

The Fulbright Experience of Visiting Scholars from Post-Communist China: A Qualitative Study and a Critical Evaluation

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This article presents a qualitative study of Chinese scholars' Fulbright experiences in the United States and factors influencing the outcomes, based on interviews with 32 Chinese professors who were visiting Fulbright scholars during the period between 2001 and 2012. The purpose of the study is to shed some light on US public diplomacy programs to suggest improvements for their efficacy benefitting all parties concerned, and ultimately to further relations between the US and the rest of the world.

- 1 Since its inception in 1947, the Fulbright Program has grown exponentially, and is acclaimed as America's premier vehicle for intellectual engagement with the rest of the world. In view of the tumultuous Sino-US relations in recent decades, China offers an interesting case study for evaluating the impact of the program on post-Communist countries. This study shows that the Fulbright Program brought positive and enduring changes to the Chinese scholars professionally and personally, suggesting that major benefits do occur as a result of participating in the program. The programmatic quality and overall standing of the program enhances the benefits. The study also provides significant information about contemporary Chinese intellectuals and their attitudes towards the United States. Notably, the Chinese scholars' Fulbright experiences in the US were apparently limited by their self-image of being a 'learner,' that mostly exhibited a 'learn from but do not copy America'-posture. Moreover, there is a strong tendency towards anti-US positioning among these scholars, which suggests that many Chinese intellectuals are very nationalistic, and that the rise of China boosted their self-confidence in intercultural settings. The study concludes that the Fulbright Program was partially successful insofar as it involved participants from contemporary China but requires action from the side of the US, particularly in terms of program administration, cost-effectiveness of the programs, and strategic consistency of US public diplomacy with its foreign policy.

Introduction

- 2 Acclaimed as "America's premier vehicle for intellectual engagement with the rest of the world" (Interagency Working Group 176), the Fulbright Program annually supports thousands of American and foreign citizens to study, teach, or conduct research outside of their home country, with the goals of "fostering leadership, learning, and empathy between cultures" and increasing mutual understanding among peoples by means of educational and cultural exchange (Fulbright xi). To ensure that the program's goals are met, Fulbright grantees are selected stringently on the basis of academic and professional excellence and leadership potential, along with the ability to share ideas with people in different cultures (SRI International). Thus, an American diplomat observed that "There have doubtless been Fulbright grantees, returned from their experience abroad, who do not report a life-change. The fact is, I have never met one" (Arndt and Rubin 1). This observation reflects the

sort of praise often voiced by Fulbright alumni all over the world. Since the days of de Tocqueville, the observations of foreign visitors have provided a valuable amendment to Americans' perceptions of their own country. Special interest can be attached to such observations when the visitors come from a culturally and politically very different country, such as China. Given its drastic social and political changes after World War II and the conflicting history of China-US educational exchange, the Chinese scholars' recent Fulbright experiences in the United States make a relevant and interesting case study of the impact of American cultural diplomacy on post-Communist countries.

Chinese Higher Education: From the Soviet Model to Opening up

- 3 On November 10, 1947, China became the first participating country of the Fulbright Program when an accord was signed between the Chinese nationalist government and the American government. However, this joint enterprise ceased abruptly with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The new Chinese government took over the higher education institutions in China, 60% of which were run by the state and 40% run privately or by foreign missionary organizations at the time (Qian and Verhoeven). In the 1950s, Chinese higher education primarily followed the Soviet model. As a key characteristic, universities and colleges were affiliated with and administered by professional ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Chemical Industry, the Ministry of Railroads, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the academic units of these institutions became 'teaching schools' for training specialized talent. In 1961, university governance in China adopted the system of University Affairs Committee; the Committee was chaired by the university president under the guidance of the University Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (Chen). During the "Cultural Revolution" (1966–1976), higher education institutions in China were devastated, as their academic units were dismissed and sensible teaching and research were suspended.
- 4 With its opening up and reform as of 1978, dramatic changes took place in China's higher education system, notably in enrolment, structure, and international orientation. Chinese top leaders realized that cultivating talent was crucial for the nation to revitalize itself and compete in the world. In 1992, the State Education Commission (SEC) formulated the principle of "joint construction, adjustment, cooperation and merger" (Li) in the management of higher education, which resulted in the merger and reorganization of hundreds of universities and colleges. In 2002, China had a total of 2,003 higher education institutions, including 1,396 regular institutions, of which 111 were directly administered by central governmental departments. 728 institutions offered graduate training (Department of Development and Planning in MOE). With the goal of building 100 top universities and a group of world-class universities in the 21st century, the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) launched the 211 Program and the 985 Project in 1995 and 1998 respectively and has since offered the targeted universities lavish funding to boost productivity in research output,^[1] among other things.
- 5 Along with its various strategies on talent development and education reform, the Chinese government has continued to exercise tight control over the higher-education institutions, especially the leading universities. According to the *Law of Higher Education of the People's Republic of China of 1998*, the state universities

and colleges must adopt “the president-responsibility system” under the leadership of the University Committee of CPC, whereas each institution of higher education is headed by the president and the CPC secretary appointed by the MOE (MOE). As the supreme organ of the higher-education institutions, the University Affairs Committee, composed of the president, the vice-presidents, a secretary and vice-secretaries of the CPC, directors of divisions, deans, etc, makes decisions on university policies and procedures regarding important issues, including the appointment of all deans and directors of academic units of the university (Qian and Verhoeven).

Establishing Exchange with Foreign Universities

- 6 With a goal of improving the quality of Chinese universities, the MOE has championed cooperative programs with foreign universities, and international educational exchanges. Upon the normalization of Sino-US relations in 1979, the Fulbright Program in China was resumed and has since progressed rapidly. In 1983, the Program shifted its priority from providing English language teaching and teacher training to advancing American Studies, with the grantees’ fields of research and study comprising history, literature, law, journalism, management, economics, political science, sociology, philosophy, international relations, etc. In 1999, under the guidance of the MOE, the China Scholarship Council (CSC) established a framework to manage selection, admission and pre-departure training of Chinese candidates. In 2004, the MOE and the State Department of the US agreed to expand the program and co-share funding for individual Fulbright grants. Renamed China-US Fulbright Program, this promising enterprise has since been jointly administered by the American Center for Education Exchange (ACEE) and the CSC and remains a premier exchange program between the two countries. The numbers of Chinese higher learning institutions^[2] actively involved in the exchange of persons increased from 41 in 2003 to 125 in 2006, and currently over 100 grants are awarded to Chinese scholars and students each year (US Embassy Beijing).

Evaluating the Fulbright Experience

- 7 Focusing on the Chinese grantees of the Fulbright Program from 2001–2012, this study aims to examine their encounter, engagement, and reflection while visiting the US, and to reveal the multifaceted outcomes of their Fulbright experiences. It will also explore the factors that influence these outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of the Fulbright Program in attaining its goals. The significance of the study is twofold: First, given the recent trends that competing interests and differing ideological and political systems have moved the US and China ever-closer to the brink of crisis, and their suspicion of each other has only heightened in the context of China’s rise, this article will evaluate how Chinese intellectuals perceive and experience the US while providing a glimpse at higher education institutions in post-Communist China. Second, as the 40th anniversary of the establishment of China-US relations is drawing close, the findings of the study should cast light on policies for a better future of the relations between the two superpowers and strategies of American public diplomacy in a fast-changing world.

Data and Method^[3]

- 8 This study employs in-depth interviews as the method of data collection. This approach enables the interviewees to describe their experiences and perceptions in detail, meanwhile allows the researcher to observe interviewees' response and make further inquiries if necessary. 521 Chinese Fulbright scholars who taught, studied, or did research in the US during the period of 2001–2012 were eligible for this study. Using their contact information provided by the American Center for Education Exchange (ACEE), I invited all prospective participants via email to an interview to be conducted in Beijing, Tianjin, Xiamen, or Guangzhou from 1 June to 30 December of 2013. Altogether, 111 scholars responded, 35 scholars agreed to be interviewed, and eventually 32 of them made it happen, among them ten men and 22 women, aged 26 to 49 at the time. All of them held a faculty position at a leading university in China, except one who was affiliated with a research institute.^[4] 25 scholars had worked in higher-education institutions for ten years, while seven scholars had less than five years of such experience.^[5] Among them were ten full professors, one researcher, ten associate professors, and eleven assistant professors. Their fields included history, linguistics, literature, law, journalism, business administration, economics, political science, sociology, philosophy, and international relations.
- 9 The grant recipients were sponsored by six specialized programs, Visiting Research Scholar (VRS), Graduate Student (GS), Ph.D. Dissertation Research (PhD), Scholar-in-Residence (SIR), American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship (APSACF), and Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (FLTA), which share certain common ground in objectives, procedure, or expected outcomes. Each participant was interviewed face to face in mandarin for 60–90 minutes. The questions consisted of four parts. Part One involved personal information, reasons for applying for the Fulbright grant, overall satisfaction, etc. Part Two focused on professional and cultural learning experiences. Part Three concerned increased understanding of and favorability towards the US Part Four revolved around fulfillment of plans and suggestions for the Fulbright Program. Additional inquiries were proposed as per the interviewee's response. The data collected was transcribed verbatim and translated from Chinese into English. Qualitative analysis techniques were employed for data analysis. Statements from similar or different transcripts were compared in order to identify the themes and subthemes of the findings. A profile of the participants is shown in the [Appendix](#). For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the Chinese Fulbright scholars and their American hosts.

The Fulbright Experience: Professional and Cultural Activities

- 10 The Fulbright experience is all about learning and understanding other cultures, languages, contexts, beliefs, and realities. While some variations in the extent of the gains from the experience by program type exist (for example, VRS focused more on research activities, whereas SIR and FLTA were more involved in teaching activities), the varying experiences involve certain common aspects. This section describes how the Chinese Fulbright scholars gained knowledge about America and how they helped Americans better understand China through professional and cultural activities during their grant term.^[6]

Professional Activities

- 11 Above all, the Chinese scholars observed how American professors teach and do research, and furthermore gained insights into host institution procedures, as compared to the practice of many universities in China. Their perceptions involve four aspects, as described below.

Pedagogical Method

- 12 The participants generally considered acquiring new ideas about teaching as a very important professional activity. By taking courses or auditing classes at the host institution, they absorbed some pedagogical principles and meaningful skills that could later be applied to their own teaching back home.
- 13 First of all, the Chinese scholars indicated broadened views of course design, including course objectives, instructional techniques, grading pattern, and so on. Ying audited "Environmental Economics" at an Ivy League university, and attended a field trip to a forest in Alaska, which deepened his understanding of scientific inquiry in Green Accounting. Lei considered formative assessment of students' performance at her host department as "effective in fostering a motivated and productive learning experience." Xia, professor of Chinese philosophy, described an instructor's unique approach at another Ivy League university:

[He] championed spiritual development and applied a contemplative approach in classrooms so that the students could better understand the works of *Zhuangzi*. I audited a few sessions and joined in the contemplations in a meditation room. It was uniquely stimulating and constructive.

- 14 The participants also highlighted how American professors inspired students to voice their own opinions. Shu commented, "The instructors would use 'praise' words, like 'good question,' 'good point,' 'exactly,' etc., to share a high level of confidence in class." Yue recollected that her professors enthusiastically engaged a group of culturally diverse students and heard their perspectives patiently. Hong felt that the classroom setting nourished free expression of ideas and different voices were treated with respect.
- 15 Seminar class was much discussed by the participants. Most of them considered the seminar approach as instrumental in cultivating students' critical thinking and argumentative skills. Their statements include, e.g., "everyone was talking and trying to say something new," "students feel free to give different views," "teachers lecture less, students talk more," "the class was very lively," "students were very proactive and responsive." As Xi illustrated, "the class was small, so the students were fully engaged in discussions, presentations, writing assignments, etc. They were inspired to express their thoughts and contribute effectively to the discussion." Comparing with the lecture-based instruction back home, Cai noted that the participatory style, with an emphasis on interactive engagement, was conducive to liberal arts education. Nevertheless, seven scholars viewed the issue critically. Fei commented, "A seminar is often unsystematic, disorganized, and short of logical connection. Students are immersed in chatting." He added by affirming a practice in China that classes would begin with an introduction of basic concepts and principles. Li felt that American students take liberty to speak out, sometimes out of ignorance and prejudice, while the instructors were usually affirmative of their liberal expressions.

Scholarship Standard

- 16 The Chinese scholars generally agreed that the Fulbright experience lifted their scholarship standards to a new height, meanwhile reminding them of the sorry state the quality of research in China. Specifically, they reported various learning experiences which imparted crucial principles and methods of scholarly research.
- 17 The GS and PhD program participants highly regarded the rigorous training in scholarly research at their host institution. As Li described, "My advisor's weekly tutorials helped me to figure out the objective and structure of my doctoral dissertation." Mo said that her professors would ask students to propose a topic with sensible research questions or hypotheses and develop cogent arguments with solid evidence. Yue noted that she shifted from English linguistics to American politics, largely because of the inspiration from her two-year study at a university in Washington DC. She explained that her professors would relate course content to existing scholarship, including methods, perspectives, and data, a practice which professors in China simply lacked.^[7] La echoed with the following,

Throughout my school years in China, I would count on the teachers to give authoritative answers. The systematic training at UMass influenced me profoundly in terms of independent thinking. It instilled the value of original research. For example, the professor of historiography, in the session on the Cold War, discussed how to write a thesis using primary sources, microfilms and movies.

- 18 Eight participants of VRS or FLTA programs reported having audited classes in methodology, including "Mass Communication Research Methodology," "Statistics," and "Historiography." They considered such experiences as "challenging but rewarding," "pleasantly painful," or "rigorous and useful." Ying described, "I got concrete guidance on quantitative measurement in forestry economics, which was very illuminating. In particular, project-based research was very helpful for honing skills of scientific inquiry." Hong noted that academic honesty is mandated and plagiarizing is absolutely forbidden in her host university, while this principle is not strictly adhered to in China. Rui, who audited two classes on methodology, commented that thesis topics are mostly broad in China whereas in the US research is very specific and the output is substantive.
- 19 Over half of the participants found their academic horizon was broadened as a result of being immersed in the libraries. As Tao described, "UOV has numerous up-to-date works on feminism in international relations. I could always learn new theories and perspectives which are unheard of in China." In contrast to the limited databases available at his home institution, Fei found his host university had vast digital resources which were crucial for his research projects. In particular, the polls of Gallup and Pew facilitated his statistical analysis of China-US-Russia relations.^[8] Li developed a keen interest in the political economy of carbon markets as a result of extensive reading on climate change policies and green reforms in the US.
- 20 The participants also felt that their scholarship standards were increased by interactions with academics from different countries and emphasized that their physical presence in the US imparted great opportunities they otherwise would not have had. The interactions took place in academic events organized by universities, professional societies, and other institutions, which brought researchers together to spark ideas on significant issues. Xia recollected that the annual conference of the American Philosophical Society in Boston enabled her to meet many prominent

philosophers. Mei reported having joined an international network of like-minded scholars. Four scholars managed to interview some leading scholars and rated such an experience as immensely stimulating. As Tao articulated, “Harding’s perceptive observations of China are enlightening on a high level—even his negative views will prompt people to rethink the issue.”

Work Ethics

- 21 The Chinese scholars generally much appreciated their American peers’ work ethics and professional traits. As one participant concluded, “American professors are serious about their work—research is taken seriously, teaching is taken seriously, ideas are taken seriously.” A most admired quality is the superb ability to combine scholarly research and teaching responsibilities. Several scholars were affirmative of the practice that distinguished professors are committed to undergraduate teaching. Feng commented, “This [practice] is genuinely helpful to the students, and students’ challenging questions in the classroom make the teachers better scholars through stimulated thinking.” Qing mentioned some American instructors’ detailed comments on students’ essays and term papers. La spoke highly of his history professor, “[He] gave tutorials regularly, and reviewed my essays in a detailed way. I came to know what makes a dedicated and admirable scholar—he is a perfect role model.” Moreover, the participants found their American counterparts to be autonomous, self-judging, and independent overall. In comparison with the urban congregation of universities in China,^[9] Zheng said, “American universities, even those in the back county, boast a large number of excellent professors who are putting their individuality into full play.” Qi observed that his American colleagues were driven to do research and pursue an academic career for its own sake. Ying highly respected his host,

I admired David mainly because of his unswerving passion for research on environmental economics. I remember him saying: to be a specialist, you have to be rigid and concentrated. He holds on to work out of genuine interest, and disregards short-term projects which may bring quick money and great recognition.

Education Philosophy

- 22 The Fulbright experience enabled the Chinese scholars to better understand the principles and practice of American higher education as to the purpose of secondary and tertiary education, school structure, and institutional culture. Their perceptions involve four aspects.
- 23 First, liberal arts education is a well-rounded model for whole person development. The stated characteristics include “smaller classes,” “more attention to students,” “broad range of subjects,” “flexibility, breadth, and depth of curriculum.” Ya described her impression of the liberal arts college she attended,

At first, the name and its small population reminded me of a three-year vocational “college” in China,^[10] but soon I found it was an elite school. Students of the first two years are required to explore a broad range of subjects, choosing among hundreds of courses throughout humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. This prepares them well for specialization in future career.

- 24 Secondly, a people-oriented environment is conducive to fostering imaginative, creative, and innovative efforts. As Li commented, "I experienced the campus life, and knew what it is like to be a student in [a] American university. I was inspired and helped by many people there." Ai observed that students at her host institution had easy access to resources and services for learning related activities. She explained, "People in different divisions of the university were all playing a part in facilitating students learning experience and personal growth. Sadly, in Chinese universities, administrators often interfere with academic affairs, rather than provide due support and assistance."
- 25 Thirdly, the participants felt struck by the diversity in American classrooms regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and age, as opposed to the generally homogeneous student population of colleges and universities in China. As Rong said, "There are many nontraditional students in my class. Two middle-aged guys went to college after fulfilling extended military service in Iraq and Afghanistan." Qiang shared his observation of a group of culturally diverse students: "Students of different age made my class discussions interesting and varied, and much different from what 18- or 19-year-olds would say."^[11]
- 26 Finally, faculty governance is a particularly admired aspect of American higher education, as compared to the highly bureaucratic situation in China.^[12] As Zheng commented: "I appreciate how the rights and values of faculty members were respected and valued. For instance, staff and administrators were held responsible for facilitating the faculty to fulfill their responsibilities." Chang came to absorb the meaning of faculty governance at an Ivy League university from the administrators' attitudes towards how teaching and research should be organized, how faculty should be engaged in articulating ideas. Chang added that in her home institution administrators are the "shakers and movers" and they usually head academic committees on department or school levels.
- 27 The interviewees were also asked how they contributed to their American colleagues' work and the learning experience of fellow students during the grant term. Most of the Chinese scholars reported having provided value to the Fulbright experience through research, lecturing, or simply adding their Chinese perspectives to formal and informal conversations and events. Notably, the grantees of SIR and FLTA felt good about their teaching experience in the US, usually at liberal arts colleges, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges, which increased American students' understanding of China. As the first Fulbright scholar in the history of her host institution, Rong had direct and indirect interactions with the American students, faculty, and staff. In particular, her class provided fresh knowledge about the economic development of China. Qiang described his role as assistant teacher of Chinese language as an enjoyable mission,
- Using a content-based communicative approach, my teaching greatly helped American students improve their command of Chinese language. They presented, watched, read, discussed and wrote, all in Chinese.
- 28 Nine VRS program participants reported having given talks at universities, organizations, and communities, and found that interactions on these occasions were very rewarding intellectually and professionally. Fei's narrative illustrates this well,

I readily accepted the invitation to give presentations at the University of Florida and Georgia Institute of Technology. The topics were about major power relations between China, US and Russia. I had a heated discussion with the professors and students there. Their questions helped me think deeply about the issues we discussed.

Cultural Activities

- 29 In addition to their professional engagement, the Chinese scholars took part in various social and cultural activities, including concerts, exhibitions, movie festivals, church events, and community gatherings, thus gaining insights into myriad aspects of US society.

Religious Faith

- 30 Exposure to local communities helped the participants better understand the significant role of religion in American life. Some scholars spoke about religious rituals like scripture study, prayer, and Family Home Evening. Rong mentioned an American family saying prayer before meals as a way to communicate with God in gratitude. All of the participants reported having taken part in religious activities out of curiosity or for the purpose of socialization. As Cui said, "I visited a few churches to see how people conducted Christian rituals. I found religion creates a safe structure in which Americans can explore their relationship with God." Qiang compared local churches in the US to community centers in China, in that these locales allowed people to socialize for spiritual and practical needs. Li felt good about an on-campus church, "I went to Hope Lutheran regularly and made some friends there. Amazingly, we shared some values, such as care for family and neighbors. And I learned to maintain inner peace in life, especially when encountering difficulties and setbacks." Nevertheless, 11 scholars had mixed feelings about religious life in America. Tao felt uncomfortable about people preaching biblical teachings tirelessly in order to convert others, "I could understand their deep faith in God, but I am cool-headed, not going to worship anything." Qing had this to say, "While weekly sermons are helpful in inspiring and connecting people, the whole thing reminded me of political indoctrination in China during the Cultural Revolution, when the masses were brainwashed into allegiance to someone."

Mutual Respect

- 31 The participants highly appreciated mutual respect as a characteristic of interpersonal relations in the US. Qiang voiced his impression of Americans as "nice, courteous and respectful." Cui described in detail, "In the streets, passengers would smile and say hi to me; in the supermarkets, the shop assistants treated me politely. At the entrance of buildings, people would hold the door open for others." The participants widely agreed that interpersonal relations among Americans demonstrated that they value individualism and equality. Citing child-parent relations, Song said, "Firmly believing that everyone is a separate individual, American parents let their children experience life fully. Sadly, in China, many parents act on their own needs to dominate their children's lives." Six scholars recounted instances which enhanced their sense of "elbow room." As Ying described,

One afternoon, a Chinese friend of mine and I were walking in a neighborhood when we saw a boy playing football. As a gesture of fondness, my friend patted the boy on the head. Then the boy's father came out to question what we were doing. I realized that personal space matters to Americans, including children.

Self-reliance

- 32 The participants had many discussions about self-reliance as an American core value. Qing noted that Americans have internalized the conviction that God helps those who help themselves, and thereby take a task conscientiously. Ying highlighted that offering a helping hand is not necessarily appreciated in the US, though it is a virtue in China. He mentioned the episode regarding his host's wife, an elderly Turkish American, "Seeing her staggering down the steps in front of the library, I stretched out my hands to help, but she simply rejected." Four scholars felt that attaching much value to self-reliance makes Americans kind of "unemotional" and "cold." Si found Americans friendly and open-hearted in general, but felt it is hard to enter their heart. Two scholars mentioned car-related issues. Rong recollected that when she asked for a free ride to a conference in town, one colleague responded with a curt email saying he could not help. Jian described a situation when he required help that taught him to be more discreet in dealing with Americans:

Shortly after arriving in Florida, I badly needed someone to drive me to the auto shop to buy a car. But none of my colleagues responded to my request. There was no bus service, while taxi service was expensive and required reservation 48 hours in advance.

Spirit of Volunteerism

- 33 The participants highly regarded American volunteerism which flourishes in large and small communities and in various forms. Xia praised many American families for accommodating visiting Fulbright scholars on the "Hospitality Home Day." Jian explained, "Americans usually don't offer to help others, but they are ready to help people in need of help. Volunteering is pervasive in the US and involves almost every aspect of people's life." Tao observed, "Elementary school students get credits for performing social service. That deepened my understanding of American philanthropic cause and enthusiasm in helping others." Nine scholars mentioned their involvement in voluntary actions and their perpetual readiness to give a helping hand. As Xin described, "I joined people [of a New York university] to clean up trash in a deserted garden in Brooklyn. And I was gratified to see some passers-by joining us voluntarily."

The Rule of Law

- 34 The Chinese scholars highlighted the power of rules and regulations in US society and reflected on many unlawful conducts in the *guanxi*-based Chinese society where benefits are often gained from social connections. As Feng commented, "If we just follow the rules, rather than seek privilege through *guanxi*, it will save a lot of time." Jian found that the business-is-business kind of culture and "'impersonal' relations in the US are kind of hurtful, yet rational and sustainable. Ai noted that an American citizen or resident can sue anybody if his/her rights are violated, and that opposites can live together under the rule of law. Citing her housing issue, Yue illustrated how rules are honored in America:

In the first year at [the university in Washington DC], I rented an apartment for a good price. My landlady asked me to read the lease closely before signing it. Later, I wanted to sublet my apartment for the summer. My landlady seriously said no and restated the terms in the lease.

Freedom of Expression

- 35 The participants were struck by the freedom with which Americans expressed their views, including negative opinions of the government. Song commented, "I know that freedom of speech is a right endowed by [the] American Constitution. My perspective was further broadened by my exposure to television programming that was genuinely liberal." Citing his experience of lecturing in various institutions, Fei praised the tremendous heterogeneity among his audiences, "While generality of the view in the media is the norm in China is, opinions are so diverse in the US. There is no one particular view on an issue, like Iraq war, gun control, gay right, etc." This observation was confirmed by Ai,

During my stay in the states, three events attracted public attention: the election campaign, rally for China's Olympic Games, and subprime mortgage crisis. These events revealed various contradictions and mutually opposing currents. It shows an America in agreement on some matters, in dissension on others.

- 36 Besides, the Chinese scholars put much effort in spreading knowledge about China by giving talks or demonstrating specific aspects of Chinese culture, such as language, arts, etiquette, and cooking. They found these were meaningful commitments to fostering mutual understanding between Chinese and American people. For example, Rong gave three presentations about Chinese culture in Birmingham. Qiang had extensive interactions with some kids in Washington DC,

My life was enriched by increasingly immersing myself in the local community. I spent time teaching Chinese in an elementary school, play tennis with a group of boy scouts twice a week, and join the Rally to Restore Sanity.

The Outcomes and Contributive Factors

Increasing Professional Capacity and Cultural Empathy

- 37 Participating in the Fulbright Program enabled the Chinese scholars to get first-hand knowledge about the US. In particular, they acquired a deeper understanding of American higher education as well as their own field, evolving professionally and in cultural empathy competence. Notwithstanding, there are variations in the outcomes. Certain factors on personal and institutional levels influenced the outcomes in positive and negative ways.

Factors on a Personal Level

- 38 First of all, motivation played an important role in the quality of Chinese scholars' Fulbright experience. 21 scholars related their premier motivation and plan to professional development, such as "to learn new knowledge and skills," "to conduct on-site research," "to obtain access to resources available only in the US," and therefore placed a high priority on academic pursuits in lieu of non-academic

activities. Accordingly, most of them formulated specific plans and kept the plans in mind throughout the grant term. Overall, the highly motivated scholars reported a very fruitful Fulbright experience in respect to professional and personal growth. Mo and Li, PhD program participants, intended to find topics and materials for their doctoral work, and finally achieved this goal as a result of strenuous efforts. For grantees of SIR and FLTA, teaching at American higher-learning institutions enhanced their professional competence. As Rong said, "The perspectives of American students in class discussions provided differing views that are worth considering. It proved to be a great stimulus for me to modify my educational philosophy and teaching approach." The statements of two VRS also illustrate the importance of motivation. Cui said, "I set up a plan of re-energizing myself professionally, so I spent enormous time in reading, writing, acquiring skills, attending conferences, giving lectures. Kui described her engagements,

My proposed project constantly pushed me to tap the valuable resources in the States. I participated in various academic activities and acquired substantial knowledge and materials of Asian American literature. I managed to interview 15 prominent writers, including Fae Myenne NG and Lan Samantha Chan.

39 In contrast, 11 scholars gave priority to personal enrichment in their motivation and expectation. Their stated plans include "to experience first-hand about the US," "to travel across the vast land of America," "to enable family members to experience living in the US," etc. A typical explanation is that visiting the US was not only about learning research skills and attending classes, but also about discovering America and experiencing American culture. As Qing said, "American society is something I want to know more about. My great satisfaction stemmed from social and cultural activities which exposed me to various aspects of the US." Feng commented, "I can take classes and read in the library any time, without even coming to the US. So, I chose to do stuff that I could only do in the US, i.e. going out talking to people, seeing things, less of reading books and papers."

40 Another explanation given by these scholars is that they wanted something different from their routine work and responsibilities back home. As Xin said, "I was seeking a work-life balance while taking a break from the rush of life in Beijing. So, I made myself an active observer of American society by engaging with various events, and traveling across the country." Interestingly, four scholars' foremost motivation was to bring their child to the United States. Ai, who was accompanied by her daughter, explained, "Exposure to a different culture will broaden my daughter's horizon, and time spent in an American high school will better prepare her for college education in the US." Thus, these four scholars reported modest scholarly engagement and professional commitment during the grant term due to excessive time spent in accompanying family members. Tao, who brought along her eight-year-old son, described,

I applied for the Fulbright grant largely for the sake of my son. I wanted him to get some schooling in the US and learn English the natural way. Taking care of him by myself, I spent a lot of time escorting him to school, visiting famous universities, Disneyland and the like. So, I had to give up many opportunities of professional learning.

41 Secondly, preparation was crucial for a satisfying placement. In order to complete a successful application to the Fulbright Program, the CIES encourages the applicants of VRS and PhD grants to make their own arrangements for affiliation, and therefore to make personal contacts with an American professor as their potential host or advisor. The findings reveal that host institution selection matters for the quality of the Fulbright experience. Three elements are found to be relevant.

42 Of the 14 VRS program participants, seven chose their host or advisor based on close relationship, recommendations by colleagues, or sufficient knowledge via online search, and therefore reported high level of satisfaction with their experience at the hosting institution. Kui attributed her gratifying sojourn to previous interactions with her host, "Prof. Tan was a long-time friend of my home institution. Ten years ago, we invited her to give a talk and we had since stayed in touch." Ying highlighted that previous collaboration with his host led to a productive working relationship afterwards,

I learned from a colleague that David was a great professor in scholarship and personality. When I contacted David to seek opportunity for collaborative research on Green Accounting, he kindly agreed. This paved the way for my further engagement at [this Ivy League university].

43 In contrast, inadequate preparation in the application process often led to a mismatch between the Chinese scholar and their American host, and therefore impeded attainment of desired outcomes. Five VRS grantees who failed to reach their prospective professors in time felt that the host institution assigned by CIES barely met their expectation. Feng explained, "As soon as I learned the result of my application, I began to seek affiliation with several universities, only to find their openings were filled. So, I had to turn to CIES for help." La reflected on her application process, "My TOEFL and GRE scores came out late, thus giving me little leeway in the selection of universities, so I left it totally to IIE. I should have done more investigation."

44 In seeking affiliation, five scholars chose an institution because it had a potential host who was interested in Chinese culture. They gave much credit to their host for their gratifying experience at the host institution. Xia commented, "I was excited to learn that a professor at Brown was keen on Daoism. Through some correspondences, he agreed to host me." Hong explained her choice, "Prof. Collins enjoys popularity among Chinese scholars of applied linguistics. He is very friendly to China and Chinese scholars."

45 In making arrangements for placement, the grantees did not necessarily favor top-tier universities. Seven scholars gave priority to scholarship and personality of their host or advisor, and they reported a high level of satisfaction with their professional learning experience. As Hong said, "My major concern is the reputation of a scholar I will work with and maintain contacts afterwards." Similarly, Jian commented,

I chose [this university in Florida], which ranked about 40th. A key thing was the professor's reputation. When applying for the grant, I already knew him quite well. He was a top-notch researcher and a very nice man. It proved I made the right decision.

46 Four scholars who chose first-tier universities were considerably less satisfied with their professional learning experience than those affiliated with non-top-ranked institutions. Cai regretted that she simply wanted to go to the best university and work with the best professor of international economics,

Through the referral of a friend's friend, I approached a big name professor at [an Ivy League university] and got his consent. In fact, there was little common ground in our research interests. And the whole thing was upsetting. With no office assigned to me, often times I felt embarrassed to show up at the coffee break to "mingle" with the faculty.

47 Thirdly, the participants' administrative position in the home institution considerably influenced the level and amount of their commitments in the US. Overall, the 12 scholars with administrative positions reported more extensive program-goal-related engagements than those without, such as establishing institutional linkages and spreading knowledge about China to Americans. Xin mentioned her conscious effort in seeking educational cooperation between China and the US. Jian described how he was driven to promote educational exchange on behalf of his home institution,

I visited 58 universities and colleges, often driving from campus to campus in rapid succession. I hoped to meet as many people as possible, with a view of fostering institutional linkages. [...] I also wanted to transmit knowledge about China to help Americans better understand China.

48 For the scholars without any administrative title, the findings indicate a different assessment of their exchange experience. Most of them reported limited engagement in fostering institutional ties or educational exchange. Yan's explanation is typical: "Being a small potato back in my home institution, I had no obligation beyond my personal and professional development."

49 Fourthly, prior travels to the US affected the outcomes. 13 scholars found their first experience quite exploratory and short of clear directions, whereas for the second time they felt more professionally rewarded professionally. Fei, twice a visiting scholar in the US, felt more confident and more capable to share his research work with his American colleagues. In contrast, six first-time US grantees were unclear about what to expect specifically from the host institution. Xi was unsure how to communicate properly in a new environment, therefore she encountered various problems in teaching.

Factors on the Institutional Level

Host Institution

50 Given the educational nature of the Fulbright Program, the participants generally were placed in a higher-learning institution in the US, thus being immersed in an intellectually nourishing environment which was scarce in China. In most cases, the host institutions gave the Fulbright scholars access to their libraries, allowed them to audit courses for free, and provided them with an office space and accommodation on campus. The participants widely agreed that accessibility to library-related resources was a most desirable support the hosting institution gave them. Their reoccurring comments involved the inter-library loan system, the massive databases, and up-to-date book titles. Overall, the participants found their learning environment congenial and developed a sense of emotional affinity with their host university. As

Kui concluded, "The ten months at [this renowned university in California] imprinted on my mind numerous delightful memories, the beautiful campus, time-honored architectures, amazing facilities, well-mannered people, distinguished professors, etc." Qi reflected on his teaching experience in Georgia, "[It] made me rethink American culture, academic life, institutions, etc. It proved to be a great stimulus for me to modify my educational philosophy and teaching approach."

- 51 Notwithstanding, in respect to collegial interactions, the Chinese scholars provided mixed opinions. Some participants appreciated their colleagues' help in navigating some professional responsibilities, while others reported inadequate opportunities for extensive discussions or close relations at the hosting department. Citing the intimate setting in China where faculty members share an office and often chat in the cafeteria, Yan was upset about the absence of close interactions at her host department largely due to each person having a private office and a private schedule. Two scholars noted that the administrators seldom discussed teaching related issues with them. Rui found her director was skeptical about her teaching but did not share student feedback.

Hosting Professor or Advisor

- 52 Being the primary contact person of the host institution, i.e. the host or advisor is crucial for the quality of the visiting scholar's Fulbright experience. Asked how they interacted with their host professionally and personally, the participants' responses were divided.
- 53 17 scholars approved of their hosting professor's or advisor's role in respect to guidance, support and help. Mei stated, "I was lucky to have a very nice host. She gave me a lot of concrete help, including making arrangements for community outreach and offering a mattress when my friend came to stay for a few days." Li spoke highly of her advisor, "[He] set aside 30 minutes every Wednesday to discuss my dissertation. It led me to modify the topic and make rapid progress subsequently." Kui described her host in detail,

When I arrived [at this renowned university in California], Prof. Tan had made all the necessary arrangements, including my temporary housing. We met almost every other week to discuss my research project. She also made contacts to facilitate my interview with some prominent writers.

- 54 Four scholars, Ying, Jian, Hong, and Xia took part in their American colleagues' research projects. For example, Ying developed a keen interest in green accounting largely because of his host, "David gave me a lot of guidance on quantitative analysis of forestry economics. Later we conducted collaborative research and published it in a well-renowned journal."
- 55 In contrast, 13 scholars found that inadequate interactions with their host overshadowed their expectations. Min complained about her host this way, "He was very busy doing field research in South America, so we met once every two or three months. Most of the time, we communicated via email." Two scholars had unpleasant relationship with their hosts. Qing commented, "Richard [...] offered little help professionally or otherwise. He was kind of indifferent to me and we had very few interactions. He rejected my invitation for dinner before I returned to China. I

understood—he was just very busy.” Fei had similar complaints about his host, “He gave me little help because he was busy talking around the world. Often times he talked nonsense out of prejudice.”

Prestige of Fulbright Scholarship

- 56 The prestige of the Fulbright Program put the Fulbrighters at an advantage when socializing in the United States. Typically, the participants were welcomed warmly at their host institution and surrounding communities. As Rong stated, “Knowing I am a Fulbright scholar, people in the community would treat me with much respect and feel like talking to me. So, I was happy to take part in their daily lives, and to experience the differences and similarities from the inside. Xia said, “My landlord would proudly introduce me to his friends and emphasize that I was a Fulbright scholar. So, I felt at ease mingling with local people.” Several scholars spoke about housing-related issues. Mei was gratified by her cozy and quiet apartment in a guest house on campus. Xin much appreciated [the efforts of her New York university] for subsidizing her housing, “Thanks to the support from the Fulbright Program, I could enjoy a comfortable two-bed room apartment in Mid-town Manhattan for only \$1900 monthly.” Hong mentioned her privilege on a cruise ship to Miami, “Learning I was a Fulbright scholar, a crew guy said ‘wait a moment, you are upgraded to 8th,’ and offered me a luxury cabin with a balcony.”

Fulbright Program Administration

- 57 A prevalent theme from the findings is that the Fulbright organization engaged Fulbright scholars through various activities. Notably, the CIES staff made sustained efforts in facilitating the Chinese scholars to experience many aspects of American life and provided the means for participants to contribute professionally and culturally to their host institutions and beyond. For example, Shu viewed the CIES as instrumental in arranging for new Fulbright teachers to meet with program alumni during the mid-term Fulbright orientation in Boston; Fei appreciated the Occasional Lecture Program for sponsoring his talks at six universities and one conference. Six scholars mentioned the Metropolitan Area Enrichment Program, which allowed them to attend various events and socialize with other Fulbright fellows, the organizers and American people. Xia’s statement is conclusive, “the massive investment and great efforts of program staff conveyed the message that they are taking our professional development seriously.”
- 58 Nevertheless, some participants’ enthusiasm about the Fulbright Program diminished due to a pre-departure formality on the part of China. Specifically, most of the grantees were asked to deposit RMB 40,000 in a CSC designated account, and get a guarantor to sign on notarized deed that they would return when the grant term was over. They considered this practice as “burdensome,” “unreasonable,” “restrictive,” “hurtful,” and “humiliating.” As Min concluded, “The whole thing was real burdensome and conveys a message of distrust to Fulbright scholars. The program was somewhat degraded by the administration under MOE” (Fu and Zhao).

Increasing Favorability toward the US

- 59 While the Chinese scholars benefited substantially from the Fulbright experience in terms of personal and professional growth overall, they did not necessarily develop or reinforce a pro-American attitude. The great majority of them viewed the US

critically in some respects. As Chang said, "I enjoyed visiting the US, and learned the things I wanted to learn, but I reserve my views of certain issues regarding the US." Similarly, Fei commented, "It is a great opportunity to experience a new culture, but I know quite well what the US has done, and I will not change my negative attitude towards it." However, the critical minds drew sharp distinctions between the US government and its people. To be specific, 24 scholars held unfavorable opinions on the US government, and four scholars were critical of the US in general, while positive perceptions about American people were prevalent among the participants. The negative opinions and critical views center on four themes.

Hegemony in International Relations

- 60 The participants with an unfavorable opinion of the US government criticized the American hegemonic power and cited its aggressive foreign policy as a primary source of their negative feelings. Qiang said, "The US is a hegemonic superpower that loots and controls the weak nations. In this respect my opinion of the US does not improve at all." Song noted that the US government often changes the rules of the game at will, for the sake of its national interest. Several scholars provided specific information about the US hegemonic exceptionalism in handling international affairs. Qing mentioned American military actions in Lebanon and Jordan. In particular, several scholars rated American foreign policy in Asia as unpopular. Yue expressed disapproval of US interference with China's territorial disputes in the South China and East China Seas. Citing the speech of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2011, Si illustrated, "Following its aggressive actions in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the US set about pivoting to Asia, as Iron lady advocated."

Racial Discrimination

- 61 The participants also associated their negative views of the US with its long-standing institutionalized discrimination and racial conflicts. Chang felt terrible to see racial discrimination still apparent in a nation that cherishes equality and liberty. Rong commented, "Americans have a deep faith that all people are of equal value, but in reality some of them often violate their faith. This situation has barred minorities from equal opportunities in many spheres" Song stated, "A particularly degrading aspect of contemporary America is that many African Americans remain second-class citizens." The participants recounted many instances which reinforced their perceptions about discrimination against certain ethnic groups. Si mentioned the growing animosity among American politicians that having ties with China makes Chinese American scientists prone to espionage. Qi noted that Asian Americans constantly confront a glass ceiling at their work institutions, especially the technological professionals. La mentioned that the Chinese accent was often equated with "stupidity" and "aliens," whereas European accents were more tolerated and appreciated. Cui felt upset that Asians are always seen as foreigners due to their visible difference in appearance from Caucasians.

Bias against China

- 62 Almost all of the participants spoke about their encounters with ideological prejudice against China in academic and non-academic settings in the US. Often times they were offended by misconceptions and bias about China, particularly on issues like Taiwan, Tibet, trade, and human rights. Citing a young scholar in a graduate forum denouncing China's policies regarding Taiwan, La said, "While I want to distinguish

American people from American government, sadly some well-educated American agree with their government." Song mentioned a renowned professor who would take the stance of US mainstream media, rather than pass judgment objectively. Fei described his host as very opinionated, "Often demonizing China out of bias, his talks are more provocative than thought-provoking. Unlike other radical scholars like Mearsheimer, he is too judgmental and moody to be respected." Mei mentioned how she responded to a speaker at a forum, "[He] asserted that China used tax rebates to undercut the price of its exports. Based on my work experience in a foreign trade company, I clarified that China's tax rebates were offset by the 17% value added tax on Chinese products before export." Rong described her horrible experience on the "Hospitality Home Day" in Denver,

Learning that I was from China, the husband turned hostile as if I were a Communist. He deliberately picked topics like Tibet, human rights and pollution, saying that the Tibetans have been suppressed by the Chinese government and China's pollution spoils the air in California.

Cultural Superiority

- 63 Most of the participants were taken aback by the mindset of cultural superiority and self-centrism among Americans, as manifest in their limited knowledge of other countries and the attitude of viewing the world from an overly US-focused perspective. Rui illustrated, "Many Americans don't see the need to travel overseas when they can do it at home. Such a perception is reinforced by the media, which doesn't focus on the world unless it relates to something bad." Zheng observed, "Some American students even think America is 'far' from the rest of the world, an insurmountable distance away. This is a sad irony for a country that has sent people to the moon." Several scholars found many Americans' knowledge about China was limited to Chinese food, the Great Wall, *Kong Fu*, etc. Mo concluded that Americans have a very narrow view of the rest of the planet and exhibit a high level of self-confidence and self-aggrandizement.

Conclusion

- 64 The Fulbright experience brought considerable changes to the Chinese scholars personally and professionally that can be characterized as significant, positive, and enduring. Through an array of professional activities, the participants acquired specialized knowledge, research techniques, and teaching methods, meanwhile absorbing American academic standards, work ethics, and education philosophy. Academic exchanges on various occasions strengthened their awareness of viewing the world with more respect for differences. In terms of cultural learning, the Chinese scholars took part in various events, and gained a more mature and nuanced understanding of a country quite different from China, admiring the strengths of American culture and educational as well as political system while accepting the shortcomings. This suggests that interactions help different people get closer to each other. To a great extent, the fruitful experiences of the Chinese scholars are attributed to the educational nature and prominent standing of the Fulbright Program, as well as the dedication of the program staff. Clearly, major benefits in the Fulbright experience do occur as a result of participating in the program, and the programmatic quality enhances the benefits (Bachner and Zeuschel).

- 65 The outcomes of Chinese scholars' Fulbright experience were much influenced by traditional Chinese culture. For one thing, Chinese people are very sensitive to their positions in hierarchical structures. Therefore, the scholars holding an administrative title would make conscious efforts to foster institutional linkages and spread knowledge about China during the grant term, while those without any "official ranks" mostly neglected such commitments. For another, Chinese culture highly regards mentors' guidance and close teacher-student relationships. Thus, the host or advisor was a big concern for the Chinese Fulbright scholars: some reported adequate interactions with their host and therefore a productive and delightful experience at the host institution; some others felt their Fulbright experience was kind of tarnished by the host who was "indifferent," "stereotyped," or "uncaring." Besides, Chinese parents make great sacrifices to ensure that their children get the best education. This partly explains why some participants devoted substantial time to their child's educational experience at the expense of their own professional pursuits in the US.
- 66 This study provides significant information about contemporary Chinese intellectuals and their attitudes towards the US. First, given the differences between China and the US in regard to scholarship standard, academic resources, university governance, etc., the Chinese Fulbright scholars' professional engagement in the US was limited by their traditional self-image of being a 'learner.' Meanwhile, however, they exhibited a 'learn from but do not copy America' kind of posture. In some respects they admired the US and their American peers while holding reservations in some others. After all, the stringent selection of the Fulbright Program means that the grantees tend to be independent thinkers capable of forming their own opinions. Second, there is a tendency towards anti-US positioning among contemporary Chinese intellectuals. This positioning is largely a result of the conflicting China-US relations, dotted with resentments, accusations, and estrangement. Like the Chinese public, many Chinese intellectuals are very nationalistic. Regarding national unity, territory, and integrity, they are not going to give up what they think is rightfully theirs. Thus, for Chinese Fulbright scholars overall, any biased views and antagonistic expressions about China would provoke their nationalistic sentiment. This also suggests that the rise of China has boosted the self-confidence of Chinese scholars in intercultural settings.
- 67 Despite the effectiveness of US public diplomacy efforts in battering communism during the Cold War, the Fulbright Program was only partially successful in the case of post-Communist China. The Chinese scholars were generally satisfied with their Fulbright experience, but they did not necessarily become favorable to the US. Thus, satisfaction and favorability were significantly unrelated. Above all, pre-existing views of US hegemony played an important role in shaping their attitude. Notably, over-emphasis on military force as a long-running criticism of American foreign policy had left a lasting imprint on the Chinese scholars. This resonates with the statement of Scott-Smith (182): "Exchange does not change previous attitudes from negative to positive; it can only strengthen the already positive attitudes." This means, American public diplomacy efforts cannot be successful without a consistent foreign policy; appropriate policies are more helpful than money and muscle spent in educational exchange programs (Melissen). The second factor concerns racial tensions in US society. Granted that Americans cherish their founding fathers' beliefs that all people are equal and that the government is expected to protect the people's "unalienable" rights, it is upsetting to see racism persistent in US, and the extended US experience

with globalization has not weakened discriminatory force in the country. Another factor relates to arrogance and self-centralism ingrained in American culture. While a primary goal of the Fulbright Program is to foster “mutual understanding,” the Chinese scholars found their Fulbright experience largely a one-way process of learning American ideas, values, standards, and skills. To improve the situation, the US should learn more about other countries and understand other peoples, by listening better and cultivating humility (Snow 22).

68 While the Fulbright Program has evolved over time with sound administrative structures and processes in place, there is still room for improvement. First of all, the program administration should articulate the standards of grantee selection and implement nuanced screening of the applicants through national Fulbright organizations. It is believed that Fulbright Fellows will be able to carry out their grant term and be committed to the program’s goals. In practice, participants seek out new experience in the US with differing motivations and intentions. Those with highly developed professional plans are better prepared for the Fulbright experience than those with less-developed plans. Meanwhile, in grantee selection special attention should be given to applicants’ professional traits, such as “leadership potential.” The second issue concerns grantee placement and oversight of host institutions. As the host institution is perhaps the most essential and irreducible feature of the Fulbright program (Bachner and Zeutschel), the matching and salutary interactions between American host and visiting scholar should be facilitated as priority responsibilities of the program administration. Information flow and resources should be designed to support success of host institution matching. In addition, the impersonal setting of the host institution may pose constraints to collegial interactions between visiting scholars and their American colleagues. As such, the CIES should insist that host institutions be more proactive in advancing in-depth exchange and mutual understanding. To quote a program participant, “Since the CIES brings the Fulbright scholars to the States, it should make the best use of our expertise.” The final issue concerns Fulbright Program administration on the Chinese side. Despite its international prestige, the Fulbright Program has been under-recognized in China, resulting in the demeaning pre-departure formalities on Chinese grantees. This calls for actions of the MOE to ensure that the Fulbright Program in China is carried out effectively.

Notes

[1] In many Chinese universities, the faculty’s scholarly research is evaluated regularly and based on the number and type of research grants and published articles in ‘recognized’ journals, notably those ranked in Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), or their Chinese equivalents.

[2] All of these institutions are leading universities or institutes in China, which are administered by the MOE or CASS.

[3] This article draws on data and method of a parallel study by the author and her assistant.

[4] A research institute refers to an independent higher learning institution which primarily does research, rather than teaching. Many of such institutes are affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Chinese Academy of Social

Sciences (CASS).

[5] In China, faculty members who start their academic career in leading institutions tend to remain at these institutions. This is also the case with the 32 interviewees.

[6] For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the names of hosts.

[7] At the time of applying for the Fulbright grant, Yue was an assistant professor of English Linguistics. The two years study at the American Studies program at this university sparked her research interests in American government.

[8] This indicates poor institutional management and financial constraints of Fei's home university at the time.

[9] Due to the wide gap in standard of living between urban and rural areas, the leading universities in China are concentrated in major cities, while universities and institutions in poor areas can hardly attract top graduates to support regional development.

[10] In China, colleges are mostly higher education institutions smaller than universities in number of students, faculty, and amount of funds appropriated by the government, and their main task is teaching, instead of scientific research.

[11] While there is no age limit for the examinees since 2001, they usually go to college at around 18, upon graduation from high school.

[12] University governance in China remains highly bureaucratized, resulting in excessive administrative interference in academic affairs. This makes it difficult for faculty to exercise their independent academic judgment and authority.

Appendix: Profile of Interview Participants

Name ^a	Sex	Type	Discipline	Rank ^b	Title/Position
Chang	F	VRS	American Literature	ASSOP	
Jian	M	VRS	Business administration	FP	Associate Dean
Feng	M	VRS	Film Studies	ASSOP	
Ying	M	VRS	Environmental Economics	FP	
Xin	F	VRS	American Literature	ASSOP	Office Director
Ai	F	VRS	Law	FP	
Hong	F	VRS	Applied Linguistics	FP	
Cui	F	VRS	American History	FP	Program Director
Qing	M	VRS	American Literature	ASSOP	
Kui	F	VRS	Asian American Literature	ASSOP	Program Director
Min	F	VRS	Linguistics	FP	

Cai	F	VRS	International Business	FP	Program Director
Fei	M	VRS	International Relations	ASSOP	Division Director
Xia	F	VRS	Chinese Philosophy	Researcher	
Tao	F	VRS	Political Science	FP	
Si	M	APSA	International Relations	FP	Assistant Dean
Zheng	M	FLTA	American studies	ASSISP	
Yan	F	FLTA	Linguistics	ASSISP	
Rui	F	FLTA	Linguistics	ASSISP	
Xi	F	FLTA	English Education	ASSISP	Vice Director
Shu	F	FLTA	Linguistics	ASSISP	
Qiang	M	FLTA	International Relations	ASSISP	
Lei	F	FLTA	Translation Studies	ASSISP	Vice Director
La	F	GS	Linguistics	ASSISP	
Yue	F	GS	Linguistics	ASSISP	
Li	F	PHD	International Relations	ASSISP	Assistant Director
Mo	F	PHD	Linguistics	ASSISP	Assistant Director
Ya	F	SIR	Linguistics	ASSOP	
Qi	M	SIR	American Studies	ASSOP	
Zhong	M	SIR	Education	ASSOP	Vice Dean
Rong	F	SIR	American Studies	FP	Program Director
Mei	F	SIR	Economics	ASSOP	

^a Pseudonyms are used for the sake of confidentiality.

^b FP–Full Professor; ASSOP–associate professor; ASSISP–assistant professor

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