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Title: Chinese International Students are Returning to China after Phd: Is it personal or patriotism?

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Keywords: China, International students, globalization, brain drain

Abstract: For this project we aimed to discover what was mobilizing Chinese International graduate students to return to China after obtaining their Phd at UIUC. We decided to focus on students studying in the science and engineering with the sense that advancement in science and technology was helpful in building a nation. In total, we interviewed 12 people, 10 male, 2 female Chinese graduate students who were studying in the field of science and engineering. In the end, we concluded that students did not make their decisions based on what we originally perceived as an underlying patriotism, but rather made their decisions based on their personal preferences.

A*Star (Singapore Agency for Science, Technology, and Research) Yearbook 2006/07

Global Future Freedom?
In the chapter article “Imagining Global Futures in China: The Child as a Sign of Value,” Anagost discusses the “little emperor,” otherwise infamously known as China’s one-child policy. The one-child policy not only has lead to a generation of elite students, but also to a much more demanding expectation of them. These single children pressured by the desires for fame and glory in their child are not only pushed to the limit with different products offering early childhood success, excess schooling, but also are sheltered to the extreme, leaving them without individual values and a chance to be more adventurous. Mainly, it’s because these children are the only children in their family, hence, they are the one and only chance these parents have to reap exactly what they sow. Triumphantly successful children obviously are the results of a genuine level of expertise in the parents themselves, since the parents have only one child, they have but one chance to make their child a
much more valuable part of an ever growing competitive Chinese society.

Similarly, in the next article titled “Higher Learning in Global Space” there are controversial issues about western versus eastern education. According to Aihwa’s article, western education in past did not encompass so much the fantastical idea of a “global citizen” and study abroad efforts until much later in the 20th century. Nowadays, western education is reaching farther beyond it’s horizons and going to new international spaces other than the original places of interest, London, Paris, and other familiar European cities. The main focus on new international cities is that of those in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other East Asian areas. Correspondingly, East Asian countries have also looked to the United States and Canada as a place for obtaining an international education, however, international education is a much more prestigious pursuit in the eyes of their home country, especially from an Ivy League School like that of Harvard. After the terrorists’ attacks on September 11th, however, it seems as the reinforcement for “ homeland security” has decreased the flow of international students in general. This decrease in international East Asian students has left a decrease in prestigious students in the Science and Mathematics Departments in Ivy League Schools. In the end, it’s still the emphasis on an international education for East Asian students that pushes them to continue to compete to go abroad to the U.S.

Joe brings up a much more different issue in his article “Youth, Neoliberalism, Ethics: Some Questions,” in that he states the younger generation of today’s society are at risk due to the Neoliberal ideals they face in today’s society. As Joe’s article claims in an example youthful criminals are often not given a “second chance” as juvenile justice system promises, “Rather than being at risk in a society marked by deep economic and social inequalities, youth have become the risk.” The government wants to treat youth like adults, because they feel popular culture has made them into one. They are supposed to follow the rules of the government, the neoliberalist society, and that of their parents, if not they become the risk to society because they did not follow the “good choices” that were presented to them as adolescent. Adolescents are given “good choices” not the freedom of choice.

Finally, the A*Star (Singapore Agency for Science, Technology, and Research) Yearbook, a very interesting advertisement book, tries to attract the brilliant minds across the East Asian region. In this book, you can see story after story, picture after picture, of success in these individuals lives that studied to the extreme, got scholarly recognition, and even found happiness in their career, field, and even found a significant other to share it with. This yearbook gives people an idea of what true happiness is, it is simply to become a successful student, and so all young students should look up to these amazing scholars in the yearbook. Although, it admires the scholars, at the same time, it seems
almost forced, all of these people could not have been satisfied with this A*Star program.

To conclude, all of the articles refer to different main points, but in essence, they focus on youth and how economy and government play into youth culture trying to convince young minds that the right way to be a good citizen is to benefit your country. They can do this in many of ways, becoming a “global citizen”, following the “good choices” presented to them by modern society, becoming successful and finally, well-educated. However, the road to success is often a very long and hard one, and yet, it is also one that many of the advertising agencies, pro-government sporters, and institutions rely on to create the best of the best, an elite generation of capable students, but sometimes at the cost of the young people’s freedom and individualism. Sometimes, these advocates of what it is to be a celebrated student is to conform, and hence more and more similar students are produced. So, exactly how much of individuality is left in ourselves?

Response Paper #2: Where does their obligation lie?

The post-Mao era has the newer generation of Chinese citizens claiming to have certain responsibilities to abide by before forming decisions about job employment. The archaic quintessence of the filial self has undoubtedly been reborn in the culture and economy of this newer generation. Chinese citizens across genders, generations, and even social status, have never failed to embody their obedience towards Chinese Confucian morals through their filial actions on both local and national levels. Filiality is so entrenched in the Chinese that Lisa Hoffman, in her article titled, "Autonomous choices and patriotic professionalism: on governmentality in late-socialist China", “filial nationalism” is the catalyst that drives fresh Chinese graduates, desperately seeking employment, into assisting the development of an emerging neoliberal China (562). This sense of “filial nationalism” trickles down to the parent-child relationship as well and so the prospective Chinese adult makes choices autonomously, but with the subconscious delegating ideas of patriotism and loyalty to the family.

In the Hoffman article, post-graduate students attempt to find work in a new capitalist economy that no longer guarantees job placement. Hence, the emergence of job fairs and talent markets are born, and the Chinese government believes without talent new ideas won’t be able to arise. The job market then becomes a constant “demand-meet-supply” and the competition begins (551). The idea of assignees and the equality of “iron rice bowl” are non-existent, instead, these newly graduated students are expected to “create your own rice bowl”, by competing for jobs where they can plan to develop and use their skills from their education (Hoffman 554). Moreover, “patriotic professionalism”, having “an affinity for, the nation” (552) and a "love [of] the motherland" (561) is incessantly
encouraged among Chinese graduates as honorable obligation of the successful in society. Not only are they required to fulfill an obligation to their own country, they are also required to fulfill the obligations of the autonomous individual: “responsibility- to one’s family, one’s country, and even one’s own professional development”. (562) Therefore, the introduction of the autonomous individual must learn to make decisions, individually, while abiding to their social responsibilities.

Also, in the Hanser article, like that of the Hoffman article, Hanser discusses the newly graduated Chinese adult as an “enterprising self” (193). This is an autonomous individual, with the prospects of developing and utilizing their skills from education, not to mention, the duty to build Chinese society. There is “a new form of competition in which, increasingly, free market mechanisms distribute jobs”, hence, jobs are not easily attained, at least not the ones desired (190). So, postgraduate Chinese began to believe that “they saw competition as necessary, natural, and fair.” (193) Switching jobs became a familiar “Oh, I’m used to it” and the “big picture of the whole nation as the first principle for selecting an occupation” became the norm (196-7) In addition, and strangely enough, even salaries were not as important as their filiality to their nation.

Similarly on the subject of filialness, in the Padzerac article pertaining to university students in Taiwan, they also support patriotic obligation to the home country, not necessarily to Mainland China, but rather to Taiwan itself. Taiwanese students are not just attempting to excel in their studies they are also trying to recruit new talent to come to Taiwan. In order to attract more international attention Taiwan’s way, “Taiwan intends to raise its next, so-called e-generation to be the smiling standard bearers of globalization” (Padzerac 3). The university students, thus, undergo rigorous cleaning activities to promote university cleanliness and attract a foreign audience. In turn, Taiwan hopes to rejoin as a recognizable power, both in education as a technology center, focusing mainly in the math and sciences, and finally as a major producer of Western goods.

As one of the leading manufacturers in the world, China has many young and under paid workers. In China Blue, a film that documented such situations filmed the lives of both the workers in the factory and contradictorily the factory owner. In this documentary, there are several young girls, some under the age requirement to work legally that work in LiFeng Co. making jeans for the western world. They are paid less than 6 cents per hour and more times than not paid late. These children are often the second in a family, a family that could not afford to send their second child to a university due to the one child policy, among other factors. The factors that force these children to leave their hometowns and seek out factory cities for work is the emergence of a new globalized Chinese economy. The standard of living is rising, and because of this, the filial children of these rural people go out to work and earn more money to send home. In reality, these children end up suffering to fulfill
their obligations to their family. Fighting against the efforts of an international economy for China is unheard of, and so the workers cannot go on strike but continue to help their nation gain international recognition and favor.
In the end, this responsibility is what keeps these Chinese people continuing to strive for national improvement in an M based society. Those that compete can gain success and wealth and those that cannot are a foundation for China's booming international economy. There is no middle class as of yet, but China is slowly encouraging the emergence of one through acceptance of Western companies' business, such as Wal-mart, Best Buy, etc. China wants to westernize their economy through globalization, though they despise foreignness and want to maintain patriotism at all costs. Yet, it's the westernized “enterprising self” that is so attractive. It's what drives their autonomous choices, but also the freedom of autonomous individuals, only given so much freedom, must always remember to choose paths relating to their social responsibility in the end.

Works Cited
China Blue


The Subject has Lack of Potential

In the articles by Andrea G. Arai, the modern day child of Japan is portrayed as a peak into Japanese culture and morals. The pressures of modernity due to capitalism and neo-liberalism take a continuous toll on the young generations of Japanese citizens. Children are encouraged to
become achievers and so are forced through a rigorous education system, causing a “collapsing classrooms” effect to occur (1 Neo-Liberal Subject). Hence, the idea of the child’s “transparent existence” is questioned in these pressured school children (Wild Child 850). In objection to these pressures placed on the child, the child has the desire for a new autonomous non-transparent life is cultivated. In the same respect, modern-day capitalism and neo-liberalism having creating a bipolar work environment, have also forced Japan into the state of embracing the idea of the reserve army, or the fureeta, those who will support Japan’s economy by becoming labor workers to help Japan become an efficient producing war. The problem, however, is that both types of youth are lacking the energy to help a post-war Japan compete on a global scale.

In Arai’s article “The Wild Child” of 1990s Japan, she states that the “wild child” has become an emerging cultural sign of Japan, giving the outside world a taste of the Japanese’ sense of self. Here we see Japan’s “nation-culture” being plucked apart by the events of a child given the name Shonen A. Here she contrasts the Miyazaki Hayao’s animated film, Mononokehime, “wild child”, with the image of the today’s modern “child” (Wild Child 841). In the film, we are introduced to San who epitomizes nature against modernity, in short, “the energized innocence at the heart of the modern dilemma” (Wild Child 846). In contrast we are introduced to Shonen A, the child that commits “unchildlike” acts in reaction towards modern childhood. Shonen A an elementary student from a regular, middle class family, raised with a “normal” childhood, has become on a global level, a case of signified exceptionalism and difference.

“The Neo-Liberal Subject of Lack and Potential” relates to how both in the classrooms where students are diverting from the childhood norm and in the working force that is expanding due to the lack of potential jobs, the youth in Japan are losing focus in their energy potential. In the film Spirited Away, also produced by Miyazaki Hayao, attempted to create a “subject of potential” by portraying a young girl whose fight is to transform her parents back into human beings after they have been transformed into pigs (Neo-Liberal Subject 4). However, he also claims that it was a message about having the “strength to live” and not in anyway political. At this time, the Japanese Diet wanted to create a “subject of potential” by encouraging autonomous thinking, while also supporting patriotic education. The autonomous individual would feel that they have more potential and so contribute to Japan’s “producing power”, as either a student or fureeta.

Therefore, in modern day Japan, the education system is attempts to produce qualified citizens of society. Subjects that can later compete on an international level in the world, citizens that can also give back to society. However, one of Japan’s largest social problems today is that Japan is creating two different types of youth, one with the prospect to
compete on the international level, utilizing skilled labor, and the fureeta, the ones that work internally to help Japan compete as a producing power by working at a national level, or utilizing unskilled labor (The Neo-Liberal Subject 9).

Compared to the ideas of the “Enterprising Self” and the “Patriotic Professional”, I feel that the new generation of Japan may be trying to find ways to becoming an autonomous individual, with a different kind of “potential”, by escaping the norm of childhood, like that of Shonen A. In post-war Japan, both the “wild child” and the “fureeta” are a new type of Japanese youth, one that doesn’t believe in nationalistic values and societal responsibilities, but instead one that feels victimized and the desperate need to express their individuality, mostly by diverting away from what is expected. The “wild child”, however, diverts through extremes, while the “fureeta” remains a subject with lack of potential, both becoming a subject with no contribution potential to the country.


http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=chinese+gold+farmers +and+ge+jin&search=Search (Youtube selections on Chinese Gold Farmers)

Technological Mediations

Technology has emerged from the pit of economic activity and has both created and diverted different spaces in which we live in today. Accordingly, technology has caused the expansion of internationalism, as well as an increase in cross-communications. Globalization has found a new method in which to reach East Asian countries and so has impacted certain cultural spaces within this region. Technology has rerouted original consumer desires and has instead created a culture of new desires. In Tomi T Ahonen and Jim O'Reilly’s
“Digital Korea” there is a demanding cry for more technology advancement. South Korea has become a place in which individuals have come accustomed to the convenience of connection to the world in the palm of their hand. The “ubiquitousness” of South Korean technology has placed Korea in a state of constant connectedness. With this, South Korea never parts from the web realm, or from their friends and family. The convenience of advanced technology has spoiled the South Koreans into desiring more than needed, and even to the point that they are willing to pay any price for the newest upgrade of a cell phone, or other electronic device. However, the South Koreans desire for more advanced technology may put South Korea in a position where it is the most advanced society in the world.

Chris Berry’s, et. al, “Mobile Cultures” states that using mobile media in East Asian l/g/b/q society has proliferated the usage and advancement of technological media. In East Asia, particularly in Taiwan and South Korea, there has been a creation of an anonymous queer space in a society that is grounded in anti-queer Confucian values. Here, bloggers can find their own space without having to openly “come out” in East Asian society, given the anonymity of Internet usage. The prevalence of these queer spaces on East Asian web aren’t as numerous as they are in the West, so often times people from East Asian regions will be attempting to access Western sites. Also, in order to access Western Internet queer space the requirement of English is a must. English then becomes, once again, imperialistic, offering an adaptation of created Western homosexual space in East Asian. The question here is if East Asian cultures are they simply adapting and assimilating Western Gay ideals or will there be more attempts to create an individualistic East Asian space.

Dean Chan’s “Negotiating Intra-Asian Games Networks” presents the ideologies of cultural proximity in the East Asian Region. With the prevalence of popular online games such as World of Warcraft, the promise of exporting the game to a different country is quite arduous. Between China, Japan, and South Korea, three countries close in range that share a similar culture, the exporting of games is less painstaking than some. For instance, the idea of popularizing a martial arts game online in East Asia is promising since martial arts can be associated as a universal culture in East Asia. When exported to the West, problems begin to arise between culture, language, and communication. One of the current common problems the Westerners have had with online gaming is the discovery of Chinese Gold Farmers, a.k.a. sweatshop laborers of the gaming world. Even though many people claim they are just doing their job, others discern that Chinese “professional” players who sell the advanced character levels for money ruin the social dynamics and economy within the game, making the game itself fruitless. In contrast, a documentary by Jin Ge on Youtube presents the Chinese Gold Farmers as laborers, forced into gaming with no other
alternative. However, fun their job might seem, the once fun escape from the working world that the world of online gaming meant to create has also created a gaming prison for those that are subjected to gaming as a profession to survive.

Technology has reached a height of different diversions. It has manifested an outlet for l/g/b/q groups, created a new a spoiled consumer, which is also associated with a modern identity, and has even, due to the desire of online gaming, created a profession. Technology is becoming as ubiquitous as air as is mentioned in “Digital Korea”. Technology has created a space in which conflict can be avoided and fun can persist for hours on end. Though it embraces international communication as a plus, technology has also become a division between the East and the West. The imperial language of technological media is English. This is because Western media and culture is often adapted, assimilated and altered to fit the culture of East Asian countries. Many East Asian countries attempt to learn from the West, but why isn’t America learning from the East if South Korea is advancing so quickly? The reason again here trickles down to the language problem, English. The Korean language is only spoken in Korea, so learning English then becomes a priority in Korea.

Response Paper #5:
Response Paper #6:
Response Paper #7:

Preliminary Question: According to Xinhuanet.com, one of China’s daily media feeders, Chinese international students are returning to their place of origin after getting their education abroad. This is mainly due to the boom of China’s economic growth in the past few years. In reality, in the next 10 years China is looking to finally have created it's first section of its middle class, starting with the lower middle class making between 60,000 to 40,000 RMB per year.

The new generations of China’s international students have come to realize that China is suddenly pushing itself into a more developed country. Some students have even said as a Chinese citizen it is their duty to give back to their country, mainly because a developing country needs some support. As for those that want to stay in the United States, or other countries beside their own, many of their fellow colleagues are beginning to believe that they are irrational. Suddenly, China has become just at opportune place to live in as the United States, sometimes even more so. The irrationality here is why live and go through the process to become an American when you can return home
and live comfortably in the newly capitalist China? The question here is then, what do other international students from China believe? Does the difference in ideas range between the students enrolled on campus and the visiting scholars? Is their difference between ages? Also, will other East Asia international students return home as well? Did Koreans and Japanese have a mindset similar to previous Chinese students about American citizenship? Actually, what is the current view on American citizenship among international students?

**Interview/Ob serv. #1:**
In my brief interview with a male Chinese graduate student in Engineering, I found that my questions seemed to encourage a very sudden response. Not only did he support my previous notions of what Chinese graduate students desired in life, but he also made me believe prematurely in Chinese patriotism, similarly, as addressed in the Hoffman article.

My first question for him was very simple and quite direct. “Do you plan to go back to China?” I asked beginning the interview abruptly. He replied quickly and assuredly, “Yes”. “Why?” I then posed. Then he went on to give me a detailed reason, particularly, why he should return to China. He said, “The major reason is that I am the only child in my family, when my parents get older I have a responsibility to take care of them. For me it is easier to move between countries, I have ability, but for my parents it’s very hard for them to live outside of China. China is also developing very fast these years, so I think China is also a very good choice [to live]. After a few years, after I graduate, I think I will go back to China.”

“I think” was not exactly what I was expecting from him. He had seemed so engraved with filial morals. How could he dare to have said, “I think” I will go back to China? Well, after further questioning I began to understand a bit more. He then went on to say, “a war…” is what would stop him from returning to China, but I still didn’t quite believe him. “If everything continues to go well,”[then] “most likely I will go back to China”. “What about your salary, how important is salary to you?” I asked.

“Salary is very important”, he replied. “On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the highest, where does it rank then?”

“I think 2 and the first thing will be my interest”. Here I began to unravel his thoughts. He made me feel as if only a war would stop him from going back, but in reality, it is more than just political confrontations that would stop international students from returning to China. These students want to return to a developed economy with more opportunities. They want a particular area for themselves where they can receive an acceptable salary and work in their field of “interest”.

“I would like to become a faculty member”, he said. [By using the]“interests in my field and research topics, only by doing that then will I achieve something great”.
Apparently, greatness is in the stars for him, but his parents were not so luckily as he told me the story of years past. "My parents generation is a very special generation, they didn’t have too much choice to choose their own career. China was in a very hard time." On the contrary, in modern day China "now we can pursue our interests", he says.

Hi parents took up assigned “routine jobs, like factory jobs, and jobs that manage how the goods are shipped, basically everyday repeat the same thing” he said.

He on the other hand had a chance to go overseas and have a look around to see what a developed country looks like. Where parents aren’t tired from laborious hours at routine jobs, and where people can pursue their own dreams.

On the subject of talent, educated people are supposedly talented. He claims that both international students who study abroad, and those that are domestic are capable of having talent. I wanted to know if the students that do get an degree abroad have an advantage over the domestic students. He only replied that, “There are too many students, the competition is very high. If you have an overseas degree, but you don’t have real talent, then people can recognize that, and you will lose in the competition”. On the other hand, when I asked him what the advantages of an overseas degree where, he confidently responded:

“The major race is Chinese, and people speak Chinese. Therefore there isn’t much difference between you and your neighbor, but if you go to another country and experience another culture, you will be much more open-minded.”

Though he claims that domestic students are just as qualified as he is when searching for a job. He forgot to mention that he isn’t a domestic student and that he did choose to study abroad and get a U.S. degree rather than stay in his home country. The advantages of “open-mindedness” have attracted Chinese graduate students to the U.S. Talent is therefore not the same, but rather two different kinds of talent, a talent from abroad and a talent from within the country. A developing China would seem to value talent from abroad.

Revision
2008-03-24

It has recently been reported that, as a result of economic improvement, more Chinese students are increasing deciding to return to China after studying, e.g.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/17/content_7436298.htm. Noting this trend, we will examine the set of meanings that Chinese students mobilize when deciding whether or not
to return to China. This will allow us to examine the extent and nature of the effect that improved economic conditions in China have had on Chinese students' sense of national belonging and duty and neoliberalism. We are specifically focusing on Chinese graduate students in the sciences or engineering, because we hypothesize that these fields' proximity to capital makes them particularly sensitive to economic influences. We are also focusing on straight male cisgender graduate students in part to minimize the diluting effect that including women or LGBTQ persons would have on our data, but also, we argue, because gender exerts enough of an influence that there is a discernably different, though overlapping, logic for each of these subject positions, as we have already seen in initial interviews.

The following questions are prompts that we hope will allow us to have conversations about money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preferences in food and media.

How long have you been a student here at UIUC?

What are you studying?

How long have you been in the United States?

What do you plan to do after you graduate?

What city would you like to work in after you graduate?

Have you considered returning to China after you graduate?

Which kind of job is more important to you, one with a high salary or one that you enjoy? (This gets at the emphasis on "personal fulfilment" that we have encountered in our readings.)

Do you have any plans to start a business after you graduate? (This gets at their relation to the neoliberal "enterprising self.").

Do you think it would be better for China if you return? Why? Why not? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? How so? (Nationalism.)

How important are the kinds of food, movies, television, books, and magazines you will be able to access to your plans for after you
graduate? (Preferences.)

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were? (This gets at both the socioeconomic position of their parents as well as their sense of the changes that have taken place.)

Do you plan to support your parents? Does this influence where you would like to work after you graduate? How important is it to live near your parents? (Filial piety.)

Do you have any siblings? (Ideally this also lets us get at the socioeconomic position of their parents.)

Have you considered whether you would like to get married? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? (This is just an attempt to get at some of the factors that might influence their plans, and also connects to some of the moments in our readings where men were more interested in their career than in marriage.)

For our project we are positing that there has been a historical shift in that Chinese grad students are now returning to China after they finish rather than staying here in the United states, and we want to know why. We are specifically focusing on Chinese grad students in the sciences or engineering.

Here are the questions we have so far, which address money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preference.

Do you plan to go back to China? Why?

How important is salary to your decision?

How important is it to get a job that is personally fulfilling?

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were?

Do you have any siblings?

Are you married? Do you think it would be easier to get married in China? How does that affect your decision?

Do you plan to support your family?
Would you like to be closer to your family?

Do you think it is better for China if you return? Or is this important?

If you decided to stay in America do you think you would miss China? Why?

Interview/Obbserv. #2: I picked up Dan from his apartment and we went to converse at Lai-Lai, a Chinese restaurant on Green Street. As I drove, we talked openly about owning cars in American versus China, about our majors, about religion, about campus life and so forth. On the subject of my major, he commented honestly that my major was very “interesting” compared to what people usually studied. It seemed to me that there was nothing existentially different between the two of us. As we were seated at Lai-Lai, he ordered for me like a gentleman and even waited for me to take the first bite. Then I started my interview, I asked Dan how long he had been in the US. Dan replied, “I have been in the US since August, I have completed one semester so far.” Then he proceeded to go into excited tangents, talking about his life previous to the life in US. He talked about the university he attended in Xi’an and about how he had chosen Electrical Engineering with a concentration in auto-power control (I understood this to be the way electricity is routed) as his final major after taking different courses in Computer Science, an apparently very boring and unchallenging internship with China Mobile, and exploring the different fields in Electrical Engineering. I asked him why he decided to say in the field of technology, and also, why did he decide to change his major so often? He nonchalantly replied, “I think I am smart so I chose CS (computer science), so… smart people study smart majors.” I felt as if “smart” majors were limited only to the technological field of study and its advancement, where as my major was a mere “interesting” major. Anyways, apparently CS proved to be quite easy for him, so it became boring, and he decided Electrical Engineering would be much more challenging. “What do you plan to do after you graduate?” He thought to himself for a while, glancing up as if he was trying to read his future through the cracks in the ceiling. “… after some time in this country, I will complete my PhD in 4 to 5 years…then maybe I will find a job here and work… maybe 3 to 5 years, then I will go back to China”, he said finally. “If you plan on staying in the US for that lengthy amount of time, why
would you return?” I asked. “Life is not as good here as it is in China. The food here is terrible, so I am learning to cook. I also have many friends in China and my family, I think it is best to live with my family in the future.” “But you also have friends here?” “Yes, but as I narrow my field my circle becomes smaller, and my friends in China will always be more.” “What if you get married here?” “I don’t know when I will get married, I could get married tomorrow for all I know.” I don’t think he understood my question about marriage entirely, but between food, friends and family, the three F’s of our daily lives, to Dan these were irreplaceable values in his life, and returning to China was the only solution, besides learning to cook for himself. Moreover, Dan comes from a well-off Chinese family. His family consists of his father and mother, and surprisingly a younger brother. His younger brother is currently a Sophomore at a Beijing University, studying mathematics. His parents have positions in the government, so they live comfortably, and Dan claims that he wouldn’t be able to make as much as he would, even if he started up his own corporation. His parents were lucky he noted. His parents grew up during the Cultural Revolution, a 10-year period in China when education was brought to a complete halt. After the Cultural Revolution, Dan’s parents were lucky enough to be accepted into a vocational 3-year college, which promised them government positions after graduation. He said that he had no existing worries while studying abroad in the US, mainly because his parents would be taken care of by the government. If his parents were very ill that would be a different story, but at the moment all is well in his world. On the subjects of location and salary, he didn’t have much to say. He simply said they were irrelevant to his decision. The job itself is of much more significance, than either of the two. “I want to do some work where you can see the result. For example, China Mobile pays a high salary, but the job is boring, and you do the same thing everyday.” Question after question, I didn’t find a “patriotic professional,” instead I found that Dan was more like that of the “Enterprising Self”. He chose his major and studied to better himself, not society. He wanted to challenge himself and so he changed his major until he was satisfied. Finally, his overall intentions for returning to China were based on his desire to be with friends and family.

Interview#3 with James
April 5, 2008

On the day I went to interview James, I wanted not only to interview this Chinese graduate student, but also understand him. While I interviewed him in his apartment, I began to make some observations, he was sporting a Li Ning track-suit, basically what would be the equivalent to the popularity of Nike in American, instead in China. He also had his
laptop open that had a background picture of him with his parents and girlfriend largely displayed. Additionally, James lives in an apartment complex that is very keen on attracting foreigners. In short, I found him to be typical of what a Chinese graduate student usually is like, especially abroad. They stick with the collective, being other Chinese students, are often times hard to read, and hence make the interview and the process in finding interviewees a frustrating experience.

James’ plans for the future are vague like most international Chinese students, but he has a general idea of what he’d like to do. “My major is Biology, so I would like to be in the Academic area in the future,” he said.

“I went into Biology as an Undergraduate because it seemed interesting.” Interesting and also a promising career apparently, he noted that the advancements in medicine are extremely attractive.

In fact, James is from the northern part of China, but he attended his undergraduate years at a Shanghai University. He complained about the atmosphere there and people in Shanghai, and compared to the US, to him, Americans seem to be much more “straight” with him. James actually just arrived in the US this summer. He is currently in his second semester here at UIUC as a graduate student. He is currently here on a Research Assistant Grant, like many other Chinese international students.

Now that he has begun his graduate studies, he has started to map out his plans a little more. “I have a few options, first option is that I can become a part of a faculty at some university, second option is that I can join a technical support group in a pharmaceutical company”. His final work destinations were all China bound.

“First, I will return for my parents,” he said without hesitation, “second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I”. When I asked him what he meant by returning “for” China, he replied, “I like my country.” Then, he went on to explain to me how he might have, “a greater feeling for China”, one in which was calling him to return, one in which I associated as having patriotic feelings.

Based on the ideas from previous articles assigned for class, “The Chinese Enterprising Self” and “The Patriotic Professionalism”, I’ve found that it stands true for most male Chinese graduate students with promising majors to have a preconceived sense of professionalism and desire to achieve. The reason being in response to James’ question and response to what my own desirable outcome for the interview might be. I illustrated to him the objective of the research project and he commented that most students, while he was in undergraduate school in China, had fantasized about graduating from a school in the US. Not only did they want to get a US degree, they even wanted to live in the US. On the contrary, now that James is in the US he has no intentions of residing in the US after graduation, even though he felt that originally he could have been categorized with the other undergraduate students that dreamed of
the fantasy life in US. His fantasy becoming a reality has forced him to realize that he is among the professional Chinese internationals, that he has an obligation to get a good job, and he views his experiences abroad as a definite advantage toward his future career development. In his future, money is not an issue. The only possible problem lying in his future is the uncertainty of whether or not his relationship with his current girlfriend will be able to endure a potential separation, since he believes both him and his girlfriend are professional individuals holding with not only great, but achievable ambitions.

"I have all confidence in my girlfriend's capabilities. She can and will find a good job. If it just so happens she doesn't, then I can always support her." I did manage to bring up the possibility that one day maybe she would support him. He smiled and laughed as if I were joking. He then said, "If we can't bear to separate, I will support her". Though women today in China's society are also claiming to be professionals it seems as if James believes otherwise, that when it comes down to it, he will be the one with the promising career. At the same time, however, I'm not sure if this generation of professionals actually has a desired goal to contribute back to their country. Their professional goals are driven by the autonomous individual's wants, not by their ties to patriotism.

Group Summary:

For our project we have sought to learn the meanings that male Chinese graduate students in the sciences and engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign mobilize when making plans for the future, with particular regards to the country they plan to work in. We were motivated to pursue this question after sensing that students here at the University of Illinois are deciding to return to China in greater numbers than in previous cohorts. This intuition has been reflected in our interviews, where these students consider family, nation, and economy, when planning their futures. Though we do not address them here, these students also consider pride, food, and friends when making their plans.

The most prominent reason for returning to China that emerged from our interviews is simply that economic conditions in China have improved in recent years and are expected to continue improving in the years to come. Thomas (who is actually an economist) said he believes students are returning to China because "China is getting better and better," and when we asked him if he might have decided to stay in the United States in the past instead of return he said, "Maybe."

However, these students also place heavy consideration on family when making plans for the future. Dan said, "I think it is best to live with my family in the future." Consideration of family, though, does not always result in the need to return to China. Jing, who does not plan to return to China, intends to bring his parents to the United States.

Finally, another point that these students consider when making plans for the future is the contribution they will make to China. As James said, without explicit
prompting, "First, I will return for my parents, second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I." Again, though, it is not necessary for students to return to China in order to make a contribution to their country. Jing highlighted this when he said, "Even if you have a faculty position in America, it doesn't mean that you will not do anything for your country," and in drawing attention to the opportunities that are available for scientists in his field he opened the possibility that someone could produce a greater contribution to China by not returning.

Paper: Chinese International Students Return to China After Phd

Introduction

The research involved in this paper discusses the possible factors that have may have mobilized Chinese international students’ decision to return to China after obtaining their Phd abroad. These students have recently been returning to China in increasing numbers as opposed to attempting to attain U.S. citizenship, which openly suggests that the Chinese economy is starting to improve immensely. China’s economy recently has risen to a status of what one might call a super power in the world, next to the U.S. Chinese international students are, thus, finding it easier to return to an improving China. Hence, these students, as neoliberal autonomous subjects, are factoring in more personal reasons to return to China, such as family, food, friends, while a more patriotic reason is suggested but never admitted completely (Hoffman 553). In our research, we decidedly chose to interview 10 male Chinese graduate students with affiliated majors in science and engineering, assuming that science and engineering was a symbol of national advancement and a promising contribution to a developing China.

Background

In the years directly after post-Mao China, Chinese universities had already witnessed the loss of many Chinese intellectuals, also, another case exemplar is the idea that the Cultural Revolution had produced an increasingly amount of inadequately educated citizens and the events at Tianamen Square had produced social unrest among intellectuals, in short China experienced a monumental “Brain Drain” (Zweig 93). In the efforts to rebuild a nation, China has put forth many recent efforts to educate its’ newest generation of Chinese students. Students are being sent overseas routinely, attempting to help China jumpstart the economy with the their students’ degrees in advanced education of Western graduate technological studies. China has also experienced it’s own economical improvement as China has become one of the world’s leading mass producers. Through the efforts of previous Chairman Deng Xiaoping and his economical reforms in 1976, China has been able to start over as a capitalist economy. With the introduction of capitalism and the effects of globalization, China has started to lure its citizens back
from Western society into the heart of China’s competitive job market. Recently, on April 6, 2007, Xinhua.net released an article by Wang Hongliang claiming, “Some 44,000 Chinese who studied abroad returned home last year, 4.79 percent more than in 2006”. This sudden interest in the motives of Chinese international students returning to China has spiked curiosity in both Western and Chinese alike. Chinese students’ motives to return range widely in comparison, but at the same time, have a similar melody when composed together.

Methodology
In our initial research we had included both men and women graduate students, in which a total of 12 interviewees were interviewed, 10 men and 2 women. We decided to focus mainly on graduate students in the science and engineering areas of study, since, according to previous sources, such as Lisa Hoffman’s “Patriotic Professionalism” stated that Chinese students have a subliminal desire to contribute to the advancement of their nation’s economy, and advancement here is seen through the eyes of technology which also progresses a nation’s economy (Hoffman 560). Women were excluded after the first interviews with two women. The women, however, did not concur with our project’s aim, to find a “patriotic professional”, which may or may not have something to do with a history of women’s repression at work and at home in China, and so we felt that their responses might complicate the project (Hanser 200). When interviewing their male counterparts, we found the neoliberal subjects we were looking for, however, whether they were in context with a “patriotic professional” is hard to discern. Two male economist majors were interviewed, but will not be used in this study, since they do not fit in with the ideology of being a contributor to the technological advancement of the society.

Findings
“First, I will return for my parents,” he said without hesitation, “second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I,” said an interviewee.” The interviewees in fact echoed a similar response in that they must return to China for the sake of their parents. As China is infamous for it’s implication of the one-child policy, our interviewees did not fail to mention that for this reason, among others, returning to China for their parents is deemed a responsibility (Hoffman 562). The interviewees also compared American culture versus Chinese culture, in which friends and food play an important role. The subject of entertainment is eluding since the advancement of today’s technology, such as the internet have made all forms of media, such as movies and music available to Chinese international students abroad. As for food, those who don’t know how to cook begin to learn and others enjoy the adventure of tasting different cultures. Culture here (of food and entertainment) becomes transnationalized and so does not factor as much into the direct decision of Chinese international students. Due to Chinese’ strong root in Confucianism, most students are subjected to the ideas of filial piety, to
care for one’s parents in old age. Nonetheless, friends and family are most likely the biggest factors in their decisions, since they are literally irreplaceable. In the end, the interviewees were could not all be placed under a label of patriotism, but rather as a neoliberal studying abroad at UIUC with the prospects of returning home and having better opportunities than before.

Conclusion
The factors that contribute to the decisions of Chinese students are subtle, they will return to China for family, friends, food, culture and their nation. Family is the most prevalent reason we have found so far. Though we could not deem all our interviewees patriotic subjects, they were, however, associated with the autonomy of a neoliberal subject. Therefore, China will experience an increase in returnee students, not simply due to it’s improving economic situation, but moreover, to a desire to return homeward bound, and to a culture and a nation that has been rooted in Confucian beliefs of filial piety for centuries. Though efforts to get at the root of patriotism in Chinese students was minimal, if I were to continue my research on Chinese international students at UIUC, I would begin to focus on the more active patriotism that Chinese graduate students may express. Recently, in the media, the 2008 Beijing Olympics has caused much controversy due to their current situation with Tibet. Westerners have already called an all out boycott of the Olympics. However, Chinese students at UIUC have already presented their patriotism, like other Chinese students across U.S. universities have already attempted to save face by promoting the 2008 Beijing Olympics initiative, an attempt to educate American students about the prospects of the 2008 Olympics being held in China. I even attended their small information booth on the UIUC Quad, which was not hard to spot when I saw a Chinese student waving an enormous Chinese flag back and forth, angry at Western media and westerners for not listening to the voices of Chinese citizens. In the end, I found that their information was quite detailed but their method ineffective, I wasn’t going to learn about China and the Tibet situation from the advanced architecture built specifically for the Olympics. My question here is where was this pronounced patriotism when I first began my project? Patriotism similar to this was not discovered during our initial interviews and so was not including in our general research plan. I have found that, in general, Chinese graduate students are first of all hard to contact, and often times hard to distinguish from other East Asian students on our ever-diversifying campus that is UIUC. The reason here is it is hard to find groups of Chinese international students who are willing to be interviewed, let alone converse with you since university students are always occupied enough. Finally, the question now enters into the heart of the UIUC campus.
What does this mean for the university? If Chinese international students, or even other international students, continue to come to U.S. universities to educate themselves in U.S. graduate education where does that leave U.S. citizens? UIUC itself has a well-renowned engineering graduate program in which is rank in the top ten in the world, therefore, most international students look at their position at UIUC as an opportunistic one. Obtaining such a degree creates limitless possibilities for the neoliberal Chinese student. It is as if the U.S. graduate education has become a desired commodity in the global realm, and once completed is extracted from the U.S. university and is to be distributed across the globe.

Works Cited


Reflect: I have to say that working on this project was both interesting in fun. I enjoy engaging in conversation with international students and obtaining a different perspective on American life. Also, I thank my team members for being quite patient with me when I would often times deliver them interviewees at the very last moment. My experience with the moodle has been usable. I was confused at first with the online posting process, but now have become accustomed to it.

Recommendations: If this project is to be continued, I would recommend bringing the project to a university level. Even though in my paper I conclude that UIUC is a member of a much larger group, it is on its own its own university sphere. So, to give the project more local attitude I would say to begin with the lives of the graduate students on this campus, for example, the daily activities they partake in, groups they join, their actions in activist groups, etc.