

Award Period (e.g. Spring 2012): Fall 2017-2018

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Project Title from Application: Emerging adult outcomes during the transition to university life: A cross-cultural exploration of American, Chinese, and Chinese international students.

Amount spent: As of 6/18/18: \$2,091.37

Non-technical summary (max 1500 characters plus spaces):

The major goals of this project were to gather information about the social experiences and stressors experienced by emerging adults across cultures. A secondary goal was to develop partnerships, promote UW, and eventually enhance the multicultural content of courses within Human Development and Family Sciences. During the week spent in Beijing work was completed at North China Electric Power University in collaboration with Dr. Haisong Shi. Together we collected data from over 500 students who provided information about their relationships with peers, romantic partners, and parents. Data analysis is ongoing, however, preliminary results indicate a need for specific support services related to social relationships. As a visitor to their campus, I was given an extensive campus tour in which I was able to make connections with the directors of the student career services center and the counseling center. I was also invited to present a lecture on my research about relationship education for youth and young adults. Overall, it was rewarding to promote the University of Wyoming and develop relationships with students, faculty, and administrators at NCEPU.

Global Perspectives Grant Report

Aims of the Project

This collaborative international project was guided by two primary goals. One goal was to better understand the cultural influences on individual and interpersonal stressors experienced by emerging adults across cultures. In line with my area of research, a focus was on romantic relationship experiences in emerging adulthood. A second goal was to use the results to promote multiculturalism in the classroom, improve culturally sensitive support services at universities, and increase the global visibility of the University of Wyoming. The following objectives continue to guide this work:

1. To collect data related to multiple individual and social domains (e.g., social, psychological, romantic, academic) among undergraduate students in the United States and China as well as international Chinese students immersed in U.S. culture to understand emerging adult issues.
2. To identify domains (e.g., social, psychological, romantic, academic) in which parents may continue to maintain influence among emerging adults across cultures.
3. To utilize the research findings to promote undergraduate well-being across the transition to university life by strengthening student programs; thereby encouraging recruitment and retention of both domestic and international students in the United States and China.

Summary of International Experience

I spent a week in Beijing and worked with faculty and students at North China Electric Power University (NCEPU) to collect data and develop partnerships. NCEPU is a top-level, relatively large university with a total enrollment of about 27,000 students. They are known for innovation in engineering and technology, yet they have a thriving social sciences department. My collaborator, Dr. Haisong Shi is a faculty member in the department of Psychology. My interpreter is an undergraduate student in the English department who expressed interest in working with me because she would like to study in the United States.

For data collection, we worked together to translate a survey and disseminate the survey to undergraduate students at NCEPU. Dr. Shi assisted with student recruitment during the visit and helped facilitate the collection of both the quantitative survey data and qualitative data. Due to very high interest in completing the interviews, students far out-numbered the capacity to conduct semi-structured interviews as outlined in the plans. Therefore, the semi-structured interview was converted into a document that students completed outside of regular class time. These times were arranged with myself and Dr. Shi to be present when students completed the worksheets. The translator who assisted me throughout the time at NCEPU then translated this information into English.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary review of the qualitative data indicate several themes about the changes Chinese emerging adults experience with their parents, stressors, sources of information about relationships, and desires for more university support services. Students expressed interest in

learning more about how to manage stress and how to have good dating relationships. An unintended benefit of shifting our method of data collection is that we were also able to ask about their views regarding studying in the United States. It was interesting to note that students commonly cited safety as a serious concern they have when considering continuing their education in the U.S.

In terms of quantitative data, there are 536 participants. The sample is 54% female with a mean age of approximate 19. In terms of class standing, the majority are underclassmen, with 77% freshman, 17% sophomore, 4% junior and 2% senior standing. Regarding romantic relationships, 23% of participants stated that they are currently in a romantic relationship with generally high relationship satisfaction. Among those in current dating relationships, casual dating was relatively uncommon with only 10% of participants engaged in casual non-committed romantic relationships. In contrast, 87% are in committed, exclusive relationships (3% engaged or married). Further analysis of the quantitative data will show the prevalence of dating aggression (physical and psychological) within this sample. Overall, it appears that Chinese undergraduate students are experiencing committed romantic relationships and have a desire for more information about this subject.

Unexpected Benefits of the International Experience

As with any travel experience, one can plan for certain experiences but sometimes unexpected benefits arise. When discussing my research on adolescence with the Psychology faculty, they were eager to show me a local high school. I was able to visit a high school in the evening and found students in study hall style classes at 7:30pm. Students were hard at work studying for the college entrance exams. At a shared dinner, I was introduced to an academic “agent” who assists high school students in their collegiate preparations. Finally, I was fortunate to share a meal with the vice-president of the university and meet at length with the director of the student counseling center. Overall, it was very rewarding to promote the University of Wyoming and develop relationships with students, faculty, and administrators at NCEPU.

Future Directions

I believe there are multiple ways to continue this research and the partnerships with the faculty and staff at NCEPU. Based on the preliminary review of data, meeting with the counseling center director, and my research/outreach interests, I plan to focus on relationship education in the future. There is a curriculum which targets single, emerging adult audiences called *Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge (PICK)* which is translated into Mandarin. To my knowledge, this program in the Mandarin version has not yet been evaluated, presenting a window of opportunity for program evaluation in China. Students specifically requested online learning materials, so I am considering this mode of delivery for some of the PICK program materials. These materials will be shared with the director of the counseling center. Information gathered about parent-child relationships during this age period can also inform student counseling services and support services.



Presenting a research and outreach presentation to students and faculty.



Enjoying a delicious meal with (from left to right) my student interpreter, NCEPU Psychology faculty, and the vice-president of the university.



Visiting an evening class, studying hard for their upcoming exams.

(I'm laughing because a student just asked me if I like Taylor Swift! I wasn't sure how to answer that!)