Socialization towards Internationalization: Survey Research on University Students in China

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ABSTRACT

Although students are the main recipients of internationalization in higher education (IHE), research on IHE mainly focuses on particular nations or educational institutions rather than on the individual. The perceptions of university students toward internationalization, particularly what may impact their preparedness for and critical awareness of internationalization, are largely lacking. This study explores the ways in which students' diverse socialization or experiences of socializing with different stakeholders impact their preparedness for and awareness of increasing internationalization in higher education institutions. The study utilizes data from a survey conducted with 511 students at two Chinese universities. The study found that students with diverse socialization backgrounds are more likely to develop a critical awareness of the social impact of internationalization, and that they believe that internationalization enables them to learn from others, to develop capacities to analyze global issues, to develop skills to work with cultural others, and to make ethical decisions on social issues.

Keywords: Chinese University students, cognitive differences, diverse socialization, internationalization in higher education

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the internationalization of higher education (IHE) has been and continues to be the central focus of research and academy (Mertkan et al., 2016). A plethora of research has been conducted on IHE that involves stakeholders at multiple levels on issues concerning educational policies, practices, and transnational collaborations, including programs, services, and curriculum delivery. One major focus of such research is the international mobility of students, which has contributed to a substantial and growing population flow globally (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Along with such global trends, Chinese students continue to be the primary contributing force to the international mobility and economic prosperity of many destination countries. Although the existing pandemic has interrupted education programs and disrupted the international mobility of students, recent research shows that the demand for overseas study is still strong (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2021).

To date, IHE research on student mobility tends to emphasize its "benefits" for students, such as opportunities for transnational communication and connections, improvement of skills and qualifications for multicultural workplaces, enhancement of independence and confidence, development of open-mindedness, intercultural empathy, and critical thinking (Alberts, 2007; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Heng, 2020; Obst & Forster, 2007; Urban & Bierlein Palmer, 2014; Yusoff, 2012). Such benefits have been a major motivation for international mobility among students. Nevertheless, motivations for international mobility are not solely derived from the potential benefits from IHE. Students' perceptions and attitudes toward internationalization may equally influence their decisions to study in a different country. How they perceive internationalization and how their perceptions and socialization influence their decisions of studying abroad may provide critical insights for those who have been impacted the most by IHE.

Chinese students have been the major recipients of the internationalization, regardless of whether they are the "consumers" or "beneficiaries"; to date, there is limited research on Chinese students' perspectives of IHE and what impacts their perceptions, particularly on those students who are still at universities but expecting to study abroad. Examining their perceptions and voices enables us to understand the impact of the reasoning process of these Chinese students on internationalization and how their personal experience contributes to their conceptualization of internationalization. The inclusion of students' perceptions will provide policy-makers and educators with a nuanced understanding of IHE. To the extent that it helps expand or reframe policies and models that guide international education and collaboration, capturing these consumer voices could significantly influence its future direction. The information gained through this study may also enhance students' sense of ownership of the internationalization of higher education and have significant implications in enriching their future social and academic experience.

This research, as part of a larger international project on IHE, focuses on the views of students at two universities in China. This study aims at seeking the "recipient" students' perceptions of or attitude toward IHE in China. The research

explores the factors that impact their perceptions, and the ways in which their socialization relates to their perceptions of internationalization in higher education. This article commences with the context and literature review on the internationalization, followed by the sociocultural framework and cognitive research that guides the inquiry, and then reports the research process and results.

CONTEXT

International student mobility is fast-growing globally and it is becoming a distinctive feature of contemporary tertiary education. Up to 2018, more than 5 million higher education students studied abroad all over the world (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018). This trend is more salient in China. According to the data compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC), there were 662,100 Chinese students studying abroad until 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics of China [NBSC], 2020), accounting for about 13% of the total number of international students in the world. This means that one out of every eight international students around the world hails from China. According to the statistics from the OECD. Stat (OECD Stat, 2021), the outbound mobility ratio of China's higher education was 2.2% in 2019. Chinese students occupy a significant position in the global mobility of international students.

The internationalization of China's higher education can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century. Students were sent with public funding to developed countries such as Britain, Germany, France, and Japan (Huang, 2003). Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China was the first country to send its students to study in the Soviet Union. In the early 1960s, policies were made to support students studying in the West. These policies laid a foundation for the management of students studying abroad.

In recent years, major actions to accelerate the internationalization of China's higher education are particularly reflected in the formulation and implementation of a series of national education policies. For example, the "Middle-and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010–2020)" (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010) states:

> Innovate and improve the mechanism of government-sponsored study abroad … with the principles of 'support studying abroad, encourage returning to China, and come and go freely' … and expand the scale of foreign students in the future. … Strengthen international understanding of education, promote cross-cultural exchanges, and enhance students' knowledge and understanding of different countries and different cultures. (item 48–50)

In August 2018, policy-makers announced the "Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of 'Double First Class' in Higher Education Institutions" (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, National Development and Reform Commission [MOE, MOF, ND and RC], 2018), which aims to: "vigorously promote high-level substantive international cooperation and

exchange, and play the role as a participant, promoter, and leader of world higher education reforms." (item 11)

As a result, Chinese students are given more opportunities for overseas exchange and learning, either self-funded or funded by scholarships from the nation or higher education institutions (Liu, 2016). A survey extending over 34 provinces in China by the New Oriental Vision Overseas Consulting Co., Ltd. and The Kantar Group (TKG) found that 73% of overseas Chinese students are in higher education and undergraduate students account for 57% (New Oriental Education & Technology Group [NOE & TG], 2020). As the economy is developing in China, more and more families are able to afford having their children study abroad, especially those with only one child (Wang, 2020). Students from middle-class families are increasing tremendously year by year (NOE & TG, 2020).

Since 2009, China has gradually implemented policies and guidelines to support students to study abroad on a larger scale (Liu, 2016). Studying abroad becomes more acceptable by the public in China (Liu, 2016). The number of students and the wide range of disciplines they are undertaking have reached an unprecedented level. Since 2000, there has been a substantial increase in the number of overseas students and returning students, through a series of programs by the government (Ryan, 2011) (see Figure 1 below).
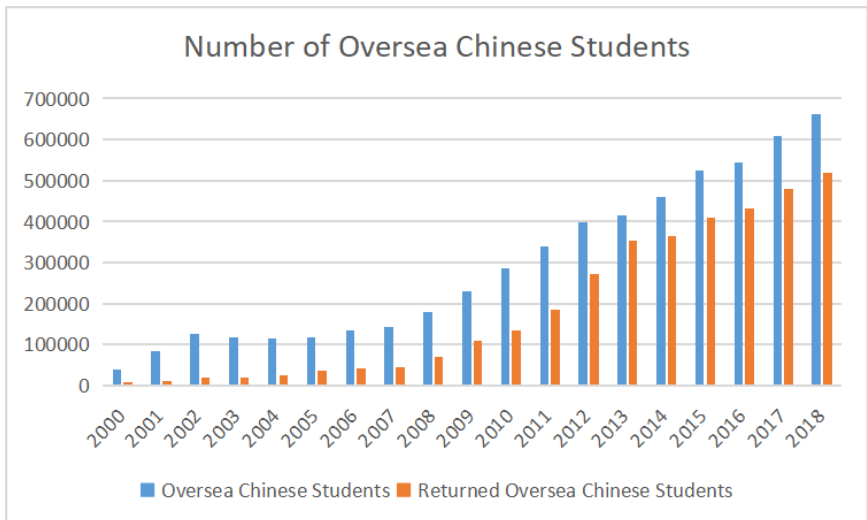

Figure 1: Number of Oversea Chinese Students

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2020, National Bureau of Statistics Database.
http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2020/indexch.htm (accessed 16 January 2021)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Internationalization

Internationalization is a broad concept and it gained popularity in education in the early 1980s. In the 1990s, the discussion on international education centered on differentiating it from comparative education, global education, and multicultural education (Knight, 2004). Until the 21st century, there was much discussion on transnational education, borderless education, multi-nationalization, and regionalization (e.g., Knight, 2008). To date, internationalization has been considered a global, strategic, and mainstream factor in higher education (Knight & De Wit, 2018). In addition, the mobility of students, scholars, and programs (e.g., Gao, 2020; Greek & Jonsmoen, 2021; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Teichler, 2015); reputation and branding (manifested by global and regional rankings, such as QS and the Times Higher Education World rankings) (Lo, 2011; Stein, 2018); and a shift in paradigm from cooperation to competition (Van der Wende, 2001) have been the main manifestations of IHE over the past 30 years. Aigner et al. (1992) stated that maintaining global security, enhancing national economic strength, and promoting understanding among countries are the three main factors for the realization of internationalization in higher education.

Some scholars adopt a broader view of internationalization, including politics (e.g., national security, investment for diplomatic relations), economy (e.g., income-generation, international competitiveness), academic factor (achieving international academic standards, institution building), and cultural/social factor (e.g., preservation of national culture, respect of cultural diversity) (e.g., Castro et al., 2020; Knight, 2013; Olson et al., 2015; Zha, 2003). In the context of knowledge economy, internationalization in higher education has become an important way to generate revenue (Kelly, 2000; Teichler, 2010), to prepare graduates for the global competitive labor market, and to attract top talent for the national knowledge economy (De Wit et al., 2015).

Recently, due to increasing focus on competition, anti-globalization voices are emerging. Issues surrounding exclusion resulted from globalization, and the risk of global economic imbalances has further reinforced such voices (Castells, 2000). In the academic community, the value of IHE becomes the central focus of a heated debate. There are critical voices that are against any form of "academic capitalism" (Van der Wende, 2017, p. 6) and seek more equitable international collaboration (Knight & De Wit, 2018). There is a call for a more inclusive and a less elitist approach to internationalization of higher education. The call views internationalization not simply as a purpose but also as a process toward comprehensive equality development for all stakeholders (De Wit, 2019, 2020; De Wit et al., 2015). Led by Brandenburg et al. (2019), the "Internationalization in Higher Education for Society" (IHES) proposes a comprehensive inclusive vision of internationalization based on the unity of the world community (Leask & de Gayardon, 2021).

Internationalization and Its Impact on Students

Why does internationalization of higher education matter for students? Through the lens of students' mobility, Tran and Vu (2018) reveal in their study that IHE not only enhances students' educational experiences but also develops their cross-cultural understanding and relationships with different communities. Students with international learning experiences can develop a new social network and acquire extracurricular skills, such as personal development, as well as linguistic and cultural competence (Green, 2019; Krzaklewska & Krupnik, 2006; Wiers-Jenssen, 2003). For many students, international mobility is also driven by "credential inflation" (Wadhwa, 2016, p. 230). International experience and credentials may enhance their employment opportunities after graduation and put them in a more competitive position for high-status jobs (Fielden, 2007; Punteney, 2012). Particularly in Asia, there is a general belief that international higher education would enhance students' competitiveness in the global and local labor markets (Berling, 2018; Mok, 2018). Mok et al. (2020) stated that high-quality education, the reputation of the host country/university, greater acquisition of English proficiency, and the recognition of their diplomas/certificates for future careers are the main drivers for student mobility.

However, studying abroad also comes with challenges: language barriers, cultural conflicts, stereotypes, etc. All of these make it difficult to live in a foreign environment. In a survey among Canadian international students conducted by Guo and Guo (2017), respondents reported that they felt it was difficult to make local friends and communicate with their supervisors. They indicated that their home culture was not well respected, and they experienced racial discrimination. Another formidable challenge is severe financial difficulties, which can cause some mental and psychological problems, such as anxiety and stress, and eventually lead to poor academic performance (Nyland et al., 2013). Based on students' perspectives, Li and Collins (2014) explored Chinese students' experiences in American doctoral education and the challenges in their socialization, including communication barriers and negative feelings. Heng (2017) interviewed Chinese undergraduate students on their aspirations for living and studying in the United States and found that better support is needed for these students to navigate the education system.

In general, previous studies tend to focus on international higher education at the macro or meso level, examining its definitions, rationales, collaboration strategies, and pedagogical implications. Studies that have explored students' perceptions of international experiences mainly focus on overseas students. Little research has been done on students who are expecting or planning to study abroad and their perceptions of internationalization in relation to their backgrounds, socialization, and lived experiences. How do they perceive internationalization and what influences their perceptions that may affect their decisions on overseas study?

Students' Perception of Internationalization

In the context of internationalization, globalization means not only multicultural exchanges, but also mutual understanding and cooperation. In 1948, UNESCO advocated education for sustaining peace in the world by interactively understanding people of different sociocultural environments. For supporting education for global citizenship, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2015) has produced documents with key aims, including "develop values of fairness and social justice, and skills to critically analyze inequalities … " (p. 16). According to Clarke (2004), global education focuses mostly on the global awareness of students with respect to international matters, and their attitudes toward internationalism, and aims at preparing students to be world citizens.

In modern China, *International Understanding Education* is popular in elementary, junior high, and high school (Qin, 2013). Preparing students for global citizenship is an essential component of the international agenda for higher education institutions (Leask & Bridge, 2013). There is still space to develop in Chinese college students' international education (Gao et al., 2014). A survey of students in a Chinese university found that students present a one-sided understanding of internationalization. Most students tend to view global issues from a national perspective, and there is a lack of understanding of "global citizenship" (Gao, 2010).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research explores how Chinese university students' diverse social backgrounds affect their international perceptions. It employs a sociocultural framework that is based on the recent development in socialization theory, combined with the psychological and anthropological cultural perspectives. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural psychology, social conditions and actions are primary to the formation of humans' consciousness. Changes in social conditions and the basis of consciousness can lead to the development of new thinking and actions. People's learning, behavior, and development are shaped by their sociocultural contexts and their interactions with their sociocultural medium. Changes in individuals' sociocultural circumstances throughout the life cycle, such as a specific family, a neighborhood friendship group, a school classroom, an adult work setting (Lave & Wenger, 1991), may help them develop different capabilities as a member of society and repertoires of multicultural competence (Goodenough, 1976). The complexity and dynamic in such changes are a crucial focus of educational practices in schools (Erickson, 2009, 2011; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). In general, personal development, including people's perceptions of a particular phenomenon, is shaped by diverse social conditions, as well as by dynamic changes in communities and social relationships (Heng, 2017, 2018).

Teichler (2014) also argues that cognitions and attitudes toward internationalization are important concepts in discussing internationalization in higher education. There are programs (such as Lisbon Convention, 1997) that

have been set up to support mobility and cross-border knowledge transfer and to improve stakeholders' cognitive orientation to internationalization. These programs aim at enhancing stakeholders' "global understanding," to help them think critically of global or other countries' issues, and to promote respect of other cultures. Students' global awareness of internationalism is about what they know about other cultures, how the world systems operate, how they empathize with the values of other cultures, and what kind of standpoint they take on global issues (Díaz et al., 1999). Being a "global citizen" means expanding the boundaries of "citizenship" beyond the nation-state level and assuming responsibilities for human rights promotion (Dower, 2003).

Nevertheless, studies show that international mobility is largely driven by "added value," such as extracurricular skills, foreign linguistic and cultural competence for successful employment (Findlay et al., 2012). Such added value also includes building social networks, enhancing cosmopolitan competence, increasing independence, and bettering communication skills (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). There are variables that might affect the students' perspectives on internationalization of higher education and global citizenship. Trilokekar and Rasmi (2011) conducted a comprehensive analysis on the factors that affect students' desire to study abroad and identified two major sets of factors: the external environment factors, such as institutional and program characteristics, faculty involvement, and course contents; and internal subjective factors, including preferences for study abroad, demographic and psychosocial characteristics, psychological well-being, etc. They especially mentioned that an individual's social networks (including institutional, peer, and family) may affect their decisions to study abroad. However, such variables have not been fully considered. The domestic students who study at institutions of their home country may hold different views toward overseas studies and what it means to be a "global citizen." This study examines their diverse socialization backgrounds that can influence students' views on IHE. The study draws on an assumption that students' diverse socialization may influence their perceptions of IHE, their overseas study plans, and their understanding of being global citizens.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a larger international comparative study on the ethics of internationalization. The research project—Ethical Internationalism in Higher Education (EIHE), funded by the Academy of Finland (2012–2015)—examines the ethical issues arising from internationalization processes in higher education. This interdisciplinary, international mixed-methods research project involves 20 universities around the world. It explores ethical internationalism in higher education by comparing official university policies and the perceptions of faculty, students, and managers engaged with internationalization processes. This study focuses primarily on surveys in two universities in China to investigate the perceptions of college students on the internationalization of higher education.

Data Source and Sample

International education in China is developing rapidly, particularly in the coastal areas, such as southern and eastern China, where economic prosperity has led to more students studying abroad (Qin, 2013). This study draws on the survey data ($N = 511$) collected in 2014 from two universities, located in the South (SU, $N = 269$) and the West (WU, $N = 242$) of China, with the purpose of investigating their perceptions of internationalization and the influence of their own social background on their cognition. The following table provides a brief summary of the sample (unit: percentage):

University	SU (52.6%)		WU (47.4%)	
Gender	Female (77.9%)		Male (19.8%)	
Year of birth	1987–1997 (25.7%)		1992–1995 (74.3%)	
Year of study	First year (33.8%)	Second year (41.7%)	Third year (17.3%)	Fourth year (0.9%)

Note: There are 6.7% invalid cases.

This study aims at exploring whether diverse socialization or experiences socializing with people of diverse backgrounds impact students' critical awareness of the changing nature of internationalization. The study specifically used the following variables to explore the diverse socialization that students have and how it impacts their perceptions of internationalization:

Neighborhood where I grew up
My school experiences
My friends growing up
My friends at this university
My online friends
My romantic relationship

This research also measures students' perceptions of the internationalization of higher education, such as the importance of universities to society at large; opportunities that the internationalization of universities can offer; challenges posed by the internationalization of universities, etc.; and what is important to develop or learn about in the study of academic disciplines, such as skills and dispositions, global themes, social and political issues, etc. Students' demographic information has also been considered, especially the degree of their social diversity. A Likert scale was used to measure their diverse socialization:

All or nearly all from my own background
Mostly people from my own background
About half and half

Mostly people from a background different from mine
All or nearly all people from a background different from mine

Data Analysis

Student t-tests were used to investigate whether there is a statistical difference between students who mainly interact with people of their own background and those who interact with people from a different background. The comparison aims at exploring how students' socialization in the neighborhood where they grew up, through their school experience and friends, affects their perception of internationalization.

- Group 1: Less diverse socialization group—participants who interact with mostly people, all or nearly all from their own background
- Group 2: Diverse socialization group—those who interact with mostly people, all or nearly all from a different background

Thematic analysis is also conducted on students' attitudes toward the impact of internationalization on society between the two groups of students.

Inspired by De Wit (2020)'s proposition of a new approach to observe internationalization, this study also employs open-ended questions to gain a detailed understanding of students' perceptions of the topic.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study results show that there is a significant difference among Chinese college students in their perceptions of IHE in relation to their diverse socialization and lived experiences. Their experience and social backgrounds shape their worldviews and perspectives, expand their thinking over the processes and the implications of internationalization in higher education, and change their expectations and goals toward overseas studies.

Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare students who interact mostly with people, all or nearly all from a different background from them (Group 2) and those who interact mostly with people, all or nearly all from their own background in neighborhoods where they grew up (Group 1). Analysis results suggest that a significant statistical difference exists between Group 1 and Group 2 students in terms of the following perceptions: Internationalization of universities can offer students the opportunity to learn from other students from different countries (t (390) = 2.59, p = .01) and to critically analyze global issues (t (390) = 1.99, p < .05). Students who are used to interacting with people of diverse backgrounds are more likely to believe that internationalization could enable them to learn from others and to develop the capacity to analyze global issues. The experience of diverse interactions enables students to have a better understanding of different cultures and to become adaptable when facing changes resulting from transnational mobility.

Further analysis shows that Group 1 and Group 2 students differ in their views of skills and dispositions relevant to their field of study, in particular the skills of working well with people from a different culture (t (392) = 2.03, $p < .05$) and making ethical decisions that benefit society (t (93) = 2.56, $p = .01$). Group 2 students emphasize more on working well with people from a different culture ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .83$) and making ethical decisions that benefit society ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .74$). Students with a diversification of social capital are more likely to adapt to different modes of learning, living, and behavior. They have a greater potential to contribute to the intercultural process and to the new academic community.

A significant difference has also been found between these two groups in terms of what they value in their courses. Unlike Group 1, Group 2 students indicated that they attach more value to learning about how poorer countries can be helped to develop (t (106) = 2.83, $p = .01$), debating course ideas (t (105) = 3.92, $p = .00$), and learning from people who have experienced injustice (t (99) = 2.47, $p = .02$). Students in Group 2 who tend to interact with people of diverse backgrounds demonstrate greater concerns with poverty and justice issues and are more likely to engage with issues in the global communities. They tend to identify themselves as global citizens with a greater sense of social responsibility and a mission in the understanding of and engaging with global issues.

A thematic analysis was conducted on 281 students (more than half of the sample) who responded to the open-ended questions on the impact of internationalization on society. The analysis results support our assumption. Students who responded thoughtfully to the open-ended questions in general had a rather balanced perception of the impact of internationalization in higher education, seeing internationalization as a double-edged phenomenon. It is noteworthy that students with diverse socialization backgrounds tend to respond to the open-ended questions (64.4% of the 281 who responded). They tend to have a more balanced and critical view of IHE than those without diverse socialization backgrounds. On the one hand, students see internationalization mainly as conducive to cultural exchange and development. For example, students commented:

> Internationalization can promote development, innovation, and interest integration (10001ED)

> Nations realize cultural enrichment through mutual exchanges (10080ED)

> For students, international learning can make them understand different cultures and then rethink other countries' or global issues in an inclusive way (10151HU)

These students believe that internationalization can strengthen exchanges and cooperation between different countries and promote sharing of the advanced scientific and technological achievements. It can also help students develop an

inclusive understanding of different cultures and expand their thinking over other countries' and global issues.

On the other hand, students see internationalization mainly as impacting local cultural, social security, in addition to social conflict as well as social and economic polarization. One student expressed his concern that "internationalization increase the risk of neocolonialism and terrorism, exacerbating the gap between the East and the West/ the North and the South" (10146HU).

According to the surveyed students, global citizens need to deal with global issues from a holistic and multiple perspectives, be open-minded to different countries, and show respect to other cultures. What is important is to take the critical issues in mind, such as poverty, discrimination, and fairness, and assume the responsibility of building a better world, as one student indicated: "A good global citizen is one who is empathetic to others and responsible to make a better global society" (10248SC). Some students also feel they should have the ability to overcome the challenges of social division and difference: "As a global citizen, the key mission is to build an inclusive and diverse world" (10149HU).

Students look forward to increasing international understanding and learning about various cultures by participating more actively in overseas learning. Simultaneously, challenges and opportunities coexist. The surveyed students are also concerned with communication barriers and the social, cultural, or academic isolation led by the cultural divergence that they have to face. One student stated:

> Given the limited internationalization of my university, it is necessary to enlarge support networks to enhance activities for students to experience IHE, such as close relationship between domestic students with foreign ones to know the diverse culture and practice language skill. (11084ED)

Students see the benefits of being exposed to different cultures and how such exposure can enhance their understanding of people from other cultures and help them better integrate into an environment that is culturally diverse.

DISCUSSION

This research reveals that students are differentially positioned in relation to their social experience. Students with diverse socialization tend to have a stronger sense of global citizenship and are more concerned with global issues, social justice, equity, and power relations. Their concerns reflect the current ethically driven agenda of internationalization as suggested in recent studies (e.g., Andreotti, 2013; Guo & Guo, 2017; Khoo, 2011). These studies explored global citizenship by highlighting not only the economic but also the ethical implications of internationalization.

The students' perceptions of internationalization in this study represent a shift from the liberal model that emphasizes self-development in international education to a social transformation model that aims at strengthening students' awareness of international and intercultural matters related to equity, justice, human rights, and environment. Such an understanding equips them with critical

thinking toward social transformation (Delanty, 2009). What is evident is that students' diverse experience in their social lives potentially contributes to the development of their critical thinking to diverse views of knowledge and skills, competence in ethical decision making, acceptance of diverse people, cultures and values, and better resilience in the multicultural overseas environment. It also helps them improve their intercultural capacity and remain competitive in the global workplace (Weenink, 2008).

Some students who experience socialization with people from diverse backgrounds also tend to have a strong sense of entrepreneurship in the context of neoliberalism. They believe that internationalization accelerates economic cooperation and the sharing of advanced scientific and technological ideas. Internationalization simply means the competitiveness of students, higher education institutions, and nations in the global economic marketplace (Fielden, 2007; Punteney, 2012; Wadhwa, 2016).

On the other hand, students with less diverse socialization are more concerned with issues at the national and societal levels, such as whether advanced technology can bring about the economic development of the nation, whether certificates or diplomas from an overseas university are conducive to providing them better career opportunities. In other words, they tend to focus more on personal gains in the labor market or national competitiveness brought about by the internationalization of higher education. In other words, they prefer to view international experiences as the "symbolic capital in elite competitive games of distinction" (Yemini et al., 2014, p. 307).

This study also raises the question of class participation of Chinese students. In Western colleges, the inquiry-based dialogic teaching method is used widely to cultivate students' critical thinking skills by interactive and cooperative communication (Holmes, 2005). Due to a lack of English proficiency and unfamiliarity with the native culture, Chinese students usually tend to be inactive in classroom participation. This results in the marginalization of Chinese students in classrooms (Holmes, 2005; Tian & Lowe, 2009). However, in this study, students with diverse socialization show a stronger democratic awareness of global issues and are more likely to actively participate in classroom discussions and debates.

Thus, critical global citizenship education is needed to help learners move toward a deeper understanding of global issues and world cultures (Andreotti, 2011). In order to achieve this goal, "internationalization efforts should be collaborative with each culture mutually enhancing and enriching a global curriculum" (Pitts & Brooks, 2017, pp. 257–278). Particularly in China, there is a strong need to develop students' critical thinking and reflection skills, which would enable them to challenge power relations and cultural stereotypes and break cultural fascination and exoticism (Brooks & Pitts 2016; Pitts & Brooks, 2017).

More importantly, students are not passive recipients of internationalization but are the core stakeholders. It is critical to highlight their voices, especially the voices of those who study in their home country while preparing for overseas studies. This study foregrounds the voices of Chinese students by sharing how they view the internationalization of higher education and what they value in the

global context. It challenges the common observation that Chinese students tend to be passive participants who are unwilling or cannot express their thoughts and opinions (Ruble & Zhang 2013; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018). On the contrary, this study showcases how Chinese students would like their domestic or host institutional community to support their international experiences.

CONCLUSION

In the context of globalization, this research examines the differences in the perceptions of internationalization of higher education in relation to students' socialization background from a micro perspective. Their diverse socialization pushes their thinking over internationalization in a more comprehensive and ethical manner. Students' perceptions suggest that internationalization should not be driven by economic or financial gains or lead to a new mode of cultural domination/imperialism. Instead, it needs to be an inclusive process that cultivates their sense of global citizenship and cultural understanding/communication. Higher education institutions need to rethink how they can better support students through diversifying students' social experiences and enriching their learning, for example, through the creation of various programs, including summer schools in which students can talk and share ideas; create diverse social experiences with people from different cultural backgrounds; integrate international elements into the curriculum and encourage students' active participation in discussions and debates with others; and cultivate students' sense of global citizenship.

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