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Understanding Chinese International Undergraduate Students' Experiences at the University of Missouri - St. Louis

Yujia Wang

University of Missouri-St. Louis, yw52f@mail.umsl.edu

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**Understanding Chinese International Undergraduate Students'
Experiences at the University of Missouri - St. Louis**

Yujia Wang

M.B.A. in Business Administration, August, 2015, Benedictine University
B.A. in Social Science, December, 2013, Benedictine University

A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St.
Louis
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Doctor of Education in Educational Practice

May, 2019

Advisory Committee

Laura M. Westhoff, Ph.D.
Chairperson

Cody Ding, Ph.D.

E. Wendy Saul, Ph.D.

William C. Kyle, Jr., Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges and stressors Chinese international undergraduate students face while attending the University of Missouri - St. Louis (UMSL) in relation to their study abroad experience. Surveys were initially used to gather information and to gauge students' familiarity and use of university support services available to help with specific challenges and stressors. Follow-up interviews were conducted to collect additional in-depth data. As consistent with the literature review, the study found that UMSL students confronted language barriers, academic challenges, and cultural differences when transitioning to UMSL's academic culture and social environment. Additionally, financial stresses were exacerbated by issues related to filial piety and U.S. policy requirements for international students. This dissertation offers background information on the contexts of UMSL's Chinese international undergraduates, in order to help the host institution better recruit and retain its Chinese international student population.

Keywords: Chinese International Students, Challenges and Stressors, University Support

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

This study began with the aim to better understand the main challenges and sources of stress for Chinese international undergraduate students at UMSL, so that the institution may seek to help improve students' experience of studying abroad, and to help students learn and face such challenges. Having an understanding of these students' experiences can help UMSL better recruit and support its Chinese international students. Chinese undergraduate international students are faced with different kinds of challenges or potential stressors as soon as they decide to study abroad. Questions such as: "which university should I apply to?" "Where should I live while in the U.S.?" may transform into challenges and may increase the difficulty of studying abroad. The stress may also cause low satisfaction levels among international students within the U.S. as well as low academic performance in U.S. higher education programs.

Research Questions

To investigate the challenges and stressors faced by Chinese undergraduate students, and to find the effective and implementable way to improve the services and help offered to Chinese international students, the following research questions were posed:

- 1) What are the primary sources of challenges and stress among Chinese undergraduate international students studying at UMSL?
- 2) How should UMSL invest in and improve its programs to help Chinese international students succeed academically and socially?

Background and Institutional Context

International students comprise a significant percentage of students studying on American college campuses. According to the latest report from the Institute of International Education (IIE) published in November 2017, the total enrollment of international students during the 2016/2017 academic school year was 1,078,822, which represents 5.3% of total student enrollment, with around 50% of international students coming from India (17%) and China (33%). The report also showed the top program choice of Chinese international students is business, followed by engineering and computer science (IIE, 2017). The report also revealed that 83% of undergraduate international students rely on family or personal funding to complete their degree, which represents a significant contribution to the U.S. economy (IIE, 2017).

The state of Missouri is no exception to this trend. Based on the individual state report (IIE, 2017) the international students made over a 696-million-dollar contribution to Missouri's economy. Throughout the 2015/2016 academic school year, Missouri

hosted over 24,000 international students. Though UMSL, with its 983 international students, is not currently in the top five of hosting institutions, its 2018 Strategic Plan (2018) has a goal of increasing international student enrollment from 3% to 5% of its total student population by 2023 and to 7% by 2028.

To help meet this goal and to support its international students, UMSL relies on International Studies and Programs (ISP) and International Student and Scholar Service (ISSS). The mission and goal of ISP is to create opportunities for all UMSL students to expand their cultural diversity awareness and to help international students attending UMSL feel welcome on campus. ISSS assists international students and visiting scholars with visas, transfer credits, and facilitates cultural understanding. It also offers valuable advice to meet the various concerns of international students. For example, “UMSL Mosaic Ambassadors (2016)” recruits students at UMSL to volunteer as ambassadors to new international student to help them become familiar with campus and meet new domestic friends.

Besides ISP programs which are available to all international students, two key students' organization specifically support Chinese international students. There are several students' organizations specifically targeting Chinese students. The Chinese-American Corner encourages Chinese students to practice their English and American students to practice their Chinese. The Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) is a student organization organizes events for Chinese students and visiting scholars. It hosts a new student barbeque events, cultural events such as Mid-Autumn Festival and “China Night” to celebrate the Spring Festival. It welcomes American students who are interested in Chinese cultural that highlights the Chinese language as

well as songs and dances. Different universities have their own CSSA. Thus, through the CSSA, Chinese international students who attend UMSL also have opportunities to meet other Chinese international students in the St. Louis area.

These services and cultural supports are critical in helping Chinese students adjust to their new environment and in finding support from other students who understand their particular challenges and stressors. Chinese educational policies and cultural elements such as filial piety and the concept of face exacerbate students' stresses and challenges. Chinese students and families feel that a student's entire future--whether or not they can attend and earn a high ranking university diploma, which in turn determines if they will be competitive in an extremely tight job market in China--is dependent on a two-day university entrance exam (Gao Kao). Previous school grades are not a factor. Beginning with primary education, families invest fortunes in elite schools and tutors to prepare their children for the Gao Kao. The higher score students achieve the better university they may attend. Students who do not attain a high enough score for a ranked university may go to private colleges, but their degrees are not well-respected in the job market. Students' scores only determine their admission and the specific major they may choose. Chinese educational policy makers introduced reforms to broaden electives and expand the curriculum, but the Gao Kao remains the only determinant of college admission.

Additionally, the high population in China means that support for quality education resources are limited; students in rural areas in particular do not have a quality education. Furthermore, the Gao Kao is administered only once a year. Students who do not perform well can retake the exam, but they must wait for the next year. Traditions of filial piety lead students who do not perform well to feel they have dishonored their parents and their

parents have lost face (Olivas & Li, 2006; Pine, 2012).

These policies and cultural experiences contribute are key reasons many students decide to pursue education in the U.S. and select UMSL. Additionally, many intermediary agencies and have emerged from this trend to match the Chinese students to U.S. higher educational institutions. These agencies advertise as “one package of service (Yi Tiao Long Fu Wu, the service with all the information you need).” The business owner usually has experience or will hire people who have studied or lived abroad and have the skills to search and collect relevant information to match U.S. universities and Chinese students. The intermediary consultant agents learn about the Chinese students and their families’ needs, and then try to give appropriate help based on the Chinese students’ budget and expectations. Agents usually help their clients by preparing university applications and documents for their visas. Some universities partner with intermediary agencies in order to recruit more students. For example, the intermediary agency may give priority to recommend the institutions that they have a cooperation with, in order to earn profit from both the educational institutions abroad and the Chinese students who choose these school. Most intermediary agencies have the records of people who pass the visa interview successfully and study abroad after their help to advertise its success.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will help UMSL and other universities to develop better understandings of international students’ experiences, especially those of Chinese international undergraduate students. This will in turn help universities to improve their services and support for international students, while better meeting their needs and

providing assistance for challenges they face while studying abroad at American universities. As Chinese students represent one of the largest populations among international students studying at American universities, improving Chinese international students' experiences may serve to increase international student enrollment numbers in the future. The findings may be useful for UMSL's ISSS program development officials, international student recruiter, program administrators throughout campus, and professors teaching international students or may teach international students in the future.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies on international students have focused on language, academic, and social challenges (Bodycott, 2015; Hegarty, 2014; Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Tas, 2013; Williams & Johnson, 2011; Yan & Sendall, 2016; Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018), that undergraduate international students face in U.S. higher educational programs (Mamiseishvili, 2012). There are many overlaps between different challenges and stressors, because, studying in the U.S. is not only learning in another language, but also living in a completely different social-cultural society and learning in a very different academic culture in the U.S. (Geary, 2016; Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yan & Sendall, 2016). These challenges, including language barriers, lack of social connection with local students, and academic difficulties have existed for a long time and their presence on UMSL's campus will be explored throughout this study. The findings of previous research related to each challenge or stressor will be examined separately in the following sections, as these frequently discussed challenges and stressors were encountered by Chinese undergraduate students at UMSL.

Language Barriers and Social Adaptation Difficulties

One of the most frequently reported challenges faced by Chinese international students is the language barrier (Geary, 2016; Su & Harrison, 2016; Tas, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2013; Hartse & Jiang, 2015; Yan & Sendall, 2016, Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018; Zhang-Wu, 2018; Bertram, Poulakis, Elasser & Kumar, 2013). Both academic English and social languages are challenging to Chinese international students. They struggle

with insufficient English skills, lack of English language vocabulary and concepts rooted in academic disciplines, and difficulties with social cultural language and rules.

Chinese students have significant opportunities for English language learning. In 2001, the Chinese national curriculum changed so that third grade students began learning English, (down from fifth grade previously) (Hartse & Jiang, 2015). At this time, the interaction between China and the rest of the world became more frequent, and the U.S. became the most popular destination for Chinese international students to study abroad in another language. But in spite of fact that current Chinese international students have been taught at least nine years of English education, their skill level in the English language is still different and not everyone is a proficient speaker (Hartse & Jiang, 2015). To be admitted by a higher educational program in the U.S. the English test score is required by both U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the higher educational institutions. According to the UMSL international students' admission website ("International Admissions", 2018), UMSL requires international students offer a minimum score of TOELF (Test of English as a Foreign Language) 61 or IELTS (The International English Language Testing System) 5.5 to prove English proficiency. Students can be trained in test-taking strategies to achieve the qualifying score, though it may not correlate to English competence. In an article, Su and Harrison (2016) pointed out that compared with U.S. domestic students, Chinese international students have low language skills in writing, speaking, and listening; making English the largest hurdle of academic success (Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018). These low language skills directly affect academic performance (Mamiseishivili, 2012). According to Yan and Berliner (2013), most Chinese international students reported that they experience difficulties in "listening

comprehension and oral communication” (p. 74). Zhang-Wu (2018) found that both international students and domestic hosting country institutions report that international students face challenges adjusting to authentic English-speaking surroundings. The lack of English language proficiency leads to misunderstandings and not being able to express themselves accurately when communicating with their professors or English-speaking peers.

Furthermore, international students’ lack of familiarity with the local culture and environment is also challenging. According to Geary (2016), based on different individual experiences, international students usually experience varying degrees of loneliness and home sickness due to the unfamiliar culture, language, and customs. It may also be difficult for them to share negative feelings with people around them in another language, which can make international students feel overwhelmed and alone.

In addition, poor language skills inevitably influence Chinese international students’ satisfaction with their study abroad experience in the U.S. Su and Harrison (2016) reported that insufficient language skills were the main cause of Chinese international students’ dissatisfaction with their U.S. study abroad experience. Many international students take extra language classes to improve their language skills, which requires extra money and extra time to stay in the U.S. to complete their degree. This may mean a higher cost of study in the U.S. and a longer time of separation from family (Geary, 2016). Su and Harrison (2016) also addressed that long periods of separation from their families can also be a major source of stress for international students. Thus

Chinese international students' low English skills contribute to personal, social, and financial stress and potential dissatisfaction with their study abroad experience.

Due to the fact that Chinese international students find their English to be lacking to their American peers and are more comfortable speaking Chinese, it is common for them to limit their social circles to other Chinese students. Research conducted by Yan and Berliner's (2013) found that the language barrier and unfamiliarity with a new culture and society leaves most Chinese international students speaking Chinese a majority of their time abroad. Cao, Zhu and Meng (2017) commented that English proficiency is one key factor influencing international students' acculturation and intergroup contact when they study abroad in the U.S. Chinese students tend to get on well with Chinese international students, as they have similar cultures, and they maintain close and positive relationship with their family and friends who remain in China. For example, Chinese international students often enroll in the same classes, go to the same Chinese restaurants and Chinese-language churches, and use the same social media apps and websites as their Chinese peers. Therefore, language barriers contribute to social isolation from domestic students. This language barrier interferes not only with the students' academics, but also interferes with Chinese international students' lives as well.

Academic Challenges and Stress

Academic challenges and stresses are commonly faced by Chinese international students especially when they first come to the U.S. According to Olivas and Li (2006), academic expectations are a great source of stress to international students, as they need to meet the full-time enrollment requirements in a foreign language (to comply with visa

rules), adjust to the new academic environments, and change their learning style to meet course expectations different from those of their home country. Besides the challenges caused by academic settings, language challenges tend to overlap with the academic difficulties faced by Chinese international students, as the academic work involved in studying at a U.S. university is challenging. Mamiseishvili (2012) indicated that international students' language proficiency and their academic performance have a parallel relationship.

For international students studying in the U.S., federal requirements and restrictions placed on them by USCIS complicate their experiences. The USCIS (2018) requires that international students holding an F1 (student) visa must be enrolled as full-time students in an educational program approved by the Student and Exchange Visitors Program and Immigration Customs Enforcement. However, these requirements may be difficult for non-native speakers to meet. Being a full-time student means Chinese undergraduate students have to enroll in at least twelve credit hours per semester, which equals at least four three-credit hour classes. Domestic students may choose between being full-time or part-time students based on their budget and personal academic performance, while international students have no choice but to enroll in full-time studies.

The expectation and requirements for Chinese students in Chinese universities are different from Chinese international students in an American university. Tang et al. (2018) found that most Chinese international students claim that the academic requirement and environment is more rigorous than Chinese academic environments. For

example, in China Chinese college students only need to do the assigned assignments and study for the final exam, there is not letter grading, they are instead graded on a pass or fail. However, while in the U.S. to attain a letter grade there is a more comprehensive evaluation. Wang, Tian, Fujiki and Bordon (2017) state that Chinese international students with lower academic expectations in their home county, face more acculturative challenges in their host country.

He and Huston (2018) comment that students become more independent while they study abroad as they develop improvement of time management skills, though they also gain independence from their living situations not only in living but also in academic studies. Rather than establishing new social connections, then, first year international students may focus more on their meeting the new academic expectations and requirements (Mamiseishivili, 2012). Mamiseishivili (2012) indicated that from the academic point of view, college life, especially academic-related aspects of it such as GPA, degree goals, and academic integration should be the primary focus for first-year international students.

Zhao et al. (2005) indicated first-year international students are also faced with student-faculty interaction challenges. American professors' different teaching styles compared to those in Asian countries can intensify academic challenges for international students. For example, Roy (2013) pointed out that if the professor does not follow the textbook's organization in their lectures, international students from China, Japan, and Korea have a tendency to become confused. Besides the challenges caused by professors not using the textbook chronologically, there are additional differences in learning styles

between the U.S. and Asia. For instance, Chinese students prefer to listen to the professor's lecture without interruption; thus, they hesitate to ask or answer questions during lectures. In American classrooms on the other hand, professors encourage discussion and questions; Chinese students often find these exchanges disruptive to the flow of learning and difficult to follow. And due to different learning and teaching styles, most international students feel uncomfortable speaking in front of the class, as they are afraid of losing face if they cannot answer a question correctly (Roy, 2013). Roy (2013) specifically found that when an American professor uses too many cultural references in lectures, Chinese international students may feel stressed. For example, Valdez (2015) pointed out that some professors do not differentiate between the needs of American and international students, and provide examples that may be understood by domestic students but not international students. Additionally, Chinese international students may not understand a reference to Dominos (a local American pizza chain) in a business lecture. When a lack of cultural awareness and understanding exists on both sides, many negative experiences between Chinese international students and American professors have been reported (Valdez, 2015).

Cultural Differences and Social Adjustment

Chinese culture is one of the longest lasting cultures in the world, and its people have thousands of years of engrained cultural practices that shape their world understanding. According to Yan and Berliner's (2011) description, China is a "non-European, developing, Eastern country" (p. 524). Due to its political ideology in both pre and post Mao eras, social background, and history, China has been isolated from the

world for a long time and has only relatively recently opened to extensive international interaction. This background can complicate the study abroad experience for Chinese international students more so than international students from other countries (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Because Chinese students have grown up in a socialist country with a centrally planned economic system and because they are highly influenced by the historical legacy of Confucianism in education, it may be harder for them to adapt to studying in American universities, whose roots lie in very different cultural traditions. According to Bodycott (2015), international students' social and academic attitudes and values are deeply influenced by their identity and the culture of their home country. Therefore, Chinese international students are dealing with at least two very different cultures while attending school abroad (Bodycott, 2015).

It is important for Chinese international students to have domestic friends from the U.S., because domestic students are a good resource of local culture and they can become a reliable source of support for international students in the hosting country. According to Korobova and Starobin (2015), international students sometimes need to establish social relationships to smooth acculturation. Based on Constantine and Sue (2005), international students who have close cross-cultural relationships with students from the U.S. demonstrate better cross-cultural adjustment; however, international students still consciously or unconsciously prefer to interact with people of the same ethnicity or with other international students. And establishing social connection is hard for domestic American students, as well. Williams and Johnson (2011) reported on a lack of "cross-cultural reciprocity" in American society, leading to insufficient cross-cultural interaction and an insufficient mutual understanding of differences between Chinese

international students and American students. Self-segregation is another kind of social isolation that is also a barrier for international students during their adjustment progress (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). Although there is great cultural and racial diversity in the U.S., different ethnic and cultural groups tend to segregate themselves by forming communities with people who share the same or a similar cultural backgrounds. Chinese international students are no exception to this self-segregation as they tend to stick with other Chinese or Asian students who have similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Lacking knowledge of local culture and values can be considered a hurdle to establishing friendships with domestic students. Chinese students' practices of friendship are also different from American students and can create misunderstanding when they attempt to become friends with domestic students. Indeed, American and Chinese students appear to have different meanings of friendship and different boundaries concerning closeness and privacy (Yan & Berliner, 2013). For example, Chinese students may expect to know everything about their friends and consider this to be closeness, while American students may value privacy more (Yan & Berliner, 2013). Yan and Berliner (2013) found that Chinese international students lacked knowledge of Americans' "culture, society and their way of life" (p. 74) and that this is a main reason why they have difficulty communicating with their American peers. The study further stated that most of the Chinese international students who participated reported that it was hard to have close friendships with American students because of this lack of general understanding (Yan & Berliner, 2013).

Having international students on campus is important for the U.S. higher education institutions as they offer a great contribution financially and culturally. According to Hegarty (2014), most universities realize the importance of having international students due to their financial contributions and the cultural diversity they bring. However, despite international students' importance to the U.S. higher education institutions, many needed support services for international students are still found to be lacking. Based on Korobova and Starobin's research (2015), the definition of educational satisfaction may differ for American students and international students. American students generally care more about customer service in school, while international students, due to their own cultures, tend not to focus on this (Korobova & Starobin, 2015). Thus, being assertive about their needs and desires at U.S. higher educational institutions likely presents challenges for international students.

Lack of Social Support

Before and after Chinese international students come to the U.S., family, especially the students' parents are the primary source of support, though the long distance and time difference often leads to challenges in families' ability to provide support at the moment of need. Williams and Johnson (2011) commented that the main challenge for international students was the lack of social support they faced. As seen above, challenges of acculturative stress such as language barriers and lack of connections make it difficult for Chinese students to find the support they need (Bertram, Poulakis, Elasser & Kumar, 2013). When Chinese international students arrived in a host country, they had left their comfort zone and social support system, and they also

experienced a short term of social disconnection (Cao, Zhu & Meng, 2017). According to Cho and Yu (2015), domestic students not only get support from the university, but they also get support from their family and friends. The support of family is extremely important to Chinese international students both financially and emotionally (He & Huston, 2018). However, international students lack a majority of their social support, as they are far from their home, do not have many close friends, and have limited language skills to express their needs. Yan and Berliner (2011) mentioned that social support can take different forms, such as support from people in the surrounding environment such as: friends, classmates, school counseling services, and people from church or other external social organizations. According to Olivas and Li (2006), when international students have personal problems they prefer to find their family and friends for help, not counselling services, because they lack understanding of the counseling and supports offered to them. According to Bertram et al. (2013), parents are the primary source of international students' support for their most important life decisions such as: high pressure, stress, and any important life events or financial related issues before they study abroad in the U.S.

For less significant life events, such as relationships and school work, Chinese international students usually turn to their friends (Bertram, Poulakis, Elasser & Kumar, 2013). When Chinese international students wish to contact close friends or relatives at home for help, the distance and time difference may not allow them to obtain immediate support. Bodycott (2015) indicated that individuals from the same country could offer co-national psychological support and socio-support. International students are less likely to seek counseling service when they are having mental health related problems (Olivas &

Li, 2006). Social support includes but is not limited to friendships with people from the host country (Williams & Johnson, 2011). These kinds of support networks can be considered the primary sources of social support for international students (Yan & Berliner, 2011). However, due to different individual characteristics and backgrounds, the available social support may not meet all student needs. It is very important to establish the co-national friendships, due to the difficulties of integrating to American local community at the beginning (Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018). Alternatively, students may prefer not to use the support offered, or they lack an understanding of the support offered and how to utilize it.

Financial Stress

Meeting the financial requirements by the USCIS and the hosting institution is also stressful or a potential challenge for Chinese international students and their family. Required by the USCIS, F1 student visa holders must have sufficient funds during their time of study in the U.S. Possessing a large sum of money ahead of time to pay for the entire course of study is a necessary condition for Chinese international students to enter the U.S. As Hegarty (2014) states, most international students need to provide financial statements as proof of being able to afford tuition and living expenses, or they will not be granted a visa to enter the U.S. This requirement may overwhelm the students who want to study abroad, but do not have enough funds. Many of the international students who are self-funded, or those not seeking financial reimbursement, can prove their ability to pay for tuition and living expenses.

Being an international student means if the student wants to maintain the legal student status, they cannot gain any other financial support through working off-campus. Yan and Berliner (2013) state that international students who hold F1 visas are not allowed to work off campus or apply for student loans in the U.S., because they are not U.S. citizens. Thus, to meet the requirements for applying for scholarships, international students must already have enough personal funds to support their study and living expenses, or they would not be in the U.S. in the first place. While the domestic peers of Chinese international students are able to have a part-time job off campus, Chinese international students are allowed only to find a job on-campus, which may not be readily available.

Furthermore, the exchange rate is different between the U.S. and other countries, so real costs for international students may fluctuate significantly, especially as tuition and living expenses rise during an international students' time of study in the U.S. This complicates matters further for international students, who are not allowed to find part-time jobs or work off-campus to lighten the financial burden on their families, as their financial situation changes during their time abroad. Scholarships for international students are always limited comparing to those available for U.S. students. Together, these circumstances may add to the financial stress for international students.

Application Difficulties

With limited access to worldwide search engines such as Google in China and limited knowledge of the primary resource of the hosting country's higher educational programs and their major program settings, choosing an appropriate school and major

suiting the students is hard for Chinese international students and their families. According to Hegarty (2014), the major challenge for international students is choosing where to go and study before they arrive in the U.S. According to Su and Harrison (2016), before Chinese international students go to the U.S., most students and their families have difficulties choosing a school. On the one hand, they do not know which school is best for the student, and on the other hand even if they know which school they want to go to, they lack first-hand knowledge of the university. For example, the requirement for international student admission may vary by different school year. Su and Harrison (2016) found that intermediary agencies in China often mismatch international students and American higher educational institutions. Additionally, Chinese international students tend to focus more on university rankings in their decision, sometimes regardless of other important aspects of the school.

Families sometimes prefer to spend money on agents in an intermediary agency or search information from translated webpages, so they can gain accurate information about a university. Sometimes, the intermediary agency cannot give accurate suggestions based on different individual students' needs, since they may recommend a university they have already sent the most Chinese international students to successfully.

Other Challenges, Stressors, and Difficulties

Some additional components are related to international students' study abroad satisfaction and their emotional challenges while abroad. Geary (2016) suggests that international students be required to enroll in one or two-year English as a second language (ESL), as well as universities should offer internships to American students that

would assist international students, and set up an international hall to promote communication between international students and local American students.

The challenge of getting a legal visa before Chinese international students come to the U.S. and after they graduate from the university are also considered stressors by most of Chinese international students. Yan and Berliner (2013) commented that Chinese international students must enroll full-time to maintain a valid F1 visa; however, every time they want to visit their home in China, they are afraid that their visa will be refused when they return to the U.S. for school. According to Yan and Berliner (2013), Chinese international students reported that they consider holding an F1 visa a disadvantage for them when attempting to find a job in the U.S. after they graduate from U.S. higher educational programs, since they have to worry if a company or institution will be willing to sponsor the international student to change their status from student visa holders (F1) to working visa holders (H-1B).

In accordance with deep-rooted cultural practices, Chinese international students make decisions based on filial piety (Pine, 2012). He and Huston (2018) indicated that cultural common sense of family obligation is critically important to Chinese students. According to Tang et al. (2018), with a culture of filial piety and one child policy, most Chinese international students' post-graduation decision-making process is highly influenced by their parents. Thus, Chinese parents' expectations usually have a huge impact on Chinese international students, yet they may not be the best decision makers for their child's future. They do not have much experience with the U.S. higher educational and academic settings (He & Huston, 2018).

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The study had two phases: survey and semi-structured interview. A survey was created to collect the participants' general demographic data and capture the patterns and trends of students' major challenges and stressors in their study abroad experience. This survey data can help UMSL improve its awareness of who its Chinese international students are and what their experiences at UMSL. A semi-structured interview method was also used in this study to collect more in-depth responses. The goal of using semi-structured interviews was to collect individualized and specific information in a flexible manner. This allowed the researcher to better understand the service supports that might benefit Chinese international undergraduate students.

Survey Phase

The survey consisted of forty-one questions. Questions collected demographic information and knowledge of services available on campus, if and when they used any services. A set of Likert type rating scale questions asked about their satisfaction with the services available at UMSL and their overall experience at UMSL. The researcher used Qualtrics to build the survey, which included study information and required informed consent so students could determine whether or not they chose to participate. A survey link was generated and ready to distribute to Chinese international undergraduate students' UMSL student email address.

The ISSS office created a full UMSL student email list of all Chinese international students currently enrolled in UMSL Fall 2018 semester. The full list

included undergraduate students, graduate students and some Chinese international students who were enrolled high school advanced credit courses. The researcher removed Chinese graduate students and Chinese students taking advanced credit courses, as they did not meet the criteria of the study. Eighty-two Chinese students remained on the email list. Since the researcher is a Chinese native speaker, all questions and selections were presented to the students in both English and Chinese. The students chose what language they preferred to answer the survey. The participants received an email with Qualtrics survey link sent by ISSS staff to their UMSL student email. The ISSS office was helpful in sending out emails of introduction concerning the survey, verifying the researcher was a graduate student at UMSL, and sending a reminder about the survey. When students opened the link, the students were prompted to consent to their involvement in the survey. If they did not agree, the survey was automatically closed. All participation was voluntarily. The survey took about eight to fifteen minutes to complete.

The final question asked if the participant would like to participate in a follow up interview. By clicking “Yes”, they were prompted to leave their contact information. By clicking “No”, their survey responses were recorded and the survey page was closed automatically.

Semi-Structured Interview Phase

For the semi-structured interviews, a list of open-ended questions was created in both Chinese and English to guide the interview. These questions were designed to gather more individualized understanding and in-depth information of participants’ background and their experiences at UMSL. One semi-structured interview was conducted during the

Fall 2018 semester. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese according to the participants' preferences (See Appendix B). The researcher asked the permission to record the interview; all participants agreed. The interview was approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. Interviews were transcribed in Chinese. The entire interview was recorded and transcribed in Chinese.

Before conducting the analysis, the researcher invited the participants to review their interview transcripts and to make corrections if errors were found. Participants had the choice of using their real names or pseudonyms. The researcher sent an email of the transcript to the participants, then the participants got the chance to decide which part of their transcript would be included in the data analysis. They also were reminded about the ways in which data could be shared (e.g., direct quotations in dissertation, dissertation presentation and research report). The researcher analyzed the interview transcription and highlighted the participants' responses describing their experiences. During the process of analyzing the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was better able to understand participants' backgrounds, decision making, and academic and social experiences before and after coming to UMSL.

Participation

Forty (nearly 50%) Chinese international undergraduate students participated in the survey phase. All were from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Macaw and Taiwan), were age eighteen and older and were enrolled in the Fall 2018 semester as bachelor degree seekers. Of that number, three students chose to participate in the

interview phase. These students recruited an additional two students for the interview phase. These two additional students had participated in the survey.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Survey Findings and Analysis

After three weeks of survey data collection, forty valid responses were collected from the eighty-two Chinese undergraduate students--a 48.8% response rate. The data provides a broad overview of this population and their reasons for attending UMSL, study abroad experiences and knowledge of and use of service and overall satisfaction with their UMSL experience.

Demographics

Table 1 shows the demographic information, frequency, and percentage of the participants, including gender, age, year at UMSL and area of study while attending at UMSL. More male students (62.5%) took the survey than female students (37.5%). All participants were age eighteen and older; most individuals were twenty years and older. Over 82.5% of participants were at their junior and senior year of study. A majority of participants were seeking degrees in the College of Business Administration (67.5%), or the College of Arts and Sciences (25.0%). Only one of the participant was in the College of Education and none of the participants were seeking degrees from the College of Nursing and College of Optometry.

Table 1

Survey Participants' Demographic Data

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		

Male	25	62.5
Female	15	37.5
Total	40	100.0

Age

18	0	0
19	1	2.5
20	10	25
21	12	30
Older	17	42.5
Total	40	100.0

Year at UMSL

Freshmen	3	7.5
Sophomore	4	10.0
Junior	14	35.0
Senior	19	47.5
Total	40	100.0

College

Arts and Sciences	10	25.0
Nursing	0	0

Business Admin.	27	67.5
Education	1	2.5
Optometry	0	0
Missing	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Decision to Go to UMSL

A multiple choice question asks the participants about the reason they choose UMSL (See Figure1).

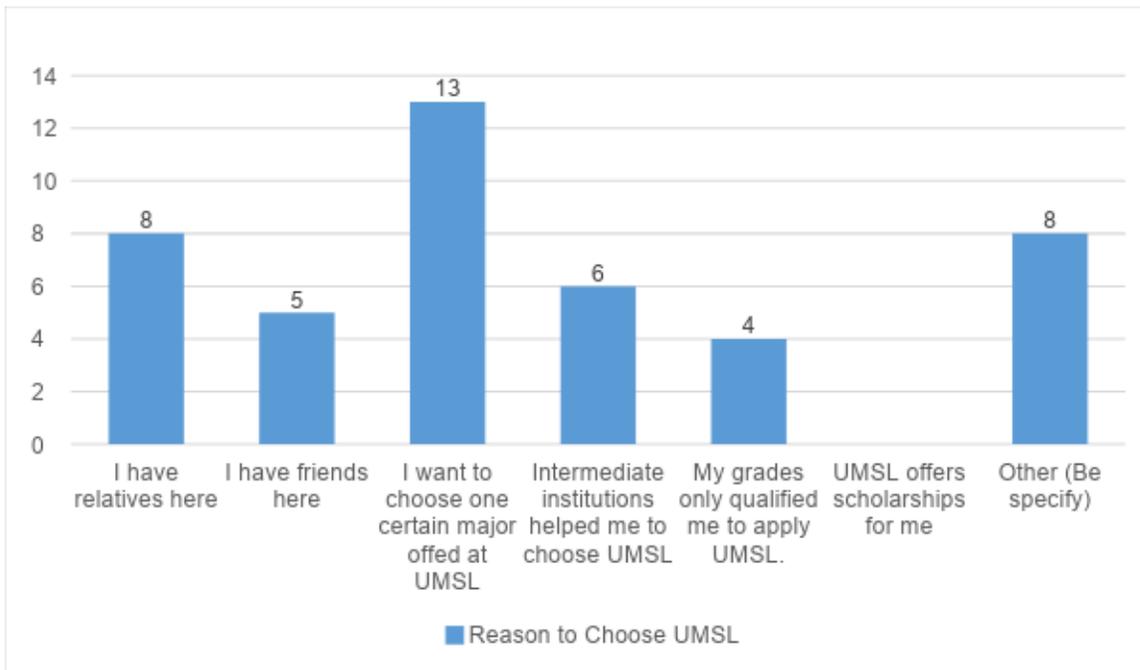


Figure 1. Reason to Choose UMSL

Choosing a certain major, participating joint program and having relatives and friends in the St. Louis region are the top reasons for Chinese international students

studying at UMSL. Knowing someone in the area ranked the highest to study at UMSL when relatives and friends categories are combined. The most popular answer with participants (thirteen) was for a particular major. Eight participants who selected other, further elaborated that they were part of a “2+2 joint program” between UMSL and a university in China. In the “2+2 joint program” Chinese international students spend the first two years’ of study in China, and another two years’ of study at UMSL. Six participants followed the recommendation of an intermediary agency’s suggestion to attend UMSL. Four participants found that UMSL was the only university that accepted their English language scores. No participants attended UMSL because they had received any scholarship from UMSL. Together this data suggests, UMSL might market in St. Louis Chinese community; develop relationships with intermediary agencies helping Chinese students to select a U.S. college and create more “2+2 joint programs”.

Study Abroad Experiences

Twenty-six scale-rating questions attempted to measure participants’ experiences, stresses, and challenges. The researcher categorized questions into six different categories: academic, support, social connection, living, cultural adjustment and finances. Participants were asked to rate statements on a 4-point Likert scale: 1= Fully Disagree, 2= Partially Disagree, 3= Partially Agree and Fully Agree.

Table 2 indicates the data on their responses. Across the six categories, several observations are possible. Generally, students report positive experiences; the data also suggest areas of student experience that may benefit from greater institutional awareness and support. In Academics, the mean of six questions was 3.10. Two questions revealed

that the participants found a greater challenge in following lectures and participating in group discussions. The mean of the two questions on Supports was 2.73, with students ranking their satisfaction with food was lower. The mean of Social Connection was 2.78. Participants expressed having more challenges in making friends with students from the U.S. and participating in their activities, than making co-national friends or friends from different countries. The mean of Living experiences equaled 2.71. The participants found they had less stress in finding good housing and roommates, than in using public transportation. The mean of two questions on Cultural Adjustment was 3.08. Finances created the most stress and challenge for students with a survey low mean of 2.64. Most participants found it challenging of not having an on-campus job and scholarship during their study abroad experience. Participants also found challenges on affording a car. Nevertheless, the results show the participants' family can afford the tuition and the participants were less stressful on getting the U.S. visa.

Table 2

Rating of experience and adjustment

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Academic				
I can follow the professor's lectures.	2.00	4.00	2.92	0.61
I have adjusted to the new academic system quickly.	1.00	4.00	3.10	0.74
I am able to finish homework on time.	1.00	4.00	3.50	0.81
I feel comfortable participating in class				

discussion and asking questions.	1.00	4.00	2.70	0.81
I can follow the class schedule offered by university, select by myself.	2.00	4.00	3.27	0.63
Supports				
I have found different kinds of support available on campus.	1.00	4.00	2.87	0.72
I enjoy the food offered on campus.	1.00	4.00	2.17	0.80
I'm satisfied with the service offered by the faculty and staff.	2.00	4.00	3.15	0.65
Social connection				
I have made a lot of Chinese friends.	2.00	4.00	3.02	0.69
I have made a lot of international friends from other countries.	1.00	4.00	3.03	0.80
I have made a lot of friends from the U.S.	1.00	4.00	2.77	0.85
I feel welcome here.	1.00	4.00	2.82	0.75
I participate in the activities, events and parties hold by Americans	1.00	4.00	2.25	0.97
Living				
I find living arrangement I wanted.	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.81
I found a nice roommate.	1.00	4.00	3.17	0.83
I understand the American medical system.	1.00	4.00	2.5	0.79
I get enough sleep.	1.00	4.00	2.92	0.88

I have a specific career goal after graduation.	1.00	4.00	2.60	0.92
I can use the public transportation to any place.	1.00	4.00	2.10	0.97
Cultural adjustment				
I have adjusted myself to the new culture environment quickly.	2.00	4.00	3.13	0.64
I understand American cultural values.	2.00	4.00	3.02	0.61
Financial				
I /My family can afford the tuition.	2.00	4.00	3.13	0.64
I got my visa easily.	1.00	4.00	3.60	0.62
I have a scholarship.	1.00	4.00	1.68	1.08
I have a job on campus.	1.00	4.00	1.79	1.04
I can afford a vehicle and related fees.	1.00	4.00	2.98	0.76

Services

Two questions asked about participants' knowledge and use of services; another asked when they learned of those services. Only 7.5% participants knew of particular services and help available before they came to the U.S., and 27.5% participants discovered them during orientation. Most participant (65%) indicated they would not seek help and support until they really need to. Students were most familiar with: Recreation and Wellness Center (85.0%); Campus Shuttle Service (75.0%); Triton Store (72.5%); Academic Advising (70.0%); Metro Pass System (67.5%). Students were least familiar with: Emergency Vehicle Service (7.5%); Student Enrichment and Achievement

Service (17.5%); Disability Access Service (17.5%); Net Tutor (20.0%); Counselling Service (22.5%).

The top five service used by the participants were: Recreation and Wellness Center (72.5%), Campus Shuttle Service (60.0%), Academic Advising (60.0%), The Triton Store (52.5%) and Metro Pass System (45.0%). The least five services actually used by the participants were: Student Enrichment and Achievement Service (2.5%), Emergency Vehicle Service (2.5%), Counselling Service (2.5%), Disability Access Service (5.0%) and Net Tutor Service (7.5%).

Overall Satisfaction

The last survey question asked about the participants' satisfaction of the service available at UMSL and their study abroad experience. Most participants confirmed they were satisfied with their study abroad experience (See Table 3). Participants were asked to rate the statements on a 4-point Likert scale: 1= Overall Not Satisfy, 2= Partially Satisfy, 3= Mostly Satisfy and 4= Absolute Satisfy. While a majority of participants were satisfied with their academic related and social cultural experiences in the U.S at UMSL, the living experience was lower. Strikingly, the mean of academic, social connection and living experience were all lower than the mean of overall experience.

Table 3

Overall Satisfaction

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Academic related experience (taking class, exam, doing homework, learning style, teacher-student relationship,	2.00	4.00	2.90	0.62

academic language.)				
Social cultural related field experience. (making American friends, participate the social events, celebrate domestic festival, understand local value.)	1.00	4.00	2.83	0.77
Living experience. (Housing, banking, spending, entertaining, dining and shopping transportation.)	1.00	4.00	2.67	0.69
Overall experience of study abroad.	2.00	4.00	3.02	0.65

Interview Phase

The semi-structured interview guide was created based on the literature reviewed (See Appendix B). Five survey participants volunteered for interviews. Two of the participants were in their junior year, and three participants were in their senior year. The participants were two females and three males. The researcher completed five interviews in one week at mutually agreeable times. The follow up interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to better understand in a more in-depth way the individual and collective challenges Chinese international undergraduate students faced. For example, the survey shows the trend that the survey participants were mostly junior and senior students who may have already spent three to four years at UMSL. During the interviews, students explained that many of the challenges they faced initially were no longer that difficult. The researcher asked them to discuss both their current experiences and recall their memories of their first year at UMSL, including their transition experiences to the new social-cultural and

academic environment, their personal solutions and the help or service they sought.

The interviews helped personalize patterns in survey data. Ren was a junior majoring in actuarial science in the College of Arts and Sciences. He came to the U.S. because he has relatives living in St. Louis; he and his family decided UMSL would provide a better education compared to his choice in China. Wei, a senior accounting major, also had relatives in St. Louis and underachieved on the university entrance exam. UMSL provided her a better choice than her option in China. Shi was a junior majoring in Finance in the College of Business. Both of his parents are running business, and his sister was one of the international students at UMSL. His sister recommended UMSL to Shi, and his parents suggested Shi to study abroad to be more competitive when he finally graduates and goes back to China. Ma was a senior who took the Chinese intermediary agent's advice to study at UMSL. His situation was also complicated by the fact that he was unable to take the university entrance exam in China. Although he was originally from another province, he and his family had moved to Beijing. Chinese education policy would not permit him to take the university entrance exam in Beijing, only in his hometown. He was drawn to UMSL specifically for the top-ranked Criminology major and the university's low TOEFL score requirement. Wang is a senior majoring in Business Administration. She was born in a small city in China. She came to the U.S. for summer camp and decided she wanted to return for study abroad. A joint program between her college in China and UMSL made it more affordable to do so. Before she attended the university. She has a strong desire to study in the U.S. So, studying abroad was her own decision and it was a joint program between her college in China and UMSL, so she had little choice but to come study at UMSL.

Most of Chinese international students came to the U.S. after they graduated from high school in China. In this study, two participants had already taken the university entrance exam before coming to the U.S., but they were not satisfied with their results. Three participants had not taken the university entrance exam, but only prepared for it. They applied with their high school transcript, and either their English exam TOEFL or IELTS. All the participants mentioned the difficulties of taking the university entrance exam and their hopes to be more competitive in Chinese job markets by attending a U.S. university. Four students followed their family, especially their parents' suggestions to study abroad.

The researcher identified the deciding factors for Chinese international students to study abroad especially in St. Louis at UMSL. Compared with university entrance exam in China, UMSL seemed easier to apply to and offered better educational resources. Participant Ma explained that he needed to avoid the challenge caused by non-Beijing residency. It was the major reason for him to study abroad. He explained, *"I was born in Shanxi, but I grew up in Beijing. My family was trying to apply to become Beijing residents, but the policy had changed, I now had to take the university entrance exam in Shanxi. Compared to Beijing residents, I needed a sky high score to attend a university in Beijing, because of the policy."* With options in Beijing, his father gave him two options. *"I could go back to Shanxi and take the university exam in Shanxi, or I could choose to study abroad in the U.S."* Wei also described difficulties with the exam: *"The university entrance exam was so hard! But, applying to an American university you just need a language score or to take the SAT exam, compared to the university entrance exam, applying to an American university is easier."* Additionally, her parents wanted her to

study abroad and learn more during college, because *“To many Chinese, American higher education is better than the Chinese higher education programs. Most people work hard before they take the university entrance exam, but after they go to the university, some of the students just waste their time at the university.* The challenges of university entrance exam in comparison to good academic resources in the U.S. pushed students, who were eager for quality academic resources to study abroad at UMSL. Though it meant they would face another set of challenges to study abroad, they reported that the experience has been worth it.

Connections to Literature Review

There are several key findings from this research study that confirmed literature reviewed, such as language barriers (Yan & Berliner, 2013); cultural differences leading to the challenges of building connections with domestic students (Wang, Tian, Fujiki & Bordon, 2017; Korobova & Starobin, 2015); lack of their usual social supports (Betram, Poulakis, Elasser & Kumar, 2013); and the challenges and stressors brought by academics (Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018), such as international student-faculty interaction (Roy, 2013; Valdez, 2015). Though the interviewees also identified issues such as lack of parking, lack study hours at library, discomfort with food, and discomfort with public transportation (He & Hutson, 2018). These challenges and difficulties may have been faced by both international students and domestic students, so the researcher does not discuss them in depth here.

Language Related Challenges and Stress

Although the Chinese students interviewed started learning English as a foreign language during kindergarten, participants still considered English as one of the most serious barriers during their study abroad experiences. UMSL will admit students with lower scores TOEFL or IELTS score compared with other schools with higher national ranking, UMSL has a lower admission English requirement for international admissions. And indeed, this was one of the major reasons interviewees gave for applying to UMSL. Ma explained UMSL's lower language requirement was one of the key reasons he applied

“My English was not good when I was in high school. I wanted to learn criminology, but then my father had a friend who was running an intermediary institution. The intermediary agent helped me find several schools. Only UMSL had a decent ranking in the criminology major with a low language requirement, that's the reason why I chose UMSL. So I just studied and prepared for the English exam, then I got a high enough score and got the offer. I didn't learn English for almost half a year before I came to the U.S.”

Furthermore, standardized language scores do not measure students' oral and listening fluency. English level, only an English transcript can prove English proficiency for Chinese international students coming to the U.S. Both Shi and Ma commented that when they first came to the U.S. they couldn't understand UMSL student volunteer at the airport.

Two participants took TOFEL or IELTS tests to apply for UMSL, but they were conditionally admitted and required to attend the English Language School (ELS), an organization which has a cooperation with UMSL. They took classes through ELS until they met the language level requirements and could officially take the college major related courses. Each month an exam is offered. Students continue with this study until

they reach the required level. For some students this may mean an additional month of study; for others it may mean an additional year of study. Shi shared his experience of attending language school before he actually attends UMSL. *“My sister was attending UMSL, so I knew I would apply to UMSL in the future, but my language score wasn’t high enough to attend UMSL. So I used my high school transcripts and applied to the language school after I could pass the TOFEL IBT (Internet Based Test) and get a high enough score, then I could go to UMSL. I spent nine months in the language school.”*

Although students pay additional tuition for these classes, they do have an upside. Wei indicated they helped with her transition to the American teaching and learning style, helped her build connections with other international student from China and other countries.

Even students that got a high enough English score struggled the challenges of accents in speaking and listening. Wei’s experience was harder than she imagined. *“At the beginning, even though they were saying a very simple word I had learned before, the pronunciation was different from what I had learned in China, so I wasn’t able to understand the questions or conversations between the instructor and the students.”* She struggled with following the lectures or having conversations, since she could not fully understand her peers, and they could not understand her. *“My pronunciation was not good,”* she explained, *“so the instructor and classmates could not understand me, either. Every time I was guessing the meaning. I didn’t have smooth communication with others. And I didn’t make a lot of friends who spoke English, because I’m not confident with my English. It was embarrassing, but I couldn’t understand them, and they could not understand me.”* Wang had similar experiences during her group discussion:

“Once I grouped with two American students for a group discussion in class, I was trying my best to explain what I wanted to do for the projects and my ideas, such as the format or structure of our PowerPoint. After 5 minutes, I remember one of the group members asked to another one ‘do you understand what she said?’ Then the other group member said ‘No!’. So at that point, I realized that my English capacity was limited, so during that time I was trying to be polite, because everyone is polite, no one will point out your English is not good in a direct and straight way, but their reaction such as the expression in their eyes, sign language or a small tiny movement, I understand these behind their polite. And I don't want to cause any trouble to others such as keep bothering others with small tiny (I think) things.”

In this case, language barriers caused a student psychological distress as feelings of embarrassment and worries of bothering others, or giving bad impressions to others, caused a lack in confidence. This feels particularly embarrassing for Chinese students accustomed to the Chinese cultural importance of maintaining face. These series of consequences caused by language barriers may influence Chinese international students’ satisfaction of their study abroad experience, especially in their academic performance and their social connection to local society or intramural activities.

International students encountered unfamiliar content, professional vocabulary, and terminology that contributed to their stress. Ren described this as a challenge during a psychology course in his freshman year. *“I realized that, if everything can be translated into Chinese, it is very easy for me. But when it is in English, and there are so many terms specific to psychology, it was very hard for me to understand. Even though I read a lot of books and searched a lot, and took a lot of notes, I still couldn’t understand.”*

Because students have to spend more time learning the new vocabulary and looking up the meanings, Chinese international student need to spend more time than the native speakers to do the homework and readings.

Even though the participants studied English before and after they came to the U.S., American slang and idioms contained in local culture caused additional challenges for Chinese international students. Wang made her own decision to study abroad at a young age and spent a lot of time learning and picking up English from movies and shows *“Before I came to the U.S”* she explained, *“I never gave up learning English in any kind of format, such as studying in class and watching American movies and TV shows. So I have the confidence in my listening comprehension and oral speaking English.”* However, she shared during the interview that, *“when I took the first class at UMSL I couldn’t comprehend the professor’s lecture.”* Ren explained further, *“English native speakers usually express things in a more idiomatic approach, for example, they would use some slang or phases. For non-native speakers, that idiomatic way is really hard to understand and we need more time to study. Sometimes, the latest pop-culture creates these new terms.”* When the instructors or domestic American students expressed themselves, or gave illustrations including slangs or idiom, it potentially left Chinese international students behind, as it is hard for them to grasp the meaning immediately, they guess from the context, or they fail understand. When this kind of loss accumulates, this is hard for international students, because they can’t stay on the same page as the other students.

This confirmed the findings from the study conducted by Heng (2018) that three fourths of the Chinese international student participants emphasize the needs of being prepared linguistically and culturally before they come to the U.S. academic and socio-cultural environment. Heng’s (2018) participants also studied English and attempted to pick it up in movies, as Wang had. Despite their efforts, Heng’s (2018) participants still

found it difficult to transition to the U.S. social cultural environment and academic environment. However, the academic culture and structure of lectures usually are not covered in the American movies or TV shows, so it is hard to gain an understanding of the academic culture, academic expectations and academic terminology by this method. This finding also suggests students' discomfort on the exposure in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

Social Connections

The participants shared that they made Chinese friends (co-national friends), local friends (domestic from America) and friends from other countries (other international students from other countries). Many participants mentioned that they made their first friend while attending UMSL's orientation, so students' earliest friends were other international students. The orientation for international students and domestic students were separated. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) discussed this in their article, as they found out that incoming international and domestic students are having different orientations, and most connections between international students and students from other countries happened during the school's initial orientation. (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). After the orientation with other international students, most Chinese international students did not meet domestic students until they were grouped to in-class projects. When they grouped together for projects. Ma, Shi and Ren mentioned they made friends through sports, as they can play the sports such as basketball and volleyball together.

This study confirmed Bodycott's (2015) idea that when Chinese international student come to the U.S. they have to deal with at least two different cultures at the same time

creating stress for Chinese students who are concerned about offending others from different cultures. Ren struggled to find the words to explain his worries about being offensive:

“I can’t define this as difficulty, but is just a kind of worry and concern. I’m Chinese and I’m in the U.S., but my way of thinking or understanding is still in Chinese., I formed my thoughts or perceptions in a Chinese way, or more Asian way, and that is my lens to understand what I am seeing. I think I will have a better understanding if you are Japanese or Korean. But for people from other countries and from the U.S., what I said and what they said, what was my reaction of one certain thing or what is there reaction to one certain thing, for example when I say something, and if they react with surprise or shocking, I will consider that am I just offended him? Or he may afraid to share something with me.”

Shi brought up the idea that *“Communication difficulties and language difficulties are two separate concepts. For communication difficulties a majority lies in the difficulty of understanding the cultural and environmental surroundings. While, language difficulties are basically I cannot understand your words and the meaning based on the cultural background.”* He outlined several ways that he felt uncomfortable to continue a conversation with domestic American student,

“I think communicating with a foreigner (American and other international students from other countries) is very challenging, because I don’t use their way of thinking. Maybe it will get better later on if I communicate more with them, but I’m not the person who likes to contact others. If we cannot find a comfortable topic to continue, it will be embarrassing and hard. For example, if I don’t know what you are talking about, you don’t know me, or you bring up some questions or topics that make me feel uncomfortable. So to avoid this kind of embarrassing scenario, I prefer to make friends with people that we can have comfortable conversations.”

Students’ psychological discomforts remind the researcher to focus more on students’ thoughts and their behaviors. There is no doubt that Chinese international student really care about others opinions, reactions and they are afraid to be offensive.

Guided with this assumption, they are afraid to communicate with their peers; they reported that this impacts their level of social connection with domestic students.

Discomfort with Academic Settings and Teach-Learning Styles

Students describe challenges transition from Chinese academic setting to U.S. teaching and learning practices. The U.S. education emphasizes more critical thinking; however, the Chinese education requires more memorizing; these are ingrained expectations by the time students reach college. Chinese education requires six-years of primary school education, and three-years of junior high school education, and three years of senior high before the National Higher Education Entrance Exam. Chinese education is teacher-centered and exam-oriented; all the students were taught to respect the teachers (Zhu, 2016). Chinese students get used to the teaching-learning style that emphasizes lecture and does not encourage students' questions. For example, there are many questions in different disciplines which have their own standard answers. If a student's answer is not the standard answer, it probably will be considered as a wrong answer. All participants shared that this was their experience in China.

The relationship between teacher and students is also different in the U.S. The U.S. instructor usually encourages students to actively think about the question, come up with new questions, and find a way to solve the questions together with students. Even though the professor and the instructor are still the leader of the classroom, they require more discussion. It is more likely student centered and the professor or the instructor guides the students to think. According to Pine (2012), teachers asked fewer questions and had less wait time for thinking in China.

All participants enjoyed the teaching and learning style and classroom atmosphere in the U.S., but adjusting to this kind of style was not easy. It presented itself to be stressful for international students, as the professor may give illustrations, which were known by most American students, but the rest of the international students did not know. They may need more time to understand the meaning of a certain term. They cannot give a real time response immediately in class or during their daily communications.

Shi shared his experience and psychological movement when he was in a classroom, he comments that,

“When the professor come up with a question, I really want to say something to show my understanding like other American students, but I needed time to think about the question. However, I realized that I did not have any idea. American students seemingly can answer all different kinds of questions in a short time, I really appreciate their ideas, they always have good ideas.”

Many participants brought up that they struggled with the different kinds of classes and homework assignments such as taking several quizzes, exams, and giving presentations in front of everyone. They also brought up that the grading system in the U.S. higher education program is more developed and specific. While most grading systems the participants experienced before they came to the U.S. focused more on the final grades, Ren commented that,

“My friends who are attending Chinese universities, they concentrate more on the final grades, if they are not planning to study abroad after they graduate from a Chinese university, they don't have to worry about GPA. For example, if a final exam's full marks are 100, they just need to achieve 60 to pass that class. But in the U.S., most professors will consider a comprehensive evaluation to evaluate students' academic performance, such as quizzes, presentations, attendance, in-class participation, assignments and exams. So it is difficult to achieve or maintain a good GPA. I believe that this is stressful.”

Ma affirmed the difference on the way grades are given: *“In China, the Chinese teacher can give you a lower grade, because your thought is considered wrong, however, I found that American teachers won’t judge your thoughts, but they will give a lower grade if you didn’t give enough evidence to support your idea.”* The participants mentioned that compared with English native speaker, they have to study harder to achieve an ideal grade. This affirmed Tang et al. (2018) that the academic requirements is more stringent than China.

Organization of courses and class meetings were also difficult. Students initially struggled with the syllabus. “Syllabus” was a new term and using it to organize learning and homework was a new experience. They had a hard time finding the homework and following the way their professor’s preferred the homework to be done. Both Wei and Wang mentioned that they had a hard time with reading the syllabus and figuring out where the homework was located, and how to make their homework meet the requirements. Wang related that,

“When I first came here, I didn’t realize that the homework is online. I was considering that I don’t have homework in college, so I was happy every day and didn’t do any homework. When I received the first warning and failed the evaluation, I talked to my professors, some professors allowed me to make up my homework because they understand I’m an international student and English was not my first language, and that was my first term. However, some of my professors didn’t give me the chance to makeup, so I had to fail and take that class again.”

Wang added that she was lost at the beginning, she was thinking of giving up, however, another Chinese senior classmate helped her to learn how to read the syllabus and where to find the homework. This confirmed the importance of co-national support, that the support from their peers or senior classman who came from the same country with the participants (Tang, Collier & Witt, 2018).

Wei comment on the heavy course load for Chinese international students that was so stressful and lead to mistakes,

“I remember the first year, the instructor asked us to do a reading response, I was so slow and I ran out of time. So I looked up to other people’s reading response online, and copied most of them to guarantee I can turn my homework in on time. Then my instructor for that class reported me to the university that I violated the academic honesty policy. Then I discovered that I can’t directly copy other’s work. Someone also helped me with the way to quote other’s work to avoid plagiarism. I think I need to arrange my time properly to finish the homework on time. But it was too much.”

When Wei shared this experience, she felt embarrassed, because her goal was finishing the homework on time. Her behavior was seriously violating the academic honesty policy. The standard of the class and homework assignments were hard, which is time consuming to meet the goal mentioned in the syllabus. All the due dates are a good way to push students to finish their work on time. But some assignments are time consuming and hard for both native speakers and international students. Completing on-time and doing the homework in their foreign language makes the assignments harder. Heavy course loads can’t be an excuse to violate the academic honesty policy, but it is really stressful for Chinese international students to face a heavy course load and to maintain full time legal status. Most participants really care about their GPA and letter grade, because it reveals they are working hard during the semester, and it is important for them if they plan to continue study in the U.S.

Wang emphasized the stress on her GPA, because of the unfamiliarity with the syllabus, she didn’t do the homework, so she didn’t get good GPA and she failed some classes,

“I didn’t do the homework and I failed some classes. At that time, I lived with fear, I was afraid my GPA would fall below a 2.0 and UMSL would

persuade me to quit. And because of this, I am supposed to graduate this semester, but I can't. I really want to go to graduate school, but my GPA is too low."

Financial stress from tuition and living expense and family

"Stress" is such a small word to describe the participants' anxieties about study abroad expenses. All participants are personally funded without any scholarships. Families contribute a large proportion of their incomes to support their child's study abroad living expenses and tuition. They need to provide personal bank statements to prove that they have enough funding. U.S. and UMSL policies require that families must have this money in advance of the enrollment. Wang explained: *"My family doesn't have enough cash flow and is supporting me with family savings. My tuition is way higher than my father's salary. If I use up the money, we don't have money to pay."* Only one participant did not have any stress or worry about the family funding. The rest of the participants all expressed their desire for an on campus job or scholarship to take the financial burden from their family. Some of the participants have an on-campus job to cover part of the living expenses. But they earn far less than expected. Yan and Berliner (2013) also mentioned that it is illegal for international students to work off campus with F1 visa.

Most students are afraid of failing classes, because it will not only hurt their GPA, but also requires student to retake the class, which means they need to spend more tuition and living expenses during that time. Failing is not an option for international students, because it is expensive and to maintain full time legal status. To maintain full-time legal status, international students cannot reduce their course load to reduce academic pressure; they must be full-time students enrolled in at least twelve credit hours per semester. Shi

also commented that *“Financial stress is not directly to me; it is directly to my parents.”* Most Chinese parents would do everything for their children to get a better education, and to have the opportunity for them to access a more social capital. This kind of expectation is also a great source of stress for our participants. *“I get on very well with my parents,”* Shi continued, *“but they always mention don’t spend too much money or study hard don’t fail any class.”* Wang also related *“when I fail one class, it means I have to pay the tuition, non-resident fee and living expense again. One day my father said, he doesn’t care about how much I spend, he hopes he has enough money to support me till graduate. At that time, I wished I could win the lottery then I would have a lot of money to support my study abroad expenses.”* Compared with the participants’ peers who choose to remain in China, international students need to spend more of their parents’ money on their study abroad expenses. The tuition is not a stable rate as it raises every year.

As described in the former language section, Shi and Wei went to the ELS for extra course to meet the English requirements. All the courses they took in the ELS were non-credit classes that will not count towards their degree progress. This means the participants who have to take extra courses in language have to spend more time and money on tuition, living expenses, and time compare to the students who got a high enough English test score to be admitted to UMSL.

Wei shared her most recent dilemma with financial stress, *“Last summer, my parents gave me the money for the new semester, but I didn’t have good control of my money, so after I paid the tuition, I realized I don’t have enough money. At that time, I was so stressed with my financial status. I was thinking to find a part-time job off*

campus, but that's illegal, I can't do that.” Even when the U.S. higher education programs offer paid on campus employment, the positions are limited and open to domestic students as well. Different interviewing conventions between China and the U.S. may disadvantage Chinese applicants. Ma mentioned that he joined one group interview for a gym reception position, however, he described the group interview as a “weird experience”, because the interviewer asked some questions not relevant to the job position and quickly informed him that he was out. Due to the different cultural background, the researcher believed Ma’s “weird experience” was caused by his different cultural expectations of interviews. The on-campus interview may look for students’ other competences, but the participants are unfamiliar with American open-ended interview questions.

Other Findings

Besides the findings confirmed in the challenge and stress categories revealed in the reviewed literatures, there were some less significant but pretty common findings shared by most of the Chinese international students. Most participants presented both positive and negative perceptions before they study abroad in the U.S. (Bertram, Poulakis, Elasser & Kumar, 2013). At the beginning of this study, most participants shared that reality of the U.S. was partially different from their impression before they came to the U.S. Because the TV shows and the news reports always showing the larger cities in the U.S., such as New York and Los Angeles, the impression of the U.S. is mostly the impression of those large cities in the U.S. Even though St. Louis area is an urban city it is even different from where the participants used to live, such as Beijing and even some second-

tier city in China.

All the participants commented on the inconvenience of public transportation and their discomfort with local food. The majority of complaints regarding public transportation were that it was time consuming, and that finding connections to places they wanted to go from UMSL was challenging. Students preferred an Asian diet habit. These two findings confirmed the findings by He and Hutson (2018) that Chinese international students discomfort with the American style food service and the lacking of public transportations. Food offered by the cafeteria is American style such as pizza, burgers and sandwiches, and Americanized Asian food. All the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with food served in the cafeteria. Compared with Asian diet, they founded it unhealthy and less tasty. The price is also higher than similar off-campus food, and absolutely more expensive than cooking for themselves. Most participants gain weight after they eat frequently at the cafeteria on campus.

Other campus services are available to international students, who have higher needs for academic and social supports, as we have seen above. The most frequently used resource reported by participants are the library, gym, academic advising, ISSS, and parking. Participants discovered some of these resources during the orientation, but the orientation was given in English, which was challenging for new coming non-native speakers. Consequently, participants did not know some service that might help them. Shi mentioned that, *“I attended the orientation when I came to UMSL, however, this is my third year here, but the first I have known about some of the services was from your survey. I think UMSL should spend more time trying to find an effective way to help Chinese international students to seek and use the service available to all the students.”*

The support services were available, but this was not always known by the participants.

Sometimes, the participants preferred to rely on themselves, because, they thought the support services were useless, and did not meet their personal needs. Ren commend that, *“I wasn’t able to understand the lecture during class, so I turned to the tutor or teaching assistant. I was trying to make a difference, to adjust myself to the new academic environment. But, I didn’t get right support, so I felt like I didn’t want to seek help again. So next time I became more independent.”* Ma shared his experience with academic advising services on campus, *“I tried to seek help from academic advisors, my major was criminology and minor in Japanese. The first advisor they assigned to me didn’t give me any advice, he just asked me ‘what do you want to enroll in?’ That was not helpful at all. But I was lucky I met another conscientious academic advisor, he helped me make a planner that helped me to take classes properly and meet my needs.”*

Finally, some Chinese international students wish to access the library on campus and study for longer periods of time than it is open. Ma gave an example of that Washington University has a place for students to study overnight. But UMSL campus closes early and the study spots are limited. Concerns about safety were mentioned especially on south campus near the Metro station. China has banned gun ownership, so Chinese students never have to worry about gun shootings and violence. Some of the participants were afraid to take the public transportation, because of reports of robberies and violence. Ren shared his feeling of the fear of the safety issue, *“Most American campus are open to the public, not only college students can come to the campuses. An ideal situation is we would be open to the public, other people could come and visit, or attend to the events then leave. But if they are armed with a gun or other weapons, you*

never know what going to happen, I saw many bad news on the news, so I'm afraid some day in the future this will happen to us."

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study. First, only 50.0% students responded to the survey, so there is another 50.0% students who did not share the challenges and stress they faced. There might be challenges and stress that the study did not identify. Second, the majority of participants were in their junior and senior year. They may no longer face the same challenges and stressors as they did in their freshman and sophomore year, and they may not have a full memory of them. Third, the experience of Chinese international students at their freshman year and sophomore year are also important, and should be sought in the future. Only five participants participated in the survey phase, thus making their personal experiences limited in generalizability to all Chinese students' study at UMSL.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the increasing number of Chinese students studying in the United States and University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL)’s desire to recruit additional students, more discussion about the challenges and stress faced by Chinese international students and how to better support them at UMSL is valuable. This study has sought to add to that discussion. In the survey data and semi-structured interviews, several patterns of student experiences emerged. Chinese undergraduates experienced challenges and stress associated with language barriers both in academic settings and outside of class, suggesting difficulties in building domestic social connections and participating in campus events. Besides language, the challenge of meeting the U.S. academic requirements, difficulties adjusting to U.S. style teaching and classroom and course organization exacerbated their difficulties. The vast differences between Chinese and U.S. academic culture and policies, with Chinese students primarily memorizing correct answers and discouraged from creative thinking and asking questions, made the transition more difficult than language barriers alone suggest. Students also wrestled with associated with their own cultural assumptions. Financial stress was one of the new findings participants raised during the interview sessions. Participants experienced financial stress through the lens of deeply rooted Chinese culture of filial piety. Students’ financial stress was made worse because, according to U.S. law, all international students’ must maintain full-time student status and cannot work off-campus. By following up on the challenges and stressors noted in the literature and in the Chinese undergraduate student population at UMSL discussed here, both International Studies and Programs and university administrators may better accommodate such students and

attract new students in the future.

Here the researcher offers several recommendations to recruit and support Chinese undergraduate students at UMSL. These can improve faculty and staff individual awareness and help them make changes to practices and programs. Colleges and departments may also find this background on their Chinese students and their learning challenges helpful. These recommendations may support majors and students at the department level. Such recommendations are also aimed to help the campus to meet strategic goals of recruiting new international students over the next ten years.

Goal 1 Increase Chinese international student enrollment through enhanced recruitment activities.

To increase Chinese international undergraduate students' enrollment, UMSL might build a network of its alumni living in key cities in China to assist with local receptions. Their experience at UMSL will be helpful in recruiting. Current Chinese UMSL students may participate if available. They can keep in touch and offer follow up meetings in-person or through digital media.

According to the findings from both the survey and interviews, some of the participants took used intermediary agents. This is a popular source of information about U.S. colleges and universities. UMSL might create an intermediary agency marketing plan to recruit Chinese international students collaboratively. This will also ensure intermediary agencies may have accurate and up to date information.

Goal 2 Ease students' preparation and planning prior to departure and ease their

transition to campus physical, service and support settings.

When Chinese students decide to come to attend UMSL, it is important to increase pre-departure communication. A video tutorial with Chinese subtitles that can be viewed on major Chinese websites will be helpful. Based on the findings from the interviews, it takes time for Chinese international students to adjust to new pronunciations and the English used by native speaker. So Chinese subtitles will be helpful for students to become familiar with the school setting.

Goal 3 Increase students' academic and social success through increasing awareness of resources of service and support available.

Based on the findings from both the survey and interviews, most participants lacked the awareness of certain support available on campus. An on-call staff member fluent in both Chinese and English who is familiar with campus services can guide Chinese international students to access supports when needed.

Goal 4 Increase an inclusive environment on campus by promoting cross-cultural social opportunities.

UMSL might include both international students and domestic students at New Student Orientation. According to Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013), students usually have different orientations at the beginning. Based on the findings from both survey and interviews, the participants made most of their friends with other international students at the orientation, and this friendship usually lasted through their college life. Thus, orientations that include both domestic and international students may encourage

cross-cultural friendships. A “St. Louis Immersion Program” including both domestic students and international students that can also encourage such friendships as students can have more activities to get familiar with local social and cultural contexts with each other.

Goal 5 Support students’ mental health needs, especially those stresses related to the study abroad experience.

Most international students lack understanding of counseling service on-campus (Olivas & Li, 2006). The finding from both survey and interviews also affirm this. By providing specialized professional development to counseling service staff and hiring consultant or staff member fluent in both Chinese and English, Chinese students may increase use of the counseling service awareness on campus. A specific orientation may be provide to all international students, including but not limited in giving the handout of how to use counseling service, role playing on how counseling service looks like.

Goal 6 Support entrepreneurial career development and reduce study abroad financial and dietary stress. By creating opportunities for Chinese international students to earn income legally and build cross cultural communication through authentic Chinese food.

UMSL could explore opportunities for Chinese international students to start and operate an authentic Chinese food business on campus. Based on the findings from survey and the literature reviewed (IIE, 2017), the majority Chinese international undergraduate students come to the U.S. are attending College of Business; developing

and running a business will give valuable experience. According to literature reviewed (He & Hutson, 2018), findings from survey and interviews, most Chinese international students, do not like the food served on campus. Students also lacked work opportunities on campus. To solve these issues, the College of Business and International Student and Scholar Service, food service, payroll department and tax specialist might work together with Chinese students to develop and implement a business plan.

Goal 7 Improve faculty and academic advisor intercultural communication and cultural awareness of Chinese students' needs.

UMSL can hold annual and on-going professional development for faculty and advisors in the college with significant number of Chinese international students such as College of Business and College of Arts and Sciences. Based on Valdez (2015) and the findings from the interviews, some faculty and staff lacked cultural awareness, causing academic and cross-cultural communication challenges between students and faculties. Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) also suggested holding seminars and meetings on campus to share information about ways to support international students' engagement.

Goal 8 Support the development of critical reading, thinking, and writing skills for success in American classrooms.

UMSL might offered faculty workshops and learning circles in conjunction with the Center for Teaching and Learning to examine teaching strategies that bridge academic cultures and support Chinese students' transition to new learning environments and expectations. Most students came to the U.S. after they graduate from high schools in

China and have no familiarity with the different academic settings and expectations in the U.S. Knowledge of their Chinese international students' experiences in classrooms back home can help American professors understand their student' challenges here.

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APPENDIX A SURVEY

Evaluation of Chinese Undergraduate International Students' Challenges and Support at University of Missouri St. Louis (UMSL) 中国本科留学生对在 UMSL 面临的挑战与支持的评估问卷

Q1 What is your gender? 你的性别?

Male 男 (1)

Female 女 (2)

Q2 What is your age? 你的年龄

18 (1)

19 (2)

20 (3)

21 (4)

Older 其他 (5) _____

Q3 Year at UMSL 你在 UMSL 所在的年级

Freshmen 大一 (1)

Sophomore 大二 (2)

Junior 大三 (3)

Senior 大四 Other (4)

其他 (please specify)请详述 (5)

Q4 Which School/College are you attending? 你就读于哪个学院? And your major? 专业?

College of Art and Science 人文科学学院 (1)

College of Nursing 护士学院 (2)

College of Business Administration 商学院 (3)

College of Education 教育学院 (4)

College of Optometry 眼科学院 (5)

Q5 Why did you choose UMSL?你为什么选择 UMSL?

I have relatives here 我在这里有亲戚 (1)

I have friends here 我在这里有朋友 (2)

I was interested in one certain major offered at UMSL 我想选择在 UMSL 提供的一个专业 (3)

Intermediary institutions helped me to choose UMSL 中介帮我选择 UMSL (4)

My grades only qualified me to apply UMSL. 我的成绩只够申请 UMSL。 (5)

UMSL offers scholarships for me. UMSL 给我提供了奖学金。 (6)

Other (Be specify)其他 (请详述) (7) _____

Q6 Based on your personal experience, please rate following experience you had on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = Fully disagree, 4=Fully agree) .根据你的个人经历, 从 1 到 4, 1 是完全不同意, 4 是完全同意。

	Fully Disagree 完全不同意 1 (1)	Partially Disagree 部分不同意 2 (2)	Partially Agree 部分同意 3 (3)	Fully Agree 完全同意 4 (4)
I can follow the professors' lectures. 我可以跟上教授上课的内容和节奏。 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have adjusted to the new academic system quickly 我让我自己快速适应了新的学术系统 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to finish homework on time. 我能够按时完成作业。 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable participating in class discussion and asking questions. 我感觉很自在的参与课堂并且提问。 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can follow the class schedule offered by university and selected by myself. 我能跟上学校的课程安排以及自己的选课安排。 (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have found different kinds of support available on campus. 我找到了各种学校提供的帮助和服务。 (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I have made a lot of Chinese friends.我交到了很多中国朋友。(7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made a lot of friends from other countries and regions.我交到了很多来自不同国家和地区的国际留学生朋友。(8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made a lot of friends from the U.S.我交到了很多来自美国的朋友。(9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the living arrangement I wanted.我找到了喜欢的住宿。(10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found a nice roommate.我找到了很好的室友。(11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have adjusted to the new cultural environment quickly.我已经让我自己快速适应新文化环境。(12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand American cultural values.我理解美国(人)的文化价值观。(13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand the American medical system.我了解美国的医疗制度。(14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy the food offered on campus.我对学校提供的食物很满意。(15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I'm satisfied with the service offered by the faculty and staff.我对学校工作人员的服务很满意。(16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I/My family can afford the tuition.我和我的家庭可以承担得起在 UMSL 的学费。(17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I got my visa easily.我的签证很顺利。(18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a scholarship.我有一份奖学金。(19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a job on campus.我有一份在学校的工作。(20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get enough sleep.我有足够的睡眠时间(21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel welcome here.我感觉我在这里受欢迎。(22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I participate in the activities, events and parties held by Americans.我参加美国人举办的活动派对。(23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a specific career goal after graduation.我毕业后有很明确的职业规划。(24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can use the public transportation to any place.我可以用公共交通去任何地方。(25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I can afford a vehicle
and other related fees
(insurance, gas and
repair).我可以负担
起汽车和其他相关
费用。(保险, 汽
油和修理) (26)



Q7 Please check the service and support you know that available at UMSL. 请选择你所在 UMSL 提供的帮助和服务。

- Academic Advising 学术咨询 (1)
- Athletics 运动竞技活动 (2)
- Campus Recreation (Gym) 体育健身中心 (3)
- Campus Shuttle Service 校车服务 (4)
- Career Services 职业服务 (5)
- Counseling Services 心理咨询服务 (6)
- Disability Access Services 残疾访问服务 (7)
- Emergency Vehicle Service 紧急车辆服务 (8)
- Health Services 健康服务 (9)
- Institutional Safety 校警服务 (10)
- Math and Writing Academic Center 数学和写作学术中心 (11)
- Millennium Student Center 千禧学生中心 (12)
- Metro Pass Program 地铁卡项目 (13)
- Multicultural Student Services 多文化学生服务 (14)

- Net Tutor 网上助教 (15)
 - New Student Programs 新生项目 (16)
 - Student Involvement (such as discount ticket to local events, eg: Six Flags) 学生参与项目 (如当地活动折扣票, 去六旗) (17)
 - Student Enrichment and Achievement (help students achieve academic goal and graduate successfully) 学生充实与成就服务 (如帮助学生达到学术目标并且顺利毕业) (18)
 - Touhill Performing Arts Center 表演艺术中心服务 (19)
 - The Triton Store 校图书电子书店 (20)
 - University Eye Center 学校眼科中心 (21)
 - University of Missouri-St. Louis Postal Services UMSL 邮政服务 (22)
 - Welcome Center 欢迎中心 (23)
 - Other (Be Specify) 其他 (请详述) (24)
-

Q8 When did you know there are support/service at UMSL? 你什么时候知道 UMSL 有帮助和服务的？

- Before I came to UMSL. 在来 UMSL 之前。 (1)
 - During the orientation. 在最初参观情况介绍的时候。 (2)
 - Depends on different needs and at different time when I'm at UMSL. 根据不同的需要和我在 UMSL 的不同的时间段。 (3)
 - Other (Be Specify) 其他 (请详述) (4)
-

Q9 Please Check all the service/support you have used at UMSL. 请选择所有你曾在 UMSL 经使用过的服务和帮助。

- Academic Advising 学术咨询 (1)
- Athletics 运动竞技活动 (2)
- Campus Recreation (Gym) 体育健身中心 (3)
- Campus Shuttle Service 校车服务 (4)
- University Health Service 大学健康服务 (5)
- Career Services 职业服务 (6)
- Counseling Services 心理咨询服务 (7)
- Disability Access Services 残疾访问服务 (8)
- Emergency Vehicle Service 紧急车辆服务 (9)
- Health Services 健康服务 (10)
- Institutional Safety 校警服务 (11)
- Math and Writing Academic Center 数学和写作学术中心 (12)

- Millennium Student Center 千禧学生中心 (13)
- Metro Pass Program 地铁卡项目 (14)
- Multicultural Student Services 多文化学生服务 (15)
- Net Tutor 网上助教 (16)
- New Student Programs 新生项目 (17)
- Student Involvement (such as discount ticket to local events, eg: Six Flags) 学生参与项目 (如当地活动折扣票, 去六旗) (18)
- Student Enrichment and Achievement (help students achieve academic goal and graduate successfully) 学生充实与成就服务 (如帮助学生达到学术目标并且顺利毕业) (19)
- The Triton Store 校图书电子书店 (20)
- University Eye Center 学校眼科中心 (21)
- University of Missouri-St. Louis Postal Services UMSL 邮政服务 (22)
- Welcome Center 欢迎中心 (23)

Other (Be Specify) 其他 (请详述) (24)

Q10 Based on your personal experience, please rate following experience you had on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = not satisfied, 4 = very satisfied).根据你的个人经历, 从 1 到 4, 1 是总体不满意, 4 是非常满意。

	Overall not Satisfy 总体不满意 1 (1)	Partially Satisfy 部分满意 2 (2)	Mostly Satisfy 大多满意 3 (3)	Absolute Satisfy 非常满意 4 (4)
1. Academic related experience (taking class, exam, doing homework, learning style, teacher-student relationship, academic language.) 与学术相关的经历, 比如说上课, 考试, 写作业, 学习方式以及师生关系以及学术英语应用。(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social cultural related field experience. (making American friends, participating in the social events, celebrating domestic festivals, understanding local values.) 社会文化方面经历, 比如交当地美国朋友, 参加社会活动, 庆祝当地节日以及理解当地价值观。(2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Living experience.
(Housing, banking,
spending,
entertaining, dining
and shopping
transportation.)生活
经历,如住宿,花
销,娱乐,银行存
取,饮食,购物和
交通。(3)

Overall experience
of study abroad. 总
体来说我对美国留
学经历。(4)

Q11 Would you like to participate in the interview? 你愿意参加将来的采访吗?

Yes 愿意。 Please leave your contact information 请留下你的联系方式(电子邮件或微信或电话请注明) (1)

No 不愿意。 Thank you! 谢谢你参与问卷调查! (2)

APPENDIX B SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about why you decided to study abroad? 请说一说你为什么来美国学习？
2. Why you choose UMSL? 为什么选择密苏里大学圣路易斯分校？
3. Did you find any intermediary agency to help with your application? 你之前申请时是否找中介了？
4. Was study abroad your own decision? 出国是你自己的打算吗？
5. When you came to the U.S. did it differ from your expectation? 当你到达美国之后，现实与你的印象有区别吗？
6. Did you face any challenges at the beginning when you just arrived? 你刚来到美国的时候遇到过什么挑战？
7. Why did you consider this as a challenge? 为什么你觉得这个是个挑战？
8. How do you adjust to the new environment? 你如何让自己适应新环境的？
9. So far in your experience, is there anything you identified as stressful? 到目前为止，是否有一些事情持续打扰到你让你觉得有压力？
10. How did you overcome those kind of stresses? 你如何克服这些压力？
11. Did you seek any kind of support? Why or why not? 你寻求过哪些帮助吗？为什么/为什么不？
12. Where did the support come from and why is that? 这些帮助来源于哪里 Are these support helpful? 这些帮助有用吗？
13. What else do you need but is not available? 你还有其他的需求但没找到帮助吗？

14. Do you have any friends in the U.S.? Chinese friends or non-Chinese friends (such as American friends or international students from other countries)? 你在美国有朋友吗？中国朋友还是（美国朋友，或者来自其他国家的朋友？）
15. How did you make those friends? 你如何交朋友？
16. What's your feeling about making friends? 你对于交朋友的想法？
17. Is there any difficulty in making friends here? 你在交朋友的过程中遇到过什么困难吗？
18. What is the primary resource to learn about local culture? 你学习当地文化主要资源是什么？
19. In your opinion, what are the main differences between American education and Chinese education? (In class and after class.) 你觉得中美教育主要区别是什么？（比如课堂上的或者课后的）
20. Have you adjusted to American teaching-learning style? 你能适应美国的教学-学习方式吗？
21. Did you meet any difficulties? How have you overcome them? 有什么困难吗？你又是如何克服他们的？
22. How do you feel about your language skills? 你觉得你的语言水平怎么样？
23. Are there any stressors caused by language barriers? 有什么压力来自于语言方面的吗？

24. Can you distinguish social English and academic English? 你能区分社交用的英语和学术用的英语吗?
25. Can you understand the deeper meaning behind the language? 你能理解语言背后的深层含义吗?
26. How do you overcome the stress caused by language barriers? Please be specific. 你如何来克服来自语言方面的压力呢? 具体做法有什么?
27. Have you ever faced any financial issue? 你曾面对过什么经济困难吗?
28. Is it easy for you pay for the tuition and living expense in the U.S.? Is that stressful? Please be specific. 你觉得交学费和生活费容易吗? 这些会让你有压力吗? 请详叙。
29. What's your plan and goal for the future after graduate? Are these stressful? 你对毕业后的未来是如何规划的呢? 这些会让你感到有压力吗?
30. Tell me about the services you used most frequently at UMSL? 说说你在 UMSL 经常使用的服务?
31. How do you know the service and support that are available to the students? 你是如何知道这项服务和支持是为学生提供的?
32. Are you satisfied with the service and support on campus? If "yes", why? If, "no" what needs to improve? 你对于 UMSL 提供的服务和支持是否满意? 如果满意, 为什么? 如果不满意, 你的期待 UMSL 如何提高?