Chen, 1995). Most of the students and scholars found jobs and settled in the United States. While some of the reasons for immigration are known, the story of the modern day Chinese immigrants is largely untold. The literature does not reveal the circumstances that lead to a decision for these students and scholars to choose to come to the United States for higher education. Nor does it describe what influenced them to decide to stay in the United States. Since the United States allowed these students and scholars to come to this country to pursue higher education, it would be interesting to know what role higher education played in the immigration process.

There is a complex mesh of causal factors responsible for human behavior. The causes for any human behavior are multiple and interrelated. The purposes of this study were to identify and describe the factors that influenced the choice made by mainland Chinese students and scholars to come to the United States, to identify and describe the factors that influenced their settlement in the United States, and to identify and describe the role that higher education played in this process. By identifying and assessing the forces acting upon a particular group of Chinese individuals, this study sought to analyze the causes of immigration of Chinese students and scholars and find out what factors influenced their immigration process.

### **Research Design**

One reason to employ a qualitative research design is to obtain greater clarity behind an existing data set or phenomenon. That is, to obtain in-depth information, to promote discussion, and to bring a level of understanding, previously missing from the literature or quantitative data gathering process, what Eisner calls the "enlightened eye" (Eisner, 1991).

An explanatory collective case study design was used as the basic strategy for advancing understanding of the factors that influenced the lives of the mainland Chinese students and scholars. In general, explanatory case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994). The case studies offered the advantage of a detailed investigation of the thoughts and circumstances of particular individuals in a particular setting. Case studies are of value because they can highlight issues that warrant deeper exploration and mark the limits of generalizability (Stake, 1994). The study was designed to optimize understanding of the cases rather than generalization beyond (Stake, 1994).

In-depth, open-ended interviews (Levinson, 1978) were conducted to describe, from the participants' perspectives, the factors that influenced their successful immigration to the United States. In-depth interviews have been suggested as the appropriate inquiry technique to produce a richer and better-balanced understanding of a complex phenomenon (Attinasi, 1986). In-depth, open-ended interviews do not rely on an interview schedule. Rather, the researcher is free to pursue any area of inquiry suggested by the participants' responses and, the participant is free to draw from his own experiences opposed to pre-stated alternatives, in responding to the interviewers' questions (Whyle, 1960). The researcher does have an interview guide to whom she/he can refer for questions to initiate and sometimes redirect conversation, but the direction of each interview is largely guided by the responses of the participant. Because the settlement of Chinese students and scholars was affected by a myriad of interrelated factors, in-depth interviews were the appropriate tool to probe the deeply seated contextual factors that influenced their action.

The lead author conducted the interviews for this study, lasting approximately two hours each. The interview procedure was developed and refined by means of pilot interviews. The first was an interview of the lead author by the co-author. Pang, who himself entered the United States through higher education as a new immigrant from China, was able to give an insider's point of view. This was followed by a pilot interview of a Chinese immigrant by Pang. These two experiences enabled Pang to conduct focused interviews with sensitivity and understanding.

The interviews were conducted during 2000 over a six (6) month period. Eight of the interviews were conducted at the home of the participant, one at a bookstore coffee shop and one at another residence. The comfort and sense of security for the in-home interviews proved to be useful. At times, a participant was joined by his/her spouse, who helped recall memories. At times, the participants became emotional while relating a story or experience requiring a break or a change of subject. The most fruitful questions included the reasons for leaving China and for wanting to stay in the United States. Questions that evoked the most emotional responses related to the participant's quality of life while studying in the United States (For example, "What was life like for you as a student or scholar in the United States?"). To gather data related to the role of higher education in the immigration process, participants were asked directly, "How did your education help you in the immigration process?" Interviews were conducted in Chinese and translated by Pang. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed by Pang into English. Each transcription was assigned a participant number for identification (e.g., Participant 1 = P1, Participant 2 = P2). The data were analyzed by a careful coding and memoing process adapted from the grounded-theory

approach described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The open coding and memoing of the empirical data (Glaser, 1978) allowed for the emergence of "core concepts" or patterns. Both during the interviews and review of the tapes and transcripts, the process of qualitative induction was initiated by coding the contents in as many ways as possible. Each of the co-authors independently analyzed the transcribed interviews. Whenever a segment of an interview contained an incident (e.g., perception, strategy, relationship) of a particular type, the segment was assigned a code. If a segment contained incidents of more than one type, then it was assigned a code for each incident type present.

Simultaneously with the coding, a process of research memoing was initiated. A research memo can be a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages that captures "the analyst's momentary ideation based on the data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp.84). Once the coding categories had been developed by each author, data reduction was accomplished by identifying the most salient categories, by merging categories and eliminating insignificant categories. As the analysis proceeded, an increasing interplay between the data reduction and research memoing resulted in the emergence of core concepts.

### **The Setting and the Sample**

The participants were 10 Chinese immigrants from mainland China selected from several Chinese professional and social organizations in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. Combined, the organizations had about 1,000 members, who had settled in the Phoenix Metropolitan area as permanent residents or citizen of United States. The participants were a convenience sample selected from a group of individuals identified as potential participants for the study. The initial group was developed through recommendations from acquaintances of the lead author, who was a member of several of the organizations. Individuals identified as potential participants were contacted and explained the nature and purpose of the study. They were asked to recommend other potential participants. From this larger group of potential participants, ten (10) participants were selected. To be considered, the participants had to have come to the United States as a student or scholar. The sample was selected to include individuals from different academic fields, gender, and age groups. The research topic was discussed with those, who were identified as potential participants. They were asked to voluntarily participate in the research project to study the factors that impacted their immigration process. They were told they might refuse to answer any questions and were free to terminate their involvement at any time. A human subject's application was filed and approved by Arizona State University prior to contacting the participants.

The 10 participants selected were of different genders, professions, and ages. Among the participants of this study, there were five females and five males. Before coming to the United States seven participants had bachelor's degrees, one had a master's degree, and two had doctoral degrees. The degrees held included two in English, one in Chinese, one in biology, one in computer science, one in music, two in physics, one in chemistry, and one in civil engineering. Three participants graduated from higher education institutions before "the Great Cultural Revolution", which meant that their education was at least ten years old before they reentered academia. Two participants had been in the United States for a short visit before they came a second time to enter a degree program. Two participants

successfully immigrated to the United States with degrees achieved in a country other than the United States.

Of the 10 participants, three were visiting scholars and seven were students. Despite their differences, it was decided to treat both scholars and students in the same data set of cases since the status between student and scholar was fluid and their backgrounds and experiences in China were, in relevant ways, the same. That is, they were highly successful students from among the best higher education institutions in China, they left China in pursuit of furthering their academic and scholarly interests, they used higher education as a means to get to the United States, and participants from both groups decided to stay in the United States. As an example of the fluidity between the two categories, one of the participants came to the United States as a post-doctoral scholar and later decided to pursue another graduate degree in a different academic field. Similarly, the primary author of this study (Pang) first came to the United States as a scholar at a private college and later enrolled as a doctoral student at nearby research university.

There were several differences between the visiting scholars and the students. The visiting scholars came with an international academic program sponsored either by the Chinese government or an American organization, including funds for support. In contrast, the students had to find their own support, including scholarships or assistantships. The visiting scholars had higher degrees before coming to the United States, while some of the students came with only a bachelor's degree. With secured income the lives of the visiting scholars were easier than those of the students, who had to work somewhere to get the money they needed. On the other hand, visiting scholars were generally older than students, and married with children, which gave them an extra burden both physically and psychologically. These differences between the participants caused each individual to have a different story in his/her immigration process. Each story tells why the individual participant came to the United States, how the individual made his/her immigration path, and what happened to the participant and his/her family in the process.

## **Background**

Chinese students started to come to the United States as early as the 1860's (Fenn, 1976), as China sought to reform its governing system to catch up with Westerners. Between 1900 and 1949 and during the 1950's and the early 1960's, thousands of Chinese studied in foreign universities. Many of these students later became influential leaders in government, business, science research, and education (Aaron, 1990; Wu, 1988). Through 1951, about 36,000 Chinese students had studied in the United States (Dow, 1975).

In 1949, Chinese Communists defeated Chinese Nationalists and established a new regime. Education, a part of tradition, was put in a less important position. After 1949 the mainland Chinese government did not allow intellectuals to go to the United States to study. The connection to Western learners was cut due to the regime's anti-Western cultural movement and its pro-Soviet policy. During the 1966-1978 "Great Cultural Revolution", schools, including institutions of higher education, were closed. It was only in 1978, after almost three decades of self-restraining policy, that the Chinese government adopted an open-door policy by starting to reform its existing system in an effort to modernize China.

Because of the traditional role of education in China, educational reform was a prominent effort in the modernization of China (Peake, 1970). One of the means of educational reform was to send students and scholars to Western countries to learn advanced science and technology. Since the shift of emphasis in the late 1970's to economic development, sending students and scholars abroad to earn degrees and conduct research had been an integral part of China's policy of upgrading its educational system and obtaining the professional manpower necessary to meet the goals of modernization. Large numbers of students and scholars were sent to Western Europe, Japan, and the United States for advanced studies and training. The official Chinese statistics showed that from 1978 to 1988, approximately 60,000 students and scholars were selected and sent to 76 countries and regions. In addition, about 20,000 students went to foreign countries for education at their own expense.

The number of mainland Chinese students entering the United States reached more than 10,000 per year after 1986 (Orleans, 1988). In 1991, mainland Chinese student enrollment in American institutions increased to nearly 40,000, and this number did not include visiting scholars (IEE, 1991). In the 1980's, the Chinese government decided to adopt its new "Open Door" policy in order to do business with the United States and other western countries. While sending large numbers of students and scholars to the United States and other Western countries to study and hoping to catch up with modern science and technology, the Chinese government also invited foreign companies to settle down in big cities in China for trade purposes. Since then, significant numbers of Americans have traveled to China and brought fresh ideas and influence to the Chinese people. They opened the window to a different world for many Chinese and attracted many Chinese students and scholars to the United States to pursue their dreams.

In the early years of exchange, students and scholars tended to be middle-aged or older and were drawn mainly from the best quality institutions in China. Later, younger and younger graduates, as well as undergraduate students were sent. At various stages policies and guidelines were made to regulate the planning and selection processes in this work (Hayhoe, 1984). In June 1987, the State Education Commission established provisional regulations for students going abroad. The provisional regulations stipulated that all state and unit government-sent students were required to sign a notarized agreement or contract that specified the aim, content, and length of their study, their return date, and their financial obligations to the unit and the state should they fail to return. In addition, fourth-year undergraduate and graduate students should not be permitted to go abroad as self-financed students until they fulfilled their expected obligations to the state, which is that an undergraduate had to work for the state for 3 years, and a graduate student had to work for 5 years.

The reason behind the restrictions was the government's increasing fear of a "brain drain". This proved to be a valid fear. Many Chinese students and scholars studying in the United States and other foreign countries sought to extend their stays or to seek permanent residency in the host countries. The phenomenon of U.S.-educated students failing to return home is not a problem unique to China. It has been common ever since World War II, especially for developing countries. However, the brain drain issue today seemed to have caused even more concerns for China than it did for other countries in the past. Many tens of thousands of students and scholars poured into the United States in a period of less than a

decade. Many students, who sought to stay in the United States, were the top of the line scholars, selected for foreign study by China's most prestigious scientific, academic, and government institutions (Orleans, 1988).

Following the Cultural Revolution, the United States had consistently been the country of choice for Chinese, who desired to study abroad, and three quarters of the total Chinese students overseas were believed to be in the United States (Reed, 1985). Western influence, particularly that of the United States, in Chinese higher education has been made possible through extensive exchange of students and scholars. Those who returned had ideas about Western academic organizations based on their own experiences. The American community college model, the structure of graduate school and the degree system, the variety of interdisciplinary programs, the diversity of course offerings, the pragmatism in the sense of social usefulness, and the spirit of academic freedom in seeking truth have all had their impact on Chinese higher education.

### **Findings**

Data from interviews revealed a number of factors that contributed to the successful immigration of the participants to the United States. These elements have been grouped into two general categories: (1) factors that influenced the decision to come to the United States, and (2) factors that influenced the decision to stay in the United States. The data were also analyzed to identify the role higher education played in the successful immigration of the students and scholars. Quotations from the translated and transcribed interviews are included here as exemplars to illustrate the findings and to give voice to the participants. Each exemplar is coded with a number identifying the participant. For example, P1 is Participant 1. A brief description of each participant is located in the Appendix.

#### **Factors influencing the decision to come to the United States**

Four factors emerged in the decisions of participants to come to the United States. They were 1) desire for more education, 2) educational preparation, 3) financial support, and 4) escape from unpleasant situations in China.

##### *Desire for more education*

Most participants came to the United States for a degree from an institution of higher education. In China, there were limited higher education institutions and limited space for students, particularly for those who wished to pursue a graduate program. In addition, many participants wanted to study in American higher education institutions because of the attractive reputation of their academic programs. The attractiveness of American academic programs was due in part to expanding Western influences and opportunities in China. American life had influenced many Chinese, who were not satisfied with their current life, and it certainly influenced Chinese intellectuals, who were most willing to learn new and fresh material. Job competition was another reason for the participants to study for advanced degrees. Since China was experiencing a changing era, they wanted to get into higher institutions to get different degrees such as Business Administration and Computer Science.

Although education was the motivation for participants to pursue more advanced education, there were different reasons to pursue an education in the United States. Opportunities in China were limited. China did not have enough higher institutions for people, who wanted to study for higher academic degrees. This was compounded by the lack of qualified professors and because a qualified professor only took two or three students each year. As a result of limited space and faculty, there were various restrictions to limit the number of students enrolling in higher education institutions. Age limits, for examples, made school impossible for older people in China. The age limit set for doctoral candidates was 35.

Some students came to the United States to study for a degree because they believed that they would not get permission to pursue an advanced degree in China from governing authorities. The Chinese government could easily deny them the right to education by exercising control over the higher education institutions. For these people, studying abroad was the only way to get their education.

Finally, research institutions in the United States were highly admired in China because they represented advanced technology and science, desirable subjects that the Chinese students and scholars wanted to study but were not available in China. The students and scholars learned about the educational opportunities in the United States through a variety of means. Some learned about the United States through the company they worked for that had contact with an American counterpart. Some Chinese worked in American companies that established their businesses in China. The Chinese employees learned about the United States and the higher education system of the United States through their American colleagues. One participant phrased it this way:

More than one year after I worked in that company I thought about going abroad to get more education. In this one year, I had talked to many foreign friends through my work, and most of them were Americans. I understood the differences between China and the United States. I had seen some of my friends going abroad to study, and I also heard that the U.S. was the best country for other peoples because of its immigration policies. (P-2)

Some had even seen the United States for themselves through educational or cultural exchange programs between the United States and Chinese governments. Influence also came from Chinese friends, who had been to the United States or who had contacts or family members in the United States.

#### *Escape from unpleasant situation in China*

For some participants, studying in the United States was a means to change their life circumstances in China, and advanced education was one way to do it. Many of the participants were not satisfied with the quality of their lives in China. They wanted a change, a different life.

By then, I had been divorced for a year. I lost my music life, and I lost my family. I did not have much left in China; maybe I did not have to stay in China. In 1989, I went to the United States to start a new life. (P-3)

The Chinese government had tight control over every aspect of peoples' lives. One participant wanted to change her career assigned by the government and that was impossible in China. To study in the United States was a chance to get away from governmental control.

The most unpleasant situation was political tension. Many people wanted to leave their motherland only because the country treated them unfairly. There were many reasons that people were treated unfairly, ranging from family background to personal convictions.

In 1977, the government was sending ten people to Japan, and I took the test. I scored seventh among the people taking the test. I was ready to go to Japan but never got any information. After I heard that someone who scored lower than I had been allowed to go, I went to ask. The answer was that I was not politically qualified. It was my family again. I felt so low and depressed. Some of the teachers, who had taught me in those bad days, told me to try to enter a master's degree program. In 1977, China restarted the new higher education system. In 1978, after more than thirty years, Chinese higher education institutions restarted master's programs. My teachers told me to try the entrance test to get into a master's program and then try to go to the United States to study and get a doctoral degree, which would be much better than the two-year program in Japan. This was the first time I got the idea to go to the United States. (P-4)

A young man was treated like an enemy by the people he worked for because he took an entrance test for a master's program and was admitted but did not get permission from his department head first. When he decided to begin working on his master's without permission, he was punished by being removed from the graduate program and being criticized many times for his action.

It was during the tour to Beijing that I heard people talking about going to the United States for education. The professor and the researchers in the institution felt very sorry for me and told me not to give in but to get to the United States to study... In these two years, I saw student movements every year in Beijing. I saw the tide of students and scholars going abroad to study and began to understand politics although I did not like it. I began to wonder why the leaders, who did not have any educational background, had power over the professors and me. I was no longer a carefree young man when I returned to Xinjiang Normal University. I hated those officers at the university and in China, for they were the ones who ruined China. (P-8)

The well-known Tian An Men Square incident in 1989 was a turning point for many of the participants, who totally lost confidence in the Chinese government.

We witnessed the events (Tian An Men Square incident). We spent time at the square and experienced several days participating in the hunger strike with other students. We went back to campus on that June fourth, so we did not

experience the bloody slaughter that night. We were lucky not being there the last day of the incident, but many of our schoolmates and friends died and were injured. (P-9)

The young Chinese believed that the United States was the leading country in democracy. Since they lost hope in the Chinese government, they chose to go to the United States to study.

I wanted to go to the United States to study. I got the idea when I studied at Qinghua University. The influence from Western countries was very strong in Beijing. There were many foreigners and many foreign companies there. Every student in Beijing planned to go abroad to study. The idea of democracy and science was very strong. Every one believed that the only way to change the Chinese government and China was to adopt the government system and social system of the West. To adopt the system, Chinese must go abroad to learn from Western systems, especially that of the United States. There was a tide of students going abroad in Beijing and the whole of China. I made plans to go to the United States when I was in my third year at the university, and I took my first TOEFL test in May of 1989. My desire became stronger after the Tian An Men Square Incident, after I saw what the government did to us students. (P-9)

For one person the reasons for leaving China were a combination of the desire to pursue a better quality of life and the need to flee from governmental oppression.

However, I did not want to work in that factory. The factory was so well known for its pollution in China. It polluted the whole of Beijing. This factory was always the topic for environment pollution in China. It was always taken as a bad example of polluters of major cities. The rates of lung cancer and other cancers were higher than any areas in Beijing. Although the factory paid better salaries and benefits, the university graduates did not want to go there. The polluted environment was not the worst thing. The worst thing was the notable autocracy of the leadership. The head of the factory was so famous for his autocracy in Beijing. He ruled the factory like his own kingdom. The factory was totally ruled under his will. He had a group of his own people running the factory according to his orders. Anyone offending him could be sent to work as a construction worker. I was not much affected by what he did in the factory. What I worried about was that he declared that no one would leave the factory alive, and it was true. I did not want to spend my whole life there to be polluted to death, and I wanted to go for my master's degree, but that was impossible without his permission. My friends told me the only way to get out of there was to go abroad to study. (P-10)

*Educational preparation*

The desire to attend an institution of higher education in the United States was but the first factor in the immigration process. To be successful, the students and scholars would have to be admitted to a program and then receive permission from the United States and Chinese authorities to enter the U.S. Educational preparation played a key role in the immigration process for the participants. The degrees they earned from universities in China, the English they learned at school or by teaching themselves, and the academic excellence they achieved through their education were important factors that contributed to their eligibility to come to the United States for a higher education degree program. Most of the participants were top students while pursuing an undergraduate degree in China. Some of them had been nationally recognized students since high school. For example, one participant said,

I had the luck to be a student of the most well known university only because I was one of the most excellent high school students in the nation. (P-4)

Another participant stated:

My school was given special attention by the Department of Education in the province. In each province, the government gave priority to a few schools to train the elite. My school was one of them. The top students in this kind of school could be placed in the best universities without a test. I was always at the first or second place in the class, so when I graduated, I did not have to take the National College Entrance Test. I was sent to Qinghua University to study. It was the best university in China. It was a reward for me, for my hard work and perfect scores. (P-9)

English proficiency was also very important. Knowing English was imperative for a student to be admitted to an American school. English was a part of the curriculum in Chinese schools, and the students took it very seriously. They also had to pass English proficiency tests such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) for purposes of admission. If they applied to a graduate program, they had to score well on either the GRE or GMAT. Without demonstrating the ability to communicate in English, international students would not be admitted to university programs that meant everyone, who wanted to go to the United States had to have basic command of English. This individual's description was common among the participants:

I took the TOEFL and got a score of 620, which was considered quite a good score. I was going to get a master's degree, so I prepared for the GRE and also received a good score on that test. Later, I learned that if I wanted to get a business degree, I had to take the GMAT. I started classes for the GMAT and scored well on that test also. (P-6)

### *Financial support*

Demonstrating financial support was a critical component for receiving a visa. The Immigration and Naturalization Service required that visa applicants present convincing documents at the time of the interview to prove that they had sufficient funds to support at least their first school year, including personal expenses and tuition. The funds are to be from a credible source and cannot come from the savings account of the visa applicant. This requirement leaves many Chinese students and scholars with only two options for financial support: a sponsor, who was either a citizen or a permanent resident of the United States or a scholarship from an academic or research institution in the United States. Without funds from a source that satisfied INS requirements, the Chinese students and scholars would not be granted visas to come to the United States.

### *Scholarship*

Usually a scholarship was granted by an academic department or a professor that the participant worked for while studying at the university. It was never easy to get a scholarship due to the intense competition among the students, and "A university usually did not give scholarships to a new student until the second semester, when his/her academic grades showed that the student was deserving of one." (P-1) One participant concluded,

Because so many Chinese students were admitted into American schools, the INS only allowed a certain number of students to go to the United States, and the (interview) process was extremely strict. A student with a scholarship would be much more likely to get a visa than one without because the scholarship meant that the student was more competitive. (P-1)

A visa applicant without a scholarship still had a hard time getting his or her visa granted even if he or she had a financial sponsor. The Chinese government also provided some scholarship funds for exchange programs that would be considered by the INS equivalent to a scholarship issued by a university in the United States.

Some of the participants, who came as students, had to compromise their major choices just so they could get a scholarship in the areas where the competition was not so tough. Sometimes the scholarship only covered a portion of the student's total expenses. For example, a scholarship might cover tuition only. The student still had to find a sponsor to cover his or her expenses for daily living. In these cases, the students had to find a qualified financial sponsor. Participants, who were scholars and went to a higher institution for a research project rather than going for a degree, were usually given a paid position to cover their daily expenses. Since the funding came from a research program at a U.S. higher institution, the INS treated the scholar applicants as if he or she had received a scholarship. If one did not get a scholarship from a university in the United States and was not eligible for funds from the Chinese government, he had to find a sponsor to guarantee all his expenses and tuition. If one did not have a sponsor, he could not go to the United States to study even if he had qualified academically.

Even if one had money to pay his own expenses and tuition, he had to find a sponsor. The Immigration and Naturalization Services did not accept the fact that a Chinese student had money from his own savings account. Although the Immigration and Naturalization Services required a financial sponsor for every visa applicant, money was not the only thing that made a person a qualified sponsor. The sponsor had to be a citizen or a permanent resident of the United States. A person, who had money and property but was not a resident or a citizen of the United States was not considered a qualified sponsor.

### **Factors influencing the decision to stay in the United States**

After the Chinese students and scholars finished their study in the United States as planned, they faced the decision of going back to China or of staying in the United States. Among those interviewed, there were three influential factors that persuaded them to remain in the United States. They were 1) desire for pursuing a better life, 2) educational achievements recognized, and 3) overcoming obstacles.

#### *Desire for pursuing better life in the United States*

It was life in the United States that attracted many of the participants to stay in the United States. The immigrants left their countries for many reasons such as education, economic relief, and religious, political, social, or other personal convictions. Like many other immigrants, the participants wanted to stay in the United States to pursue a new life for themselves and their families. The quality of life in the United States was much better than in China. After the participants had seen the major differences for themselves, they were able to compare the life in the United States with life in China and make up their minds to stay in the United States. A better life did not only mean material goods such as cars and big houses, but it also included the environment that surrounded daily life, such as the social and political atmosphere.

One participant compared the material life he had in China with the one in the United States and concluded:

I did not regret that I changed my major to computer science. If I had not changed it, I might not have been able to find a job that paid so well. I like this job. If I had stayed with physics and gone back to China to do research, I might still be living in a two-bedroom apartment making little money. (P-5)

The same participant also compared his current life with the life of his colleagues in China.

My colleagues in China have no work to do. Most research institutions do not receive funds from the state government anymore. The research institutions in China have to find funds themselves. Many researchers are out of a job. Some are selling breakfast now to support themselves. I believe what I have done is right for my family and myself. (P-5)

Now he and his family enjoy their lives in the United States, and this life could not possibly have happened for them in China.

Now my daughter is in medical college, my wife has her own clinic, my young son is in middle school, and I am going to be retired. I have my own house, and this would be impossible if we were still in China. (P-5)

Some did not expect to stay in the United States, but after they saw and experienced life in the United States and made comparisons to their lives in China, they were attracted by the lifestyle and its advanced technology. One Chinese scholar had not planned to stay in the United States. He did not want to have a life in the United States but wanted to go back to China to continue his research. When he saw the advantage of staying for his family, he changed his mind.

Now I have a good job and my family is enjoying the life here. After all, the life and the society are not so bad. This was why my family wanted to stay in the United States. (P-7)

Life in the United States might not only be materially positive, it could also be psychologically positive. One female participant was very dependent in China but living in the United States turned her into a confident and independent person.

The three years I spent fighting for my life and studying gave me confidence to do anything in the United States. It made me believe that as long as I was willing to try, I could accomplish anything. (P-1)

### *Dissatisfaction with the Chinese political system*

Although access to material wealth was an important consideration for the participants when making the decision to stay in the United States, other reasons such as social and political issues also had an impact on their decision-making. The Tian An Men Square incident in 1989, for example, was the deciding factor for many of the participants as they debated whether or not they should return to China after finishing their studies in the United States.

The political situation changed greatly in China due to the Tian An Men Square incident. It was enough to make me think about staying in the United States for good after graduating. (P-1)

I did not want to serve such a government. I wanted to escape from the land that continuously brought back memories of June of 1989. (P-9)

Another reason that the participants did not want to go back to China was the system of the government that was so well known in China. The officers of various departments in the Chinese government were corrupt, often taking bribes from the people, who needed their

authority to approve various businesses. This experience made such an impression on one participant that it impacted her ideas about the Chinese government for the rest of her life. She said,

Although I got the passport, I felt so insulted. I even hated myself for bribing that man. It was the most shameful thing I had ever done in my life. I never thought that someone like that director could be so cheap. This is the major reason I do not want to go back to China to work. (P-9)

Bribery might be one of the things all Chinese know and dislike about the government, but the abuse of authority was the most hated act among the participants. One student remembered what happened to him just in front of the American Embassy.

I went to Beijing to apply for my visa in the American Embassy. There, I experienced unpleasant treatment by police. When I was in line waiting for my turn, a Chinese policeman came to tell us to back up. I was the first one in the line, and I backed up several steps then stopped because the people behind me were not moving. The policeman then yelled at me to back up. I told him I could not move, and he had to tell people behind me to move. Because I talked back to him, he told me "you will not enter the Embassy for your visa today". Then he told everyone in the line that he was going to let the last person in line get in. The last person did not move for it was so ridiculous. The policeman threatened the last person in line, saying, "Do you want to go or not?" People then moved, and everyone in the line looked guilty. We had been in line since the night before and had slept on the street. Then came this young policeman reversing the line only to show his power. (P-8)

It was not strange that this policeman could manipulate a group of educated people in front of the U.S. Embassy. In China, even educated people did not gain much respect unless they had bureaucratic position and power. A scholar, who had earned a doctoral degree in China, decided to stay in the United States because he compared the way he was treated in China with the way he was treated in the United States as a highly educated person.

After the officer at the Customhouse (of the U.S.) checked my passport and invitation letter, she stood up and saluted me. She said it was America's honor to have a Chinese doctor come to the United States. I had never seen an official respect a scholar like this in China. I had been in various government offices in China for different affairs, and I had always looked like an elementary student in his teacher's office being disciplined. Actually, the Department of Education at different levels of government was the governmental agency I had the most opportunity to deal with. There, I was never respected as a highly educated person, nor in any other government agencies. I remember all the insults I received because of my family background and for other reasons. At that moment, an idea came to my mind: staying in the United States. In January 1987, when my wife and my two

daughters came to join me, I told my wife that Americans respected intellectuals and knowledge, and if the future life in the United States proved it, we were not going back to China. (P-4)

Another participant recalled an unpleasant scene where a Chinese officer treated Chinese and Americans differently. He also compared the way Chinese intellectuals were treated by Chinese and American officers.

I could see that all the Chinese staff were friendly with the Americans but were so demeaning to their Chinese fellow countrymen, who were waiting for their fate. When it was my turn, an American interviewed me. He was very nice and interested in the situation in Xinjiang. We even had quite a long chat about minorities in Xinjiang. I got my visa granted. When I was leaving the Embassy, I saw another humiliating incident between two Chinese. A small sized middle-aged man with a pair of glasses coming in for the visa interview ran into a Chinese person working in the Embassy and knocked the files out of his hands. The Chinese employee was so mad and yelled at the man with vulgar language. The little man was in such a panic and apologized again and again, while the Chinese employee kept shouting at him. I did not understand why he treated the other Chinese like trash, but yet the Americans treated the Chinese better. After many years, whenever people were talking about how hard it was to get the visa, I would still remember the scene with the two Chinese. All the people going to the Embassy for the visa were highly educated people, but their social position was lower than any of the government officers who had power. (P-8)

#### *Family and future of children.*

Family was a very important reason for staying in the United States. There were participants, who wanted to go back to China, but they changed their minds only for their children's lives. As parents, they sacrificed their own possible future and stayed in the United States, so their children could have a better education and future. One participant remembered how he came to the decision.

By June of 1996, only six months after I got my new job in the United States, I decided to go back to China. I talked to my wife, but she did not agree with me. Her sole concern was the children. If we went back to China, I would have a good position, but my children would not have as good an education as they could receive here in the United States. My oldest son was the best student in his high school, and a straight "A" student. My youngest son won first place in the state math contest, and won ninth place in the national math contest in D.C. (P-7)

Many of the participants determined to stay in the United States because their children could take full advantage of the American educational system. One participant

recalled that when he and his wife had to make a decision about whether they should go back to China or stay in the United States, they thought about the children first.

My children were the best in their classes. They participated in various activities and traveled. They enjoyed their life in the United States, and my daughter was encouraged by her teachers to pursue a degree in medical school. (P-5)

Without power and good connections in China their children would not be able to attend good schools in China for a better education.

My wife reminded me of the problems we had in China when I was a country schoolteacher. Because of my job, we could not live near each other, and I was only able to see her on Sundays or other days off. She also reminded me of social connections that we did not have that might still hinder us in China. I had to admit that she was right . . . . My children were the top students in their schools and their districts. Moving back to China would destroy their promising future. (P-7)

### **Settling in the United States – Making Adjustments and Overcoming Obstacles**

Many of the participants expected that moving to the United States would be difficult, but many suffered beyond what they had anticipated. The new immigrants encountered economic, cultural, language, and social differences when they came to the United States. Although the Chinese government adopted an open door policy in the 1980's, and took advantage of the technological and scientific advancements in the United States, the policy did not provide Chinese people with much information about U.S. society and culture. Participants had to learn about America and American life by way of fragmented impressions offered through limited sources. Because of political reasons, Chinese people may not have fully understood America and American life as people from other Asian countries did.

#### **Overcoming financial difficulties**

The participants usually did not earn high incomes in China before coming to the United States and did not have much cash in savings. They usually came to the United States with just enough money to support themselves for a few months. Those, who had a scholarship from the Chinese government might have had three to five hundred dollars a month, but they had to pay their tuition out of the money. Finance was a common problem for the students unless they got a part time job such as a research assistant or teaching assistant position from their professors. Most of them had to work illegally for the cash.

Usually the student participants worked in Chinese restaurants. The owners of Chinese restaurants wanted workers, who spoke both Chinese and English, and the Chinese students were often paid with good tips. Working in the restaurants was something very new

to the Chinese students because they had never thought about doing such work before. It was hard for them both physically and psychologically.

I started working in a Chinese restaurant. The first night I came back from the restaurant I could hardly stand on my feet. Actually, I did not work that day. I was just standing there to watch while being trained since that was the first day. I spent four years working as a full time student and a full time waitress in restaurants to support myself until I graduated. (P-2)

The work environment was not what they were used to, and sometimes it became unendurable.

I, however, had to work to make money. The first place I worked for was a Chinese grocery store. I was hired as a cashier, but I actually had to do all kinds of heavy labor. I had to load and unload shipments, and the owner's wife was mean to every employee. It was a painful experience; even now I cannot stand to remember it. Later, I found a Chinese restaurant in which to work as a waiter. (P-3)

Most of the participants put their hope in their scholarships and studied hard for them. The scholarship would solve many of their urgent financial needs. For those who had scholarships, life was much easier. It was not easy to get a scholarship. Scholarships were dependent upon one's ability and competence. Even students, who were eligible for a scholarship, still might have to work some hours at another job, but things were much better financially.

The business school offered several scholarships each year. If I wanted to get a scholarship, I had to have higher GMAT scores than others. I had seen some Chinese students study without a scholarship, and it seemed difficult. Most of their time was spent working in a restaurant, and school was far from enjoyable. I studied very hard and got very high GMAT scores. The best thing was that I was admitted into the program with a scholarship. I still had to work, but only to make enough money for a living; I did not have to make more money to pay tuition. (P-3)

Sometimes the spouse of a participant had to work to support him or her. It was hard for the participants and their spouses to work in places they had never worked before. It was even harder for them to work without a work permit.

He found a job in an auto garage. It was not a secret that some spouses of Chinese students had to work illegally to support their families. It was very hard for the spouses since they worked illegally and their wages were lower than those of legal workers. I am thankful for my husband's hard work that made my degree possible. (P-10)

**Overcoming academic difficulties**

Although the Chinese students and scholars coming to the United States were the top ones in China, they still faced a different academic world. Although the participants had to pass certain English proficiency tests before they came to the United States, their English was not good enough to fully understand lectures, especially during their first year. Because of their difficulty with English, academic work was also a problem for them; the teaching and studying methods were very different from those in Chinese schools, especially the research paper that was not a common assignment in Chinese schools. The participants had to spend more time studying to catch up with others in the class.

Although I had an English degree, and my English was quite good in China, things were totally different in the classroom. I could only understand half of the lecture in class. I had to tape the lectures and listen to them several times after class, and I borrowed notes from other American students. Thus, I spent double or triple the time needed to finish each lesson. (P-2)

Some students had a very hard time because they did not have a foundational bachelor's degree in the same field as their master's degree. They had to study hard to make up for the courses they had not taken before beginning their graduate program. In addition, some students had to change their majors to meet the market demand. The new academic fields made their studies harder and lengthier because they had to take some classes to meet the pre-requisites for their master's program before they could take courses in the program.

I spent two years finishing my master's degree, for I did not have a bachelor's degree in business. I had to take thirty undergraduate credits in business before I could take my master's program classes. Although I had difficulty finishing the degree, I believe it was worthwhile to spend those two years. My master's program was in accounting, but the department provided some courses related to Computer Information Systems, which was helpful later when I was looking for a job. (P-6)

Some students had to give up their graduate programs and start from the beginning of a bachelor's degree program, so they could catch up. Their studies then took several more years than they had planned.

I spent four years in school because I changed my program. I came to the United States to be an MBA student, but soon I found school was difficult for me because I did not have a bachelor's degree in business. I talked to the teachers, and I decided to go for a bachelor's of accounting. (P-2)

Most of the participants continued with their choices. They believed that their difficulties could be overcome as long as they studied hard enough. One participant related the story of how he made himself the top student. He was encouraged by his belief that only

after he became the top student would he have an opportunity to be recognized and accepted in American society.

I spent three years completing the two degrees. It was not easy for me in those three years. I was not young, and my English was still a barrier in class, especially for the presentations required. Some courses were hard for me. One of them was business law, and no foreign student had ever received an "A" in this course. No matter how hard it was, the only thought in my mind was to try my best to study. Unlike others in the class, I did not have any job experience in the United States. My English was not as good as others; my knowledge was limited, coming only from courses in the school of business. I did not have strong competency over others. The only thing I could show people was my transcripts when I looked for a job in the future. Finally, I got an "A" for the course in business law. (P-3)

### **Overcoming emotional crisis**

The financial and academic difficulties that were on the shoulders of the participants sometimes could be a real burden for them and cause an emotional crisis. When the participants came to the United States, they left behind a world they had been in their whole lives and came to a new world with little or no possessions with them. This created uncertainty in their lives.

I left everything behind in China when I came to the United States. I lost all my friends, all my social relationships, all my connections in life, and all my finances. It was hard at the beginning when I started here, but the hardship also tested me to see if I could live my new life independently. (P-1)

I did not have a car until a year later; I did not have a life for these four years. My life was a simple triangle: classroom, library, and restaurant. I had to be a full time worker to support myself through school, and I had to be enrolled full time as foreign student, according to the INS regulation. (P-2)

Most came to the United States alone without a single friend. Most of the participants did not bring their families with them when they first came to the United States. Some had their families join them later, within the span of one to three years; others were never able to get their families to join them. This added to their emotional stress beyond the already existing academic and financial burdens.

My husband finally got his visa granted and came to join me in September 1994. In this one year, I spent the most difficult time of my life. I did not have friends in Arizona, and I felt so lonely, especially during the holidays. It was only after my husband came and joined me that I began to feel life was enjoyable. (P-9)

One participant became so emotional when she mentioned her parents during the interview that she had to stop talking until her feeling eased.

In September of 1991, I left China. Since then I have not seen my parents and my brother, I have never gone back to China due to the immigration process. (P-2)

The participants were so busy studying and working to make money that they could not indulge in an active social life.

This is a totally different country and culture. I had to adjust myself to fit this society. I had so many friends in China, but I have never made a single friend at this school. Everybody is busy. The only time I got together with my American classmates was when we had to do a group project. They were so busy doing things, too. Maybe it was because of me. I was always busy working and studying. (P-2)

The fact that they had to work in low social-status jobs was hard to accept as a part of their life. The unpleasant working conditions could be so humiliating that it often put these well-educated Chinese students and scholars in misery.

I did not care how hard the work was, but I could not endure the insults. It was the way the (restaurant) owner treated me that made me greatly depressed. I was depressed because I was treated like garbage. I felt like I lost all my value. I often asked myself what made me come to the United States, and why I had to live so poorly. I had prepared for hard situations, such as long hours of work and study, language problems, and money problems, but I had never prepared to be insulted and live so low in society. (P-3)

When I had to work in the restaurants, it was very hard. I had been very popular in Chinese society when I worked as the executive manager for the Chinese company. Later when I had to work in restaurants, it was hard for me to face the people I had known. A lot of people wanted to be my friend when I was the executive manager. When I worked in the restaurants, I found I did not have many friends. It was hard, especially when my husband was in China, and I was alone. I almost went back to China. I do not have to tell you how much pressure there was. Just by looking at my face you should be able to tell how many years have been added to me. (P-10)

Life was so unbearably hard for some of the participants that some of them did not want to stay in the United States anymore. One interviewee expressed that he was prepared to leave but did not go due to fear of being a failure.

The first year was very painful for me; it was the most intolerable year of my life. I was prepared to go back to China if the situation got worse. I knew I

would be a laughing stock to my people if I went back to China, but if life was only anguish why should I stay. On the other hand, I really did not want to give in since other Chinese students also suffered from the same situation. Everyday, I lived under such contradictory thought. (P-3)

The participants had no one to talk to about their depression and frustrating circumstances. They did not even want their families in China to know about it. In the end, they chose to swallow their bitterness and pride rather than sharing their struggles with their families.

They probably still do not know what I did to survive. The only support I got was from the idea I told myself: to finish the education successfully and to get my degree. Without this idea, I would not have been able to go to class everyday, study, and finish my degree. (P-2)

The participants survived only because they possessed personal fortitude that enabled them to realize their dream of achieving higher education in the United States,

These last two years were the most difficult years of my life. Sometimes, I asked myself why I gave up what I had in China to come to such a life just for a bachelor degree that I already had in China. Whenever I became upset, I would warn myself that I had come too far to give in. I had to tell myself not to give in whenever I faced psychological or financial problems. (P-2)

The Chinese culture was something the participants missed often; there seemed to be nothing that could replace it. Even the prospect of a better American life could not replace the loss of their Chinese culture.

It is so hard to assimilate to mainstream America. I dearly missed China. I realized how dedicated I was to Chinese only after I came to the United States. The material life here is better than in China, but the spiritual life is not as good as in China. I frequently missed the days I used to spend with my friends. Here, you work and work. There is nothing interesting in life. (P-6)

Ultimately, the participants joined as part of the Chinese community to re-create Chinese culture.

### **The role of higher education**

Higher education, as a main thread, ran through the stories of the 10 participants and played an important role through their immigration process stages. Without the higher education they had achieved in China, it would have been impossible for them to come to the United States to study. And, without their American higher education it would have been impossible for them to find jobs and stay in the United States. Higher education paved the path to final immigration for them.

Each of the 10 participants had at least one higher education degree before coming to the United States. This was the first condition for them to be accepted into United States schools since Chinese were only allowed to leave their country to pursue graduate degrees. Among all of them, seven participants had bachelor's degrees, one had a master's degree, and two had doctoral degrees. They were excellent students with excellent undergraduate transcripts to qualify them for admittance to American universities.

Higher education not only prepared the participants academically for their acceptance by a higher education institution in the United States, but it also provided a route for the participants to the United States by granting them a visa. Without the higher education they received in China they would not have been accepted by American institutions and granted visas by the INS. Since the INS only allows certain Chinese students to come to the United States to study, the competition assured that only excellent students were granted visas. These students had excelled from the time they were in high school and fought hard to be the top students at their universities.

Education became the tool and vehicle for the participants to successfully reach the United States when they decided to pursue further higher education in the United States. First, the participants had to meet academic admission requirements set by American institutions and additional requirements for all foreign students. Secondly, the participants, who were admitted by American institutions, had to pass the INS interview to finally obtain a visa to enter the United States.

The openness and flexibility of the U.S. higher education institutions proved to be a great advantage to the students. To stay in the United States, the participants had to find jobs. They quickly realized their degrees had to fit the job market if they wanted to find employment. The openness of higher education in the U.S. allowed the participants to change majors or degrees that would fit the job market. Those, who had degrees in English and Chinese, for example, would have difficulty finding jobs if they stayed with their specialties. They had to enroll in programs that would later guarantee them jobs. Switching to a different field was common among the students. Seven participants switched to a major other than their first degrees. After receiving their second degree, three participants changed their major for a second time and pursued a third major to ensure they would find jobs. Only one student completed his graduate studies in the same major as his undergraduate degree (computer science.)

Higher education helped them adjust to a position that would prepare them for the job market. When one participant ran out of time on his visa and legal status in the United States, his wife enrolled in a graduate program to legally keep him in the United States. He was able to find a job during the time his wife was a student. Another participant managed to stay in the United States by enrolling in a graduate program when her Chinese based company withdrew from the United States and returned to China.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the immigration process of 10 students and scholars from mainland China. It found factors that influenced the immigration process of the participants. The study also suggested how higher education was used as a tool in the immigration process.

Consistent with earlier findings, the participants in this study were highly qualified students and scholars from the top educational institutions in China (Orleans, 1988). Factors influencing their decisions to immigrate to the United States, lack of professional opportunities, recurrent intrusion of the state into individuals' lives, the residual mistrust of intellectuals, and related political instability, were similar to the finds of Orleans (1988). For most of the participants the immigration process was long, difficult, and stressful. The initial challenge began in China while they were seeking an opportunity to advance themselves academically and professionally. The next hurdle was obtaining a visa to come to the United States. For some, this process was difficult and humiliating. Once in the United States, the participants faced many difficulties and hardships, including financial, emotional, social, and academic. At times, they felt lonely and isolated. They spent long hours studying and working. However, in spite of the hardships, they proved to be disciplined, persistent and resilient.

An unanticipated finding of the study was the degree to which the participants were willing to change their majors in order to be competitive in the job market. It was not surprising that a Chinese student would select a graduate program in a field different from his or her first degree in China, but it was a surprise that the participants would change their degree again after they had earned a new degree in the United States. This is especially so since life was quite difficult in the United States for most of the students. At times, these changes required that a participant start over with undergraduate level courses before he or she could continue with graduate level work in the newly selected field.

The research for this paper was conducted in 2000. There have been significant changes on the political landscape since the participants of this study immigrated to the United States. The terrorist attack in the United States on September 11, 2001 has had an affect on the way national security is viewed in the United States. Travel in and out the United States has become more carefully regulated. This in turn has had an affect on immigration. Similarly, the SARS out break in 2003 has created a greater awareness of the potential for internationally transmitted disease, particularly from China. It is unclear exactly how these events have affected the opportunity of students and scholars to take advantage of higher education in the United States. Anecdotal data collected by Pang during an eight month stay in China in 2002 and a six month stay in 2003 suggest that students and scholars in China have not changed their desire to come to the United States to study. However, tightened security policies and procedures have extended the time it takes to secure a visa. Some students have missed school for several months or are no longer able to travel to the U.S. There is little evidence to suggest that the circumstances for Chinese students, who have entered the U.S. with a valid visa are having a more difficult time than the participants involved in this study. These questions, however, are worthy of further investigation. How have these events influenced the immigration process of Chinese students and scholars to the United States? For example, a study to better understand the process and experience of obtaining a valid student visa would be interesting.

This study chose to consider both scholars and students in the same sample. In retrospect, it may have been advantageous to separate the two populations. Similarly, the subjects consisted of individuals, who had received their first degrees prior to the Great Cultural Revolution and younger individuals, who completed their academic work in China during and after a period of liberalization. It would be interesting to learn if younger scholars

and students perceive current opportunities in China differently than the participants of this study. For example, is there a greater desire of students and scholars who study abroad to return to China to take advantage of a growing economic opportunities?

The findings of this study might be seen as a first step in understanding the role of higher education in new immigration patterns to the United States. This study included a relative small sample confined to one geographic area of the United States. A logical continuation of this study would be to broaden the sample to include Chinese, who settled in other geographic areas of the United States and who attended other institutions of higher education. It would also be interesting to broaden the sample to see what role institutions of high education play in the immigration of students and scholars from other countries. Such a study might include students and scholars from countries that rely heavily on American higher education institutions but that have a political economy different from that of China, for example India. Other studies might include participants, who chose not to immigrate and return to their home countries after completing their higher education. Finally, while it is clear that higher education institutions in the United States are having a profound impact on foreign students; it would be interesting to learn what impact foreign students are having on higher education in the United States. To what extent do research universities depend on foreign students for a student pool and for research assistants? For programs that are highly dependent on foreign students, have recruitment, admission, and retention policies been affected? Has the presence of foreign students affected the cultural climate of some academic disciplines?

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## Appendix A

### The Participants

P1: Female. Came to the United States in 1989 when she was approximately 30 years old. At the time, she was married with a child, had a bachelor degree in English, and was teaching English in middle school. Earlier, she had stayed in the United States for one year as an exchanging teacher. She came to the United States as a student, enrolled in a master of education program in Secondary Education, and became a teacher teaching ESL in the high school.

P2: Female. Came to the United States in 1991 when she was in her mid 20's. At the time, she was unmarried, had bachelor degree in English, and worked for a company as an interpreter. She came to the United States as a student and enrolled in a master's program in business. Later, she changed to the undergraduate program, achieved her bachelor's degree in accounting, and found a job in an accounting company and married.

P3: Male. Came to the United States in 1989 when he was in his mid 40's. At the time, he was divorced with a child, who lived with his ex-wife. He had an undergraduate degree in music, worked for an American company in China, and had visited the United States for a short time. He came to the United States as a student, taking master's degree in music. Before completing the music degree, he changed major to the MBA program, graduated with a dual degree of master's in business and computer science, got a job in a computer company, and then remarried.

P4: Male. Came to the United States in 1986 when he was in his mid 40's. At the time, he was married with children. He had a doctoral degree in chemistry from China and worked in a research institution. He came to the United States as a visiting scholar in a post-doctoral program. He had several patents and joined a company as one of the owners and a shareholder.

P5: Male. Came to the United States in 1983 when he was in his mid 40's. At the time, he was married with two children. He had an undergraduate degree in physics and taught in the university. Came as a visiting scholar and then enrolled in a doctoral degree in physics. After receiving his Ph.D. in physics he was unable to get a job in the United States because of his immigration status. In order to stay in the U.S., he enrolled in a master's degree program in computer science. Upon graduation, he found a job in a computer company with his master's degree.

P6: Female. Came to the United States in 1994. At the time, she was in her mid 20's and came to join her husband, who was already reenrolled in a graduate program. She had a bachelor's degree in Chinese/English and has worked for an American company in China. She came as a student enrolled in master's program in accounting. After graduating, she found a job working for a company maintaining accounting data software.

P7: Male. Came to the United States in 1995 when he was in his early 30's. At the time, he was married with two children. He had a bachelor's degree in physics from China and a Ph.D. in physics from a university in Sweden. He came to the United States as a visiting scholar in a post-doctoral program. Later, he enrolled in master's program in computer information system. After graduation, he found a job with that master's degree.

P8: Male. Came to the United States in 1990 when he was in his late 20's. At the time, he was married with a child. He had a bachelor's degree in mathematics, and a master's in math and computer science. He came to the United States as a student and enrolled in master's program in computer science. After, he found a job in computer science.

P9: Female. Came to the United States in 1991 when she was in her mid 20's. She was married and without children. She had a bachelor's degree in biology and had been working with her husband for their own computer company. She came to the United States as a student in a master's program in industrial management. After graduating, she found a job working in a company maintaining data program.

P10: Female. Came to the United States in 1992 when she was in her mid 20's. At the time, she was married but without children. She had a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and worked for an investment company. She was sent to the United States as an employee working of the company to help establish a branch of in the United States. After the company failed to meet its business goals in the United States, she changed her status to that of a student and enrolled in a MBA program. After, she graduated she found a job and stayed.

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### Author Note

Bangcheng Pang is working as a consultant for international educational programs at Oasis Culture and Education Development, Incorporate. He received his Master's in Education with a concentration in Secondary Education from Grand Canyon University, and Doctor of Education in Higher and Adult Education from College of Education, Arizona State University in 2001. Mr. Pang received his bachelor's degree in English from Xinjiang Agricultural University in China, teaching English in a university in China for five years and was the Director of English Department in the university before he came to the United States. He came to the United States as a visiting scholar and later changed to a student. He moved to Arizona State University pursuing his doctoral degree after he achieved his master's degree. Mr. Bangcheng Pang has been active in social activities. He is the founder of a Chinese school in Tempe, Arizona and active in leadership position in several other organizations in Chinese and American societies in Arizona for more than ten years. While attending Arizona State University, he worked in Educational Development, Maricopa Community College District; Articulation Office of Provost Office, Arizona State University; and Arizona Commission for Post Secondary Education. He had worked for more than five years as an assistant director and acting director at Unaccompanied Alien Minors Shelter Care Program sponsored by Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) of U.S. Federal Government. Now, he is doing education programs for schools and companies between China and the United States. Mr. Pang could be reached at bangchengang@hotmail.com. Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Mr. Pang.

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