

Overseas Integration Condition and Strategies of Young Chinese Students

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ABSTRACT

This study expands and tests the culture shock model of Oberg (1960), using 10 high school students from three countries as samples to study college students. Through path analysis (semi-structured in-depth interviews) to understand the impact of cultural differences, language and learning, social media and other difficulties. The results show that the support of family and friends, personal character factors and social media play an important role in the adjustment process of international students.

Keywords: *young international students, culture shock, cultural apart, social media, career planning.*

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The definition of acculturation

Oberg's 'culture shock' model describes the cultural shock experiences by acculturators as a process in accordance with their physiological and psychological feelings, which includes the following four stages: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment (Oberg, 1960) [1].

Stage 1: Honeymoon

The honeymoon period of studying abroad is usually the first month of reaction for international students who have just arrived in a foreign country. They are curious about all the new things and the environment around them, feel fresh, and want to try and understand them. In learning, there are new campuses, new classmates and friends, new teachers, and new teaching methods; in life, they are exposed to new lifestyles and the entertainment methods of foreign young people, such as bar culture. These have a strong attraction for international students. They can't wait to experience and try. Of course, this kind of curiosity is good and can help them get rid of the initial homesickness, but there are also risks. Many young people cannot resist temptation, such as blindly experimenting with sex, alcoholic beverages, and even marijuana, which eventually lead to bitter fruit.

Stage 2: Crisis

After the honeymoon period has passed, there will be a crisis period, which lasts approximately one to three months, which is a period full of stress and conflict. After trying new things, the life of the international students returned to peace. At this time, they began to miss the cultural and living habits of their own country and nation, and began to reject the culture of other countries, feeling that living in an unaccustomed environment would face pressure and challenges. At this time, the most likely emotions are autism, depression, and anxiety.

For elementary international students, the main problems they face during the crisis period are learning pressure and social pressure. How to overcome language difficulties and differences in teaching methods, adapt to foreign study life and complete homework on time has become their main problem in learning. In terms of social interaction, elementary international students may face a lack of close friends and rejection by locals.

Stage 3: The recovery period

As the crisis period slowly fades, the recovery period is gradually ushered in, that is, regaining interest and love for the fresh life around, gradually accepting and adapting to the new environment psychologically, and restoring a calm mind and living habits. The recovery period will last about 2 to 3 months.

The specific manifestations of the recovery period are the improvement of the learning situation and the increase of local friends in the studying abroad country. Under normal circumstances, elementary international students gradually overcome language barriers and can complete their learning tasks independently and achieve satisfactory results. In terms of social interaction, they have further expanded their friendship circles, met local friends or friends of foreign students who are in similar circumstances, and have their own stable and intimate social circle.

Stage 4: Adaptation

When everything has returned to calm, it is the final adaptation period, which is basically to integrate into the foreign cultural life environment. With your own stable social circle and lifestyle, you can basically adjust your homesickness and feel in the new environment. Find your own interests and hobbies (Hu Jiayi, 2012).

International students entering the adjustment period usually have stayed in the country of study for more than one year and have their own short- and medium-term life plans, such as obtaining a certain academic certificate or looking for a job goal. They have an in-depth understanding of local life and learning, and can reasonably plan their future development directions according to the environment and personal conditions.

1.2. Cultural adaptation theory

Acculturation can be understood as the psychological and behavioural changes that occur in different groups or individuals during face-to-face intercultural contact (Penley, 2017) [3]. In 1883, Powell first used the term 'acculturation' in a paper that focused on the psychological changes that occur when a group or individual simulates the behaviour of a person from a foreign culture (PRITSCHET L, POWELL D, HORNE Z, 2016). In 1936, the anthropologist Redfield gave the definitive explanation of acculturation, which consists of individuals who simultaneously meet the phenomenon of sustained direct behavioural contact that occurs between two different cultural groups, resulting in a change in the cultural connotations possessed by one or both parties.

Berry (1997) [2] proposes a 'cross-cultural adaptation model' that classifies cultural adaptation strategies into four categories: integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation. If an individual wants to maintain his or her native culture and also wants to maintain a good relationship with the dominant culture, he or she adopts the integration strategy; if an individual only wants to maintain his or her native cultural identity and rejects establishing a relationship with the dominant culture, he or she belongs to the separation strategy; if an individual only seeks a close relationship with the dominant culture and does not want to maintain his or

her native culture, he or she belongs to the assimilation strategy; but when an individual neither wants to relate to the dominant culture nor wants to maintain. However, when individuals neither want to relate to the dominant culture nor maintain their native cultural identity, they adopt a marginalisation strategy. "The Intercultural Adaptation Model changes the traditional view of acculturation as a one-dimensional linear process, and instead views the gradual disengagement from the native culture and the gradual integration into the new culture as two separate linear processes, with acculturation thus becoming a two-dimensional dynamic transition.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses semi-structured interviews. The main reason why the in-depth interview method is widely used in the study of international flows of people is that the deep interview method is an unstructured, direct, personal interview in which an investigator with advanced skills interviews a respondent in depth, to reveal underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a certain issue. The in-depth interview method is appropriate for understanding complex, abstract questions. The purpose of this study is to explore the integration of young overseas students in a foreign country and the changes in their psychological state. Such issues are often not clear in a few words, effective information only be summarized from them through free conversation and in-depth look at important topic. In contrast, semi-structured means that the interview outline of this study is not completely determined in advance, and the interviewer will ask follow-up questions according to the different answers. The semi-structure interview method follows a rough outline, and the interviewer has the flexibility to make necessary adjustments according to the actual situation, at the time of the interview in order to better exploring valuable information. In this study, a 30-60 minutes semi-structured interview was conducted with eight Chinese teenage students who were studying abroad or had studied abroad. The interviews began in September 2020 and ended in February 2021. The interviewees included 6 international students who had a face-to-face contact with the researcher. As well, 2 international students recruited by the researcher through a snowballing sampling.

The interviewees were diverse in terms of gender, education, age, study abroad destination, major, and other indicators, which to reduce the result's distortion which is caused by homogeneity of interviewees. Specifically, this study covers destinations such as UK, Canada and Singapore; the interviewees are high school and undergraduate students; four of them are male and four are female; the age range is 16-18 years old; and the interviewees have lived abroad from half a year to

two years. For those who settled in Hangzhou or stayed there briefly, the interviews were arranged in the classroom nearby each other. For interviewees living overseas or in other parts of China, the interviews were conducted via WeChat voice calls. The conversation is conducted in Mandarin Chinese. All interviews were recorded with the approve of the interviewees and converted into transcripts by Xunfei software, the researcher proofreading for the transcripts and 25,079 words were counted. The interview questions were divided into three main parts. The first part asks the interviewee about situation study abroad and adaptation. The second part asked the interviewees what actions they would take to promote acculturation, including the use of social media. The third part asked the

interviewees about their assessment and attitudes towards their stage of acculturation. At the end of the interviews, the researchers independently read the interviews transcript to extract the thematic clues that emerged. The analysis was followed a three-level coding process. In primary coding, the interviewer, together with another researcher who is a PhD student in journalism and communication. In Open coding researchers distil and interpret all the valuable statements. In the Axial coding, the coding analysis was categorized by gradually moving closer to specific themes. Finally, the clusters were further integrated in the Selected coding while the researchers compared each other's findings, culminating in the overall conclusions of this study.

Table 1 Basic information of interviewees

coding	Sexual	age	Destination	Major of overseas study	learning stages	Interview method	Time (Min)
S1	Male	16	Canada	mathematics , economy, physical	Junior high school	Personal interviewing	64
S2	Female	18	Singapore	literature	undergrate	Personal interviewing	57
S3	Female	18	UK	Mathematics, Biology, chemistry	Junior high school	voice calls	58
S4	Male	18	USA	Mathematics, Economy, Business	Junior high school	voice calls	43
S5	Female	18	UK	Mathematics, Business, Art	Junior high school	voice calls	48
S6	Female	18	UK	Mathematic, Chemistry, Economy	Junior high school	voice calls	41
S7	Male	17	UK	Mathematics, Economy, Physics	Junior high school	voice calls	47
S8	Male	17	UK	Mathematics, Accounting, Business	Junior high school	Personal interview	58

3. CULTURAL SEPARATION HAS BECOME A COMMON STATE

Many young international students expressed that although they are overseas, the friends and hot news they follow on social media are focused on their home country, and the variety shows they watch in their leisure time are also domestic programmes. Cultural separation refers to the desire to maintain all identification with the home culture, to reject communication and contact with the mainstream social

group. The small group of international students interviewed for this study felt that they would all return to their home countries when they eventually completed their qualifications and therefore did not have a strong need for local cultural integration. A young international student said, "(on social networks) it's basically all Chinese friends, I will contact with, and posting updates is just for my family and friends. I'm not really interested in foreigners, I go my own way and rarely look at them. The bloggers I follow on social networks are basically Chinese as well." (S5) Tool-oriented young

international students were more common among the interviewees, who used the experience of studying abroad as a tool to get a better job back in their home country after getting a diploma, so they just wanted to graduate as quickly and savely as possible and did not want to socialise with the locals.

There are some international students who say they are in a state of cultural separation. "I think it's separation, I guess, and I don't want to change. In fact, I am not really interested in foreign culture at all, I prefer the traditional culture at home." (S5) Many young international students continue to maintain social circles and habits at home due to their heavy academic pressure and undeveloped social skills, not deeply integrated into the local community, they still sustain with their social circles and habits at home.

After graduating from university, I will work in the UK for two or three years probably, accumulating experience and then go back to China." (S6) The majority of international students interviewed for this study indicated that they planned to come back to work

after finishing their studies to find work or further their careers.

The study deduces two reasons for the cultural separation of instrumental students. One is that they are only abroad for a short period of time and that they have clear goals when they living abroad, so they do not spend much effort on integrating into local social circles; the other is that they have a heavy academic pressure, learn in a non-native language and have little time to socialise as the new teaching system creates challenges for them.

Therefore, this paper classifies the cultural integration strategies of young international students into two types: instrumental and integrative. On the whole, the instrumental students are less integrated into the local culture and pay more attention to the hot news of their home culture, and their interactions in social media are limited to the social circle of their home culture. The integrative students are more integrated into the local culture and is more attentive to hot news in the host country, and they will have the interaction with the local people in social media.

Table 2 Characteristics of two types of international students and their social media use strategies at home and abroad

	Type characteristics	Social Media Usage Strategy
Instrumental students	A. Self-sourced cultural identity B. Low interest in the local culture of the country of study	A. follow celebrities and friends in their home country B. frequently browse information related to their home country on social media C. post less content and have low emotional involvement in foreign social media
Integrative students	A. a sense of belonging to the local culture B. the dependence on the home culture be partial replaced by host country	A. less frequent use of domestic media B. further use of foreign social media as a tool to recreate the circle of relationships

“(Watching domestic variety and TV shows) is less frequent, and there is no special need to reverse a time difference to watch some live TV shows.” (S1) Many young international students use foreign social media frequently to integrate into the local culture and to learn more about the preferences of local people through. “Like ins and tiktok, you can browse on a lot of interesting things, like my favourite anime spoofs and things that the locals like, so I can learn what their laughing points and talk to them easier” (S1). The integration of young foreign students fits in the situation “everyday interaction of non-mainstream people who leave their home culture behind in a new cultural environment and actively seek to interact with other cultures” (Berry, 1997)[2].

4. GENDER HAS AN IMPACT ON CULTURAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

When asked "What do you think are the new skills you must have to learn when you go abroad? (except the local language)", the most frequent option among boys was "sports" (S1, S7), followed by "leadership" (S4) and "self-care" (S8). " The only word that appeared for girls was "self-care ability" (S2, S3, S5, S6).

The researchers attribute this difference to two factors: Firstly, due to the deviated expectations of men and women regarding the core of life, men spend more energy on expanding activities, such as sports, sociability and involvement in student union. Therefore 'sport' and 'leadership' are key skills for them. Women are more interested in quality and comfort of life, and most international students choose to cook for themselves as foreign restaurants are not suitable for Chinese tastes and are expensive. Increased "self-care

ability" means that they can enjoy better food, but "self-care ability" also includes cleaning, repairing appliances and driving. Secondly, as most of the group sports that women like to do at home are difficult to achieve in foreign countries, such as dancing and yoga, most of the respondents do not go specifically for sports, while men have a stronger need for sports and the sports they like are more international, such as football, basketball and volleyball.

Men will be more interested in fitting in with the local social group, and many men will be more concerned about swapping social resources, "but I think it's appropriate to join the group if it's good for me." (S4) Expanding their circle of friends can give them access to more information and opportunities, so men will start to build their circle of resource exchange during the academic year. Men will be more inclined to work creatively and need to expand a certain number of contacts to introduce them to resources, while women are more inclined to work in a step-by-step manner, with a fixed social circle and less need for the extra benefits that come from contacts. Wise Recruitment and Baby Tree released the 2020 China Women's Workplace Status Survey Report [4], and the research data shows that the current overall income of women is still lower than that of men 67.98% of respondents believe that women can be competent at the top of a company, with a higher percentage of women choosing this option. A higher percentage of men believe that women are not qualified to work in higher status. In terms of job distribution, men are more likely to be in technical positions and women are more likely to be in functional positions.

According to data from a survey conducted by the Women's Institute of the National Women's Federation in 2020, six of the eight industries in which women are absolutely subordinate are high-paying monopolies or industries with a high degree of social power. Compared to men, women are account for low proportion in "white collar" and account for high proportion in "blue collar" occupations, reflecting the overall low level of women's occupations.

According to a Pew Research Center survey 2017 [5], Americans generally believe that the most important peculiarity for women are physical attractiveness (35%), compassion and child-rearing (30%), while the most important peculiarity for men are honesty and integrity (33%), professional/business success (23%) and ambition and leadership (19%). Similar viewpoints are prevalent worldwide. This phenomenon of psychological fixation tends to discourage women with ambition and leadership.

Most of the males in the young international students already have a clear future career plan when they study abroad. Men are more inclined to start a business or take on a leadership role, so they focus more

on developing their social and leadership skills while studying abroad. Women, on the other hand, do not have a clear career plan, so they do not purposely develop their social and leadership skills when studying abroad, but focus more on life experience, so they will focus on developing their life skills such as cooking and cleaning.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Language

The majority of Chinese primary school students are not proficient in English, and language is a major barrier to their integration into a foreign culture. Firstly, in terms of English proficiency, Chinese students are exposed to written English in their basic education and lack the ability to communicate with foreigners in their daily lives. Some young people who choose to study abroad at high school or university level attend international schools with a westernised training model, while others come from ordinary high schools, with different levels of English proficiency. When researcher ask what difficulties that young students had during study abroad, language problem and isolation are frequent answers. "When I first chose biology, I couldn't understand anything at first, it was all technical vocabulary, and I couldn't ask the teacher if I didn't understand something in class. (S3)" Another interviewee (S8) said that language did not only affect her study, but also her daily life and social interactions: "Because of the difference in language and culture, I have never really communicated with foreigners because of the language barrier, so I have a certain fear of social contact with foreigners. "The language barrier makes it difficult to communicate with foreigners. Another interviewee (S5) said that "my social circle has narrowed significantly after going abroad".

5.2. Motivation

Chinese young overseas students have a clear and utilitarian motivation to study abroad and therefore do not have an urgent need for local cultural integration.

The researcher broke down their motivation to study abroad into three stages, with the first stage being why they chose to study abroad. The majority of interviewees indicated that their immediate motivation for studying abroad was that they were under too much pressure from the Chinese college entrance exams and predicted that they would not be able to get into a top school with their own grades, so they chose to apply to a foreign schools. Interviewee (S1) revealed, "The reason for going abroad was that I decided to go abroad at that time because I was not studying well in China and then after that I did not want to receive education in

the Chinese high school system, so I decided to study abroad." Some interviewees also stated it was their family's decision and that they were just following their parents' wishes (S5). It is clear why young Chinese students go abroad to study, but due to their age and limited practical experience, they lack deep understanding of studying abroad, and in the decision-making process, they take into account their parents' opinions and imitate the choices of their peers.

The second stage is the goal of studying abroad. The majority of respondents said they studied abroad to get a diploma, to improve their competitiveness in the labour market and to get a better job. "I want to stay and work in the UK for a few years after get the postgraduate qualifications and then have the opportunity to go back homeland and work in a foreign company." (S3)

The third stage is planning after graduation. Half of the respondents said they would back to China to build up a business or find a job after completing their studies, but 50% choosing to work abroad for a while first so that they could find a better position return home.

5.3. Academic Stress

Academic stress is a common anxiety in young overseas students before university application months, with limited help from family and friends.

(S3) The biggest difficulty I encountered was academic pressure. I am now facing the problem of applying university, and pure mathematics is considered one of the most difficult subjects to apply for, I guess. Good universities require extra exams while the minimum standard to get into the maths department is 3 "A"s, and it is better to get two "A+"s one "A". I don't know if I will be able to get this grade in the end.

Family members can provide important financial support and peers can provide emotional support for young students. In contrast, academic stress is more of a problem that young students have to deal with on their own. However, there are also parents who choose to put international students down in out-side classes, which are run by Chinese people and taught by Chinese teachers who can explain in Chinese what is being taught in the classroom abroad, helping young students with limited English to better understand the content in English classes.

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