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# Western Influence on (People's Republic of China) Chinese Students in the United States

XINSHU ZHAO AND YU XIE

In the late 1970s, shortly after the Cultural Revolution ended, the People's Republic of China reopened its door to the West. Through the open door came tens of thousands of students and scholars. By 1988 more than 60,000 of them had gone aboard, with 93 percent going to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Between 1978 and 1988, students from the People's Republic of China became one of the largest foreign student groups in the United States, second only to those from Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> According to recent estimates, by the beginning of this decade more than 40,000 Chinese students were living in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The number may seem small, given China's population of more than a billion. Additionally, the group is by no means a representative sample of ordinary Chinese students and scholars, much less of ordinary Chinese people. Before June 1989, they were referred to as Communist China's "best and brightest," "new elite," "future leaders," or the "successor generation."<sup>4</sup> After June 1989, they were more often regarded as "the source of political disturbance," or the only group who openly "vowed to carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy."<sup>5</sup> They have, however, attracted much attention from educators, politicians,

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<sup>1</sup> The number 60,000 was announced in the fall of 1988 by Li Tiejing, Minister of Chinese State Education Commission, "China's Policy of Sending Students Abroad Unchanged," *People's Daily* (October 8, 1988), p. 1. Leo A. Orleans, *Chinese Students in America: Policies, Issues, and Numbers* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1988), p. 112, estimates that about 56,000 Chinese students and scholars came to the United States between 1979 and 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Institute for International Education, *Open Door: 1987-1988* (New York: Institute for International Education, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Estimation by Thomas L. Friedman, "White House Asks an Irate Congress for China Support—Veto May Be Overridden" (special to the *New York Times*), *New York Times* (January 24, 1990), p. A1; Thomas L. Friedman, "Bush Is Set Back by House Override of Veto on China—Senate Action Due Today" (special to the *New York Times*), *New York Times* (January 25, 1990), pp. A1 and A6.

<sup>4</sup> Orleans, p. 53; Fred Strebeigh, "Training China's New Elite," *Atlantic* 263, no. 4 (April 1989): 72-80; David Austell, "The Birds in the Rich Forest: Chinese Students at an American University" (doctoral diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Education, 1990), pp. 28, 42.

<sup>5</sup> For example, CBS and CNN coverage on the Independence Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars (July 30 and 31, 1989); and *World Journal* (June 13, 1990), p. 31.

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and researchers in both China and in the students' host countries, precisely because of their uniqueness and significance.<sup>6</sup>

These students and scholars are by far the largest number any communist country has ever allowed to go abroad. The historical significance of this is not limited to China's own developmental process but has wide implications for global East-West interactions.<sup>7</sup> Further, given the expectation that many students from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union will soon follow the Chinese students' footsteps to the West, the experience of the Chinese has attracted much attention from these countries.<sup>8</sup>

Although Chinese leaders want students to bring home technological knowledge, they resent Western ideology and cultural values that "pollute" Chinese society.<sup>9</sup> Many Westerners, however, expect, if not hope, that the Chinese will not only learn science and technology but also understand, if not accept, the culture and ideology of their host countries.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese intellectuals, including students themselves, are willing to absorb whatever they see as useful for China, be it technology or ideology.<sup>11</sup>

But have the ideological beliefs and political attitudes of these students been affected by their living in the West? If they have been affected, how? This study attempts to answer those questions. It focuses on Chinese students in the United States and their attitudes toward Chinese official ideology.

### Theoretical Framework

When China's door opened, Chinese leaders were confident in the ability of "their" students to reject the "dross" while absorbing useful techniques from the West.<sup>12</sup> This confidence stems from their categorical belief in the superiority of China's political and economic system. Why,

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Orleans, pp. 19–35; David M. Lampton with Joyce A. Madancy and Kristen M. Williams, *A Relationship Restored: Trends in U.S.-China Education Exchanges, 1978–1984* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986); Ruth Hayhoe, "A Comparative Analysis of Chinese-Western Academic Exchange," *Comparative Education* 20, no. 1 (1984): 39–55.

<sup>7</sup> Hayhoe, "A Comparative Analysis"; Orleans, pp. 53–56.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Serguei N. Goncharov, a Soviet sinologist conducting research at Stanford University, *World Journal Weekly* (June 17, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> John Hawkins, "Educational Exchanges and the Transformation of Higher Education in the People's Republic of China," in *Bridges to Knowledge: Foreign Students in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Elinor Barber, Philip Altbach, and Robert Myers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 19–31; *World Journal* (June 13, 1990); Chen Yihan, "CCP Restricts Study Abroad, So Many Regulations—Conservative Leaders Consider Study Abroad a Channel of Importing Bourgeois Liberalization Thoughts," *World Journal Weekly* (March 25, 1990), p. 7. Also see Orleans, pp. 8, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ruth Hayhoe, "Penetration or Mutuality? China's Educational Cooperation with Europe, Japan, and North America," *Comparative Education Review* 30, no. 4 (November 1986): 532–59; Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Absence of Decision: Foreign Students in American Colleges and Universities* (New York: Institute of International Education, 1983), p. 20; see also Hawkins.

<sup>11</sup> Weiyi Tan, "Why Overseas Students Didn't Return," *Quest*, n.s., 53 (May 1988): 23–25.

<sup>12</sup> Hayhoe, "A Comparative Analysis." See also Hawkins.

orthodox theorists frequently asked in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, had “born red” youngsters lost their confidence in the Chinese socialist system, while older generations, particularly those educated in the West before the 1950s, had shown more loyalty? The reason, they believed, was that youngsters who had suffered from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution heard about highways and high rises of the West but had never been exposed to the pervasive vices rooted in capitalist societies. The younger generation had been poisoned by the illusory surface of the West, they contended. Originally, this reasoning was meant not to support sending students aboard but to defend the current system. But when the advocates of study abroad argued that the best way to disillusion the youngsters was to expose them to the facts in the West, the old guard acquiesced.

Interestingly, these Chinese leaders’ hopes may find support in some studies conducted in the United States before large numbers of Chinese students went abroad. R. Phillips, basing his work on research conducted in two major universities in North Carolina in 1973, found that foreign students who had stayed in the United States longer tended to have less favorable attitudes toward the United States.<sup>13</sup> In a study conducted by W. F. Hull in 1976–77 at three universities in three states, 36 percent of foreign students reported that they had grown more positive about their own countries after coming to the United States.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this study, this line of reasoning is referred to as “disillusionment-patriotization” theory and we framed the following hypothesis accordingly.

**HYPOTHESIS 1.** The longer Chinese students live in the United States, the more positive will be their attitudes toward the official ideology of the Chinese government. (This hypothesis is represented in fig. 1 by the slope ascending from left to right.)

This hypothesis, however, runs contrary to the vision of America as a melting pot. The vision, first expressed in the eighteenth century when America was still in its formative stage, predicted that immigrants of different origins would ultimately form a distinctive new culture and that every newcomer would identify with the new culture and become part of it.<sup>15</sup> In later years the process was labeled as “assimilation” or “absorption”

<sup>13</sup> Robert M. Phillips, “Foreign Students: An Attitude Study” (master’s thesis, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> W. Frank Hull IV, *Foreign Students in the United States of America: Coping Behavior within the Educational Environment* (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 18–21, 162.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Mann, ed., *Immigrants in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), pp. 23–25, 121, 139–42. This view is both prescriptive and descriptive in nature—it *prescribed* what the authors wanted to happen and *described* what they thought will eventually happen. For the purpose of this study, our focus is on the descriptive side of the theory. The same is true for the cultural pluralism theory that is discussed below.

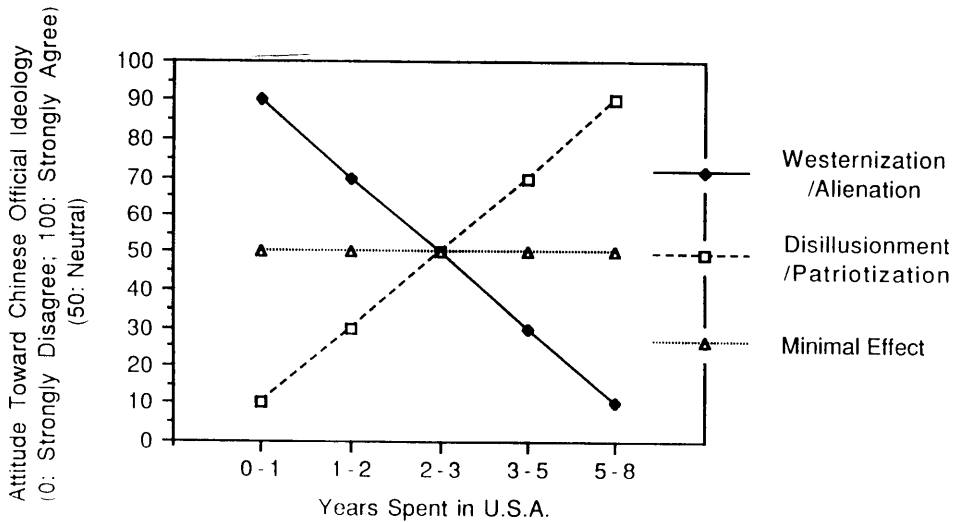


FIG. 1.—Predicted effects of years in the United States on attitude

into the existing American culture.<sup>16</sup> Some studies on new immigrants support this view. Immigrants and their foreign-language newspapers have been openly loyal to the United States, even when it was at war with the immigrants' ancestral nations.<sup>17</sup>

In foreign-study literature, the concept of assimilation has been taken one step further. Some scholars have argued not only that foreign students will absorb their host culture but also that this absorption may lead to *alienation* from their home culture.<sup>18</sup> This is especially true in the case of immature undergraduate students from materialistically less developed countries.<sup>19</sup>

A similar view, more often called "Westernization," is widely held by Chinese and Americans who write on the issue.<sup>20</sup> They describe Chinese

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146–49; John J. Appel, "Cultural Pluralism vs. Absorption," in *The New Immigration*, ed. John J. Appel (New York: Jerome S. Ozer, 1971); Thaddeus Sleszynski, "The Second Generation of Immigrants in the Assimilative Process," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 93 (January 1921): 156–61, reprinted in Appel, ed.

<sup>17</sup> Mann, ed., p. 114–18.

<sup>18</sup> Hull, p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Fondness and Frustration* (New York: Institute of International Education, 1984), pp. 5–8.

<sup>20</sup> Rob Damon, "Students Take Home Thoughts from Abroad," *Times Higher Education Supplement* (London) (May 6, 1983); Edward A. Gargan, "A Purged Chinese Intellectual Derides Talk of Liberalization" (special to the *New York Times*) *New York Times* (February 11, 1988), pp. A1, A6; "Number of Mainland Students Leap to Be the Largest in U.S., Deeply Affected by Western Thoughts, Profoundly Affecting Democratic Movement in China, despite Severe Brain Drain Problem," *Center Daily News* (May 3, 1989). (*Center Daily News* was a Chinese-language daily newspaper published in New York. It ceased publication in the summer of 1989.) Editorial, "The Locking-Door Mentality and Overseas Student Policy," *Quest*, n.s., 53 (May 1988): 1.

students as a group from "an autocratic society which had for a long time been locked away from the world" and who were "suddenly thrown into a totally different, free, open society." They believe that these students inevitably experience the "puzzle, the uncertainty, the trepidation, the vacillation, and the alienation in their mind." Eventually Westernization encourages political asylum and public criticism of the Chinese Communist government. According to this view, students who return to China carry back not only technical knowledge and skill but also Western beliefs in freedom and democracy that threaten the Communist party.<sup>21</sup>

Even the Chinese government has recognized "Westernization alienation" as a fact and has taken this factor into consideration in making policy. Several times the Chinese government, fearing that too many students would become "too Westernized," considered reducing the number of students going to the West, particularly to the United States.<sup>22</sup> After the 1989 upheavals, the Chinese government came to believe that some 90 percent of the students in the United States and Canada had become so "Westernized" that they would be a threat to political stability if they returned in the near future. Consequently, Chinese diplomats were instructed not to encourage students in these countries to return.<sup>23</sup>

Politicians and journalists are concerned mostly with the presumed impact of Chinese students' political attitudes on Chinese society and politics.<sup>24</sup> But Ruth Hayhoe raises an attendant question: Who, China or the West, benefits more from China's educational cooperation with the West? Does the cooperation really further China's development, or is it just another version of the penetration of cultural imperialism?<sup>25</sup> Given that China has been considered one of the few developing countries that has successfully achieved self-reliance and cultural independence, what will happen if China is governed by some Westernized leaders who have been alienated from their own culture? The expectation of "Westernization alienation" is the basis of our second hypothesis.

**HYPOTHESIS 2.** The longer Chinese students live in the United States, the more negative will be their attitudes toward the official ideology of the Chinese government. (This hypothesis is represented in figure 1 by the slope descending from left to right.) Although the above two hypotheses predict effects in exactly opposite directions, both predict that there is an

<sup>21</sup> Tan (n. 11 above).

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times* (February 11 and March 24, 1988); *World Journal Weekly* (March 25, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> "Chinese Communist Party Tightens Curb on Overseas Students" (the body of this article is a secret document of the Chinese Education Commission obtained by the Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars in the United States), *World Journal Weekly* (June 3, 1990); also see Ling Xu (former official of the education desk of the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., who defected to the United States on May 2, 1990), "We Must See Clearly the Essence," *World Journal* (June 13, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Austell (n. 4 above), pp. 18–20, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Hayhoe (n. 10 above), "Penetration or Mutuality?"

effect.<sup>26</sup> Our next hypothesis, in contrast, predicts that an effect, if it exists at all, will be weak.

Foreign students are less affected by their host culture than immigrants. In the aforementioned Hull study, most of the respondents (53.3 percent) reported that their stay in the United States has not affected their views of their home countries.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Asian students are more likely to be isolated than other foreign students because of psychological and language differences between the East and the West.<sup>28</sup> Elaborating on that view, one could argue that a student from China would experience not only psychological and language differences but also vast differences in political systems, economic structures, and material conditions. Moreover, the aforementioned hypotheses ignore an important fact about Chinese students studying abroad: almost all are mature individuals who have spent at least 20 years in China.<sup>29</sup> Most of them probably developed their political and ideological beliefs before leaving China. These beliefs may be strong and stable enough to survive pressures to change that come from living for a time in a different culture.<sup>30</sup>

One could also argue that the two hypotheses may be based on an incorrect assumption that there is a negative relation between attitude toward the host culture and attitude toward the home culture—that is, disillusionment necessarily leads to patriotization, and Westernization necessarily leads to alienation. Yet there is not much empirical evidence to support that assumption. Theoretically, a foreign student could be disillusioned by the host culture without being more patriotic, or “Westernized” without being “alienated,” from the home culture. Some Chinese students might become disillusioned on finding that life in the United States is not as easy as they anticipated yet might think that the system in China is worse than in the West. Other students might become Westernized in the sense that they become accustomed to American food, dress, entertainment, and way of socializing yet might think that the Chinese system is the most appropriate for China.<sup>31</sup>

Some Chinese students may be moved by the wonders or ills in America. But the change might not lead to a change in their attitude toward the

<sup>26</sup> This is consistent with the assumption generally held in foreign-study literature that “a foreign sojourn will influence the student’s view of the home country.” See Hull (n. 14 above), p. 161.

<sup>27</sup> Hull, p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> See Marjorie H. Klein, A. A. Alexander, and Kwo-Hwa Tseng, “The Foreign Student Adaption Program: Social Experiences of Asian Students,” *Exchange* 6, no. 3 (Winter 1971): 77–90. See also Tai S. Kang, “A Foreign Student Group as an Ethnic Community,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* 2 (March 1972): 72–82; and Hull, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Orleans (n. 1 above), p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> This view is also consistent with some Brazilian commentators’ speculation that a mature graduate student studying abroad would not be easily “alienated.” See Goodwin and Nacht (n. 19 above), *Fondness and Frustration*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> We owe this line of reasoning to an anonymous reviewer of the *Comparative Education Review*.

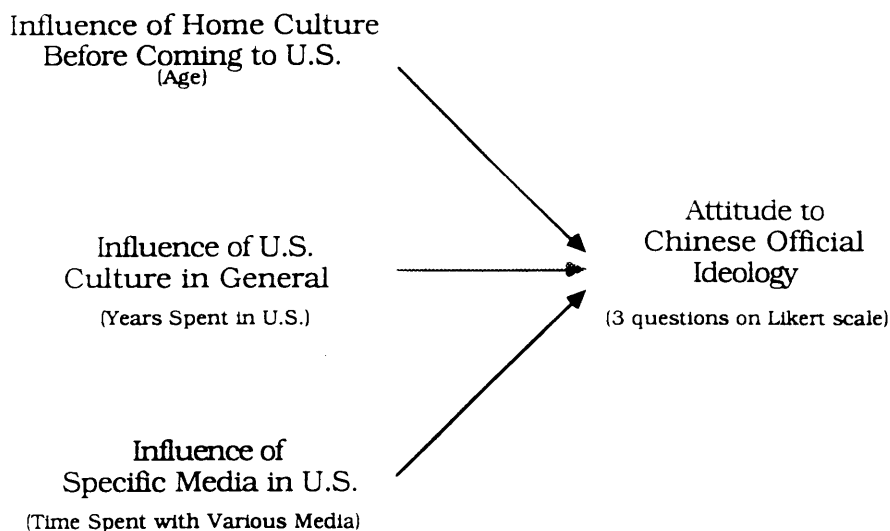


FIG. 2

Chinese political system. It is not clear that the time a student spends taking notes in a computer class, reading a medical science journal in the library, cooking in a shared apartment, driving on an interstate highway, shopping in a supermarket, or working in a restaurant affects his or her ideology with regard to China. Changes in political attitudes are more logically a result of being exposed to some particular elements of American culture, such as American mass media that cover international issues and, more specifically, Chinese issues. Figure 2 is a schematic view of attitudes under the influence of three factors—home culture, American culture in general, and some particular parts of American culture.

This view does not deny that the students' political attitudes may change during their stay in the United States. It does argue, however, that their stay per se does not cause the change. Change may be unleashed by events in China that coincide with students' stay abroad. Or it may be induced by years of thinking about the home nation's experiences.

This line of reasoning is supported by reports that in the past few years Chinese intellectuals and students who stayed in China are as critical of official Chinese ideology as, if not more than, those who went abroad.<sup>32</sup> After all, among the 21 student leaders on the Chinese government's most wanted list after June 4, 1989, none had previously spent a single day abroad. This reasoning is referred to as "minimal-effect" theory and gives rise to our third hypothesis.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley Rosen, "Editor's Introduction," *Chinese Education* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 3–5; Edward Friedman, "The Crushing of the Democracy Movement in China and the Struggle to Reform Leninist Dictatorship" (University of Wisconsin—Madison, Department of Political Science, July 1989).



**HYPOTHESIS 3.** Students' attitudes toward official Chinese ideology are not significantly affected by the number of years they live in the United States. Home culture and some elements of American culture have a stronger effect. (This hypothesis is represented in figure 1 by the horizontal line. Also see fig. 2.)

#### Data

In the spring of 1987, a questionnaire in Chinese was distributed to 150 students from the People's Republic of China who were studying at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. A total of 116 (77.3 percent) completed the questionnaires.

Some of the variables in our data were compared with national estimates. The Appendix (sec. V of the questionnaire) describes some characteristics of the respondents in our sample: with missing values excluded, 74 percent of the respondents are 30 years of age or younger, 81 percent are males, 80 percent are graduate students, 76 percent received higher education after the Cultural Revolution (or graduated after 1981), and 68.4 percent came to the United States in 1985 or later.<sup>33</sup> These figures generally correspond with relevant statistics provided by Leo A. Orleans on Chinese students and scholars in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

The group, of course, is not a representative sample of Chinese students in the United States for all characteristics. However, this study relies on bivariate and multivariate analyses, which are much less sensitive to sampling errors than results of univariate analysis.<sup>35</sup> Findings from this data set should help further our understanding of the effects of American culture on Chinese students studying in the United States, or at least those at the leading tier of universities.<sup>36</sup>

The Appendix indicates that a large number of respondents chose "don't know/no answer" when they answered some of the important ques-

<sup>33</sup> In the original questionnaire, more variables, such as academic department, passport type, month of arriving in the United States, and so on, were measured. It was soon realized that anyone with access to the raw data could identify some respondents by cross-tabulating enough variables. Given the sensitive nature of the questions asked and that we cannot guarantee the security of the data, we elected to not enter some of the information into the computer and to destroy relevant parts of the questionnaires to ensure respondents' confidentiality.

<sup>34</sup> One major discrepancy seems to be the underrepresentation of visiting scholars in the Wisconsin sample as compared to their representation at the national level, since Orleans reported that there were more J-1 visiting scholars than J-1 students (J-1 is a visa type). This comparison, however, is problematic because Orleans's statistics were based on the number of visas issued. Students stay much longer than scholars and therefore could outnumber the latter in 1985.

<sup>35</sup> We may consider the following example. Suppose a survey in Orange County, Wisconsin, found the following three things: (1) In Orange County there are more Democrats than Republicans. (2) In Orange County there are more people supporting abortion rights than people opposing it. (3) In Orange County Democrats are more likely to support abortion rights than Republicans are. The third statement, which is based on bivariate analysis, is more likely to be true in another county or another state than any of the first two statements, which are based on univariate analysis.

<sup>36</sup> We owe this point to an anonymous reviewer of *Comparative Education Review*. One could argue that these 30 or 40 universities host a large majority of the Chinese students in United States, and these students in more influential universities deserve much research attention any way.

tions. Thirty-two people (27.6 percent of the sample) did not indicate their ages. Twenty-two (19 percent of the sample) did not indicate when they came to the United States. While this is not surprising, given the sensitive nature of the questions asked—apparently some respondents feared that they could be identified from such information as age and time of departure—our concern is whether this large number of missing values would threaten the validity of causal inference that we wish to draw from the data.

To contend with the problem, respondents were repeatedly assured that their answers were strictly confidential. Furthermore, attitude questions (dependent variables) were placed before demographic questions (independent variables), and respondents were told that if they still had doubts about confidentiality, they could answer only the attitude questions and skip the demographic questions. This strategy apparently worked well. As is shown in the Appendix, there are few “don’t know/no answer” for the three attitude questions, and they are apparently true “no opinions” rather than missing values due to fear. Furthermore, when these three items were combined into one attitude measure, the missing rate dropped to less than 1 percent since there was only one respondent who reported “don’t know/no answer” to all three individual items. As a result, we are able to retain almost all respondents in the analysis and to test for the possible effect of missing values in the independent variables. We will report the results of such testing later. There are almost no missing cases for another group of independent variables, media use.

### Measurements

The main dependent variable, respondents’ attitude toward the communist ideology of the Chinese government, is measured by the mean score on three questions concerning Marxism, socialism, and the Chinese Communist party on a five-category Likert scale (see the Appendix, sec. II of the questionnaire, statements 3, 5, and 7). The questions touched directly on three of the “Four Cardinal Principles” that have been written into the Chinese Constitution. The inclusion of the “Four Principles” has been for years the focus of heated debate between the Chinese government and dissidents. For example, the Chinese Alliance for Democracy, which is composed mainly of students in the United States, was outlawed by a Shanghai court because “it is publicly against the Four Cardinal Principles.” Fang Lizhi, a well-known physicist and leading dissident, was wanted by the Chinese government partly because “he violated the Four Cardinal Principles.”<sup>37</sup>

The three questions were chosen not only because of their face validity but also because of their “bell-shaped” distribution and fairly high reliability

<sup>37</sup> Xinhua News Agency (June 25, 1990), reported by *World Journal* (June 25, 1990).

score after being aggregated into one attitude measure (the Cronbach alpha is 0.81).<sup>38</sup> To facilitate interpretation, the aggregated attitude scale was linearly transformed so that 100 represents maximum support for the Chinese official ideology, 0 represents minimum support, and 50 represents neutrality (see, e.g., fig. 1).

The main independent variable is the amount of exposure to American culture, measured by number of years each respondent spent in the United States. The minimal-effect hypothesis predicts that exposure to home culture and exposure to some media in the United States should have a clearer effect than exposure to American culture in general. Accordingly, two additional independent variables were included. The exposure to home culture was approximated by a respondent's age. The exposure to the mass media was measured by number of hours per week a respondent had spent with various media in the past month. Six media usage indices were created:

1. Chinese government publications: total hours per week spent reading the *People's Daily*, the *China Daily*, and the *Outlook*.
2. Chinese dissident publications: total hours per week spent reading the *China Spring* and the *Cheng Ming* (Speak out).
3. The *New York Times*: hours per week spent reading the *New York Times*.
4. Local newspaper: hours per week spent reading the *Wisconsin State Journal* or *Capitol Times*.
5. TV: hours per week spent watching TV.
6. Radio: hours per week spent listening to the radio.

The Appendix also indicates other items from the same questionnaire along with their summary statistics. We will not discuss these items in detail because they are beyond the focus of this study.

### Data Analysis and Findings

The number of years spent in the United States does not appear to affect respondents' political attitudes. Students who spent 4, 5, or more years in the United States are not very different in political attitude from those who spent only 1 or 2 years (see fig. 3). The linear correlation between political attitude and years spent in the United States is negligible ( $R = 0.07$ ,  $P = 0.24$ ). Since the curve in figure 3 appears to have a U shape, polynomial regression functions of various orders were tested. The

<sup>38</sup> The mathematic maximum of the Cronbach alpha is one, which represents a perfect consistency among measures, and the minimum value is zero, which represents a perfect inconsistency among measures. For technical details, see L. J. Cronbach, "Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests," *Psychometrika* 16 (1951): 297-334.

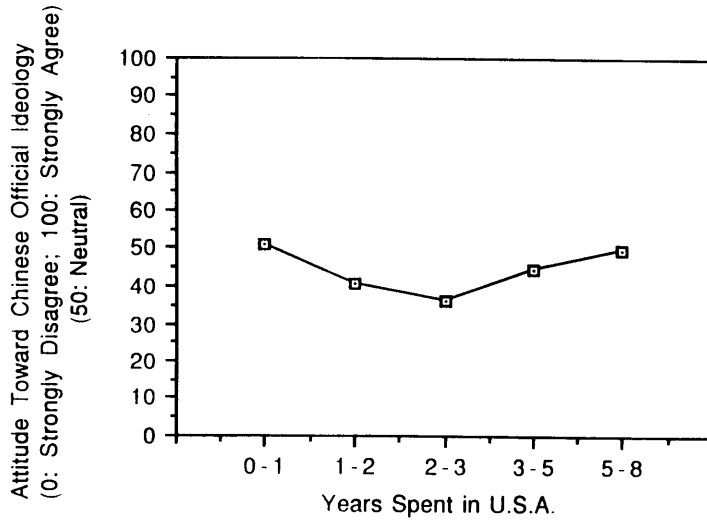


FIG. 3.—Attitude by years in the United States

results still do not indicate any effect of the independent variable. Analysis of variance (ANOVA), which assumes no linearity in the relation between the dependent and the independent variables, does not manifest any effect either.

Age, however, is clearly related to attitude. As shown in figure 4, those who are 36 years or older tend to be more supportive of the Chinese official ideology than those between 31 and 35, while those between 31

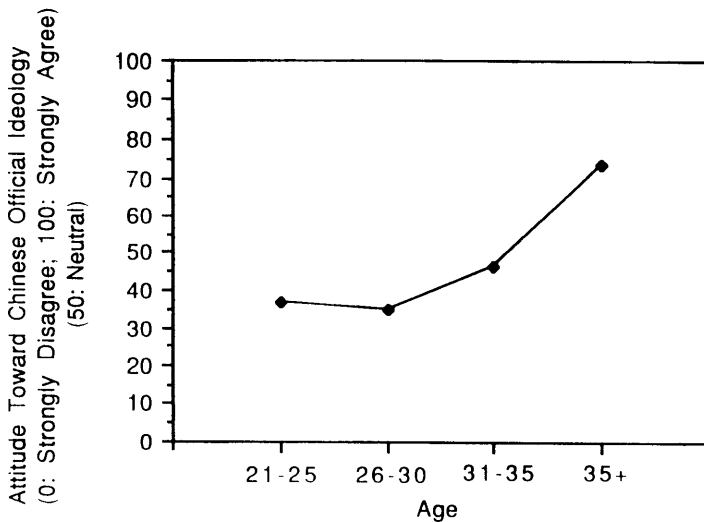


FIG. 4.—Attitude by age

and 35 in turn tend to be more supportive than those between 21 and 30. The linear correlation between attitude and age is substantial and statistically highly significant ( $R = 0.33$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

These results suggest that years spent in the United States do not have a clear effect on students' attitude toward official Chinese ideology, whereas their age does. However, it is possible that the observed relation between attitude and years in the United States is confounded by a third variable, age. That is, years spent in the United States may indeed have an alienation effect, but those who have been here longer also tend to be older, and older people tend to have more positive attitudes toward the Chinese government. As a result, the effect of age cancels the effect of years spent in the United States to produce the flat line in figure 3.

To control for the age effect, we examined the effect of years spent in the United States after the respondents had been divided into different age groups. As figure 5 indicates, there is no clear pattern for the effect of years spent in the United States within each age group. A multiple regression equation was constructed to perform a more formal test. After age was included in the equation, years spent in the United States explained almost no additional variance (incremental  $R^2 < 0.001$ ,  $P = 0.80$ ). This result suggests that the flat curve in figure 3 cannot be explained by the counterbalancing role of age.

To avert possible bias due to other variables, age was replaced with sex, date of college graduation in China, visa type, current academic status (graduate student, postdoctoral student, visiting scholar, or other), or financial sources (the Chinese government, foundations, the University, or self/family savings) in multiple regression equations. None of these

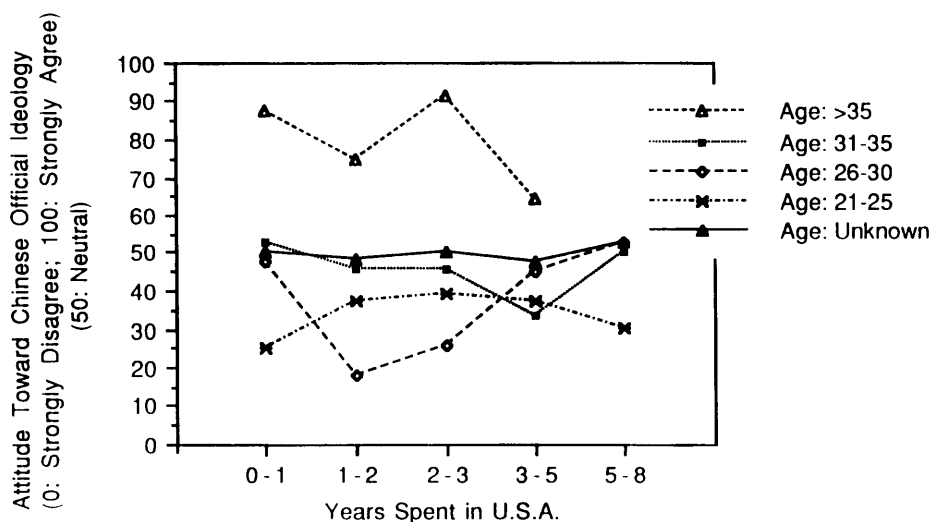


FIG. 5.—Attitude by years in the United States, grouped by age

variables, however, manifests a statistically significant effect beyond that of age by conventional *t*-test. Their inclusion does not alter our tentative conclusion: specifically, there is no effect of years spent in the United States on respondents' attitudes; there is a clear effect of age on attitudes.

Bias may also come from the considerable number of missing values in the independent variables. It is possible, for example, that those respondents who are older and more critical of Chinese official ideology tend to be more fearful of revealing their identity and therefore tend to be "missing" in the age question. So those whom we can identify in the older age group are only those who are relatively supportive of Chinese official ideology. If that is the case, the observed correlation between age and attitude may not indicate an age effect on attitude, but an age effect on fearfulness.

To test such possible bias, two dummy variables were created and entered into the multiple regression equation.<sup>39</sup> The result lent no support to a possible bias. Instead, it contradicted an assumption behind the bias theory. In our data, respondents who did not report their ages or their time of departure appeared to be more *supportive* of Chinese official ideology, although the differences are not statistically significant. On a scale from 0 to 100 where 0 is extremely critical of Chinese official ideology and 100 is extremely supportive of Chinese official ideology, those who did not report their ages had an average score of 50.54, which is 9.57 points higher than those who did report their ages ( $F = 3.9, P = 0.051$ ); and those who did not report their time of departure had an average score of 49.62, which is 7.51 points higher than those who did report their time of departure ( $F = 1.85, P = 0.176$ ). As a more formal test, the effects of age and time of departure were examined after the two dummy variables entered into the regression equation. The result again supported our tentative conclusion that there is no effect of years spent in the United States on respondents' attitudes, and there is a clear effect of age on attitudes.

There is a possibility that students' attitudes may change rapidly during their first several months in the United States. Years spent in the United States as measured in this study is unable to capture this effect directly, since all who have been here 1 year or less have been grouped into one category. To test this possibility, the variance in attitude of the first-year students was compared with that of other students. Given the fact that the mean in attitude is about the same as that of any other years, if there is indeed a dramatic change in attitude during the first year, we should observe a larger variance. On the contrary, we observed a smaller variance.

<sup>39</sup> Dummy1 = 1 if age is missing, 0 otherwise. Dummy2 = 1 if time of departure is missing, 0 otherwise. For details of this technique, see Jacob Cohen and Patricia Cohen, *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (Hillsdale, N. J.: Erlbaum, 1983), pp. 284–86.

(Standard deviation for the first-year students is 0.18. Standard deviation for other students is 0.24. Relevant statistics for the difference in variances are  $F = 1.50$ ,  $dF = 1/113$ ,  $P = 0.22$ .) This result implies that there is no dramatic attitude change during students' first year in the United States.

An alternative way of looking at the data is to reverse what is represented in figure 5. Instead of grouping respondents according to their age and then examining the effect of years spent in the United States, we may group them according to years spent in the United States and then examine the effect of age. Figure 6 presents these results. The pattern that older respondents tend to be more positive toward the Chinese official ideology is still there. In a multiple regression run, after years spent in the United States is entered into the equation, age explains a substantial amount of additional variance (incremental  $R^2 = 0.0919$ ,  $P = 0.0005$ ). This result suggests that the age effect as shown in figure 4 cannot be explained by an artifact due to years spent in the United States. We may, therefore, infer that age does have a stronger effect than years spent in the United States.

No relation appears to exist between political attitude and time spent reading Chinese government publications. Although the single linear correlation score has a positive sign, the  $p$  value barely passes the 0.05 criterion ( $R = 0.17$ ,  $P = 0.045$ ). A closer look at the curve, as shown in figure 7, does not suggest a clear pattern, especially if those "outliers" who spent more than 8 hours reading are excluded. In a multiple regression test, after age or time spent reading the *New York Times* is included in the equation, time spent reading Chinese government publications does not produce an additional  $R^2$  that is statistically significant. This further suggests

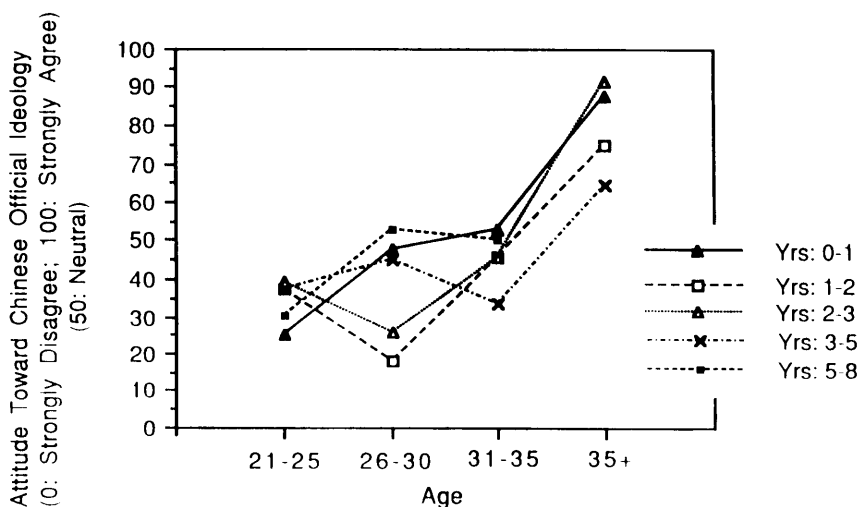


FIG. 6.—Attitude by age, grouped by years in the United States

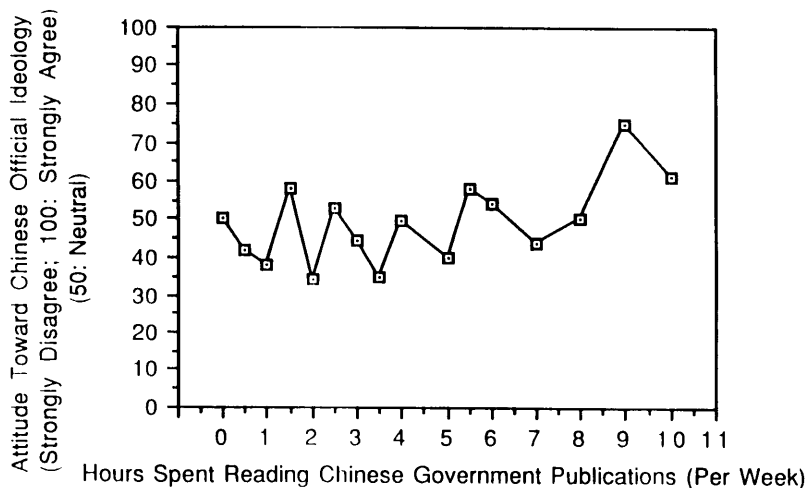


FIG. 7.—Attitude by hours spent reading Chinese government publications

the possibility that the statistically significant correlation is an artifact due to one or both of these two variables.

Also, there is no relation between political attitude and time spent with dissident publications. Although the correlation coefficient has a negative sign, it is surprisingly small ( $R = -0.09$ ) and statistically insignificant ( $P = 0.17$ ). The relationship between attitude and time spent with TV, radio, and the local newspaper is even more negligible. The correlations are close to zero, and statistically insignificant.

There is a clear relation between respondents' time spent reading the *New York Times* and their attitudes. As shown in figure 8, the more time

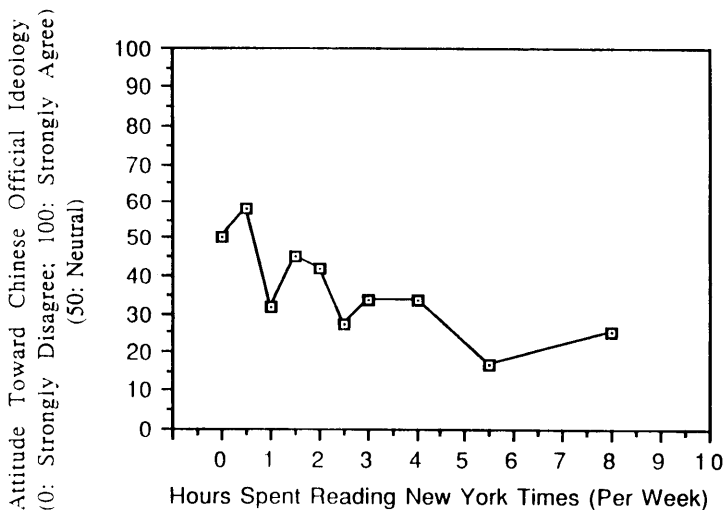


FIG. 8.—Attitude by hours spent reading the *New York Times*



students spent reading the *New York Times*, the more likely they were to be critical toward official Chinese ideology. The single linear correlation between the two variables is substantial and statistically significant ( $R = -0.30$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ).

The observed correlation, however, does not necessarily represent the effect of reading the *New York Times* on respondents' attitudes. An alternative explanation is selective exposure. That is, students' critical view toward official Chinese ideology leads them to read the *New York Times*. Nevertheless, our common knowledge about Chinese students does not lend much support to such an explanation. The *New York Times* generally is regarded by students as a neutral information source. The amount of time Chinese students spend reading the *New York Times* may depend on how much they care about the news from China covered in the paper, but it is unlikely to be influenced by the direction of attitude. Furthermore, if students do selectively expose themselves to various media according to their political attitudes, they should be more likely to do so with Chinese government publications or dissident publications since these are perceived as more opinionated than the *New York Times* on Chinese political issues. The minimum relation we observed between students' attitudes and their exposure to Chinese government and dissident publications indicates an unlikelihood of selective exposure due to attitudes.

In summary, our data suggest that only the *New York Times*, but not any other media, may have had an effect on students' attitudes toward official Chinese ideology. One possible explanation for such a result, as shown in figure 9, is that the *New York Times* is the only medium that both contains substantial news coverage on China and is regarded as a neutral information source. In 1988, when the data were collected, TV,

	Chinese Government Publications	U.S. Media	Chinese Dissident Publications
Heavy News Coverage on China	<i>People's Daily, Out Look, China Daily</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>China Spring, Speak Out</i>
Little or No News Coverage on China		TV, radio, local newspapers	

FIG. 9

radio, and local media devoted little coverage on China. It is not surprising that the popular media did not have much effect on people's attitudes concerning Chinese issues. Chinese government publications and dissident publications, in contrast, may have suffered from a lack of credibility since both positioned themselves at the extremes of the debates and both were perceived more as propaganda tools than as information providers.

To compare the predictive power of age and time spent reading the *New York Times*, we entered both, with alternating orders, into multiple regression equations. When other variables and time spent reading the *New York Times* are entered first, age contributes an additional 0.0669  $R^2$  ( $P = 0.0032$ ). When other variables and age are entered first, time spent reading the *New York Times* contributes an additional 0.0662  $R^2$  ( $P = 0.032$ ). Hence, age and time spent reading the *New York Times* are about equally important in predicting students' attitude.

### Conclusion

Our data support neither the Westernization-alienation hypothesis nor the disillusionment-patriotization hypothesis. Instead, they are consistent with both the prediction and underlying assumptions of the minimal-effect hypothesis. The number of years spent in the United States did not have a clear effect on students' attitudes toward the Chinese communist ideology. Instead, age, as an indicator of the home culture, and time spent with the *New York Times*, as an indicator of a particular aspect of U.S. culture, may have been stronger influences.

The failure of the Westernization-alienation hypothesis and the disillusionment-patriotization hypothesis poses some interesting questions. The Westernization-alienation hypothesis predicts that students would be Westernized, and that Westernization would lead to alienation. We found that the students were not alienated (i.e., they did not become more critical of home ideology). Were they also not Westernized? The same question can be asked about the disillusionment-patriotization hypothesis. This hypothesis predicts that the students would be disillusioned, and disillusionment would lead to patriotism. We found that the students were not patriotized (i.e., they did not become more supportive of home ideology). Were they also not disillusioned? More empirical research is needed to answer these questions.

Since the major dependent variable employed by this study measures a very important aspect of Chinese students' political beliefs, the findings disapprove unconditional acceptance of either the Westernization-alienation or the disillusionment-patriotization theory. Nevertheless, that an effect was not detected in one important aspect does not imply that it does not exist in any other aspects. There are many important things that we did not measure. Among them are, attitudes toward the U.S. political and

economic system, the U.S. government, or the American people; attitudes regarding Chinese people, traditional culture, or any social issue in China; and attitudes regarding family, career, or leisure life. It is possible that Westernization, alienation, disillusionment, patriotization, or other kinds of effects exist in some of these and many other aspects. In a future study, the question to ask may not be, "Does U.S. culture have an effect on foreign students?" We know there must be effects. A better question is, "When, how, on which group of students, and on which part of their mentality does U.S. culture exert or not exert effects?"

## Appendix

### Questionnaire and Answer Distributions

I. Recently a series of events happened in our homeland that have attracted much attention. In general do you think they will have a positive or negative impact on the future of China? (Please mark one choice for each item.) (Distributions are given in percent.)<sup>40</sup>

	VPO	PO	NIM	NE	VNE	DK
1. Students demonstrated in several cities and provinces.	14.7	60.3	4.3	8.6	3.4	8.6
2. Fang Lizhi was ousted from the vice presidency of his university and Guan Weiyuan from the presidency of the university.	1.7	.0	4.3	34.5	51.7	7.8
3. Wang Ruowang was repelled from the Party.	1.7	.9	9.5	33.6	44.0	10.3
4. Hu Yaobang resigned from the General Secretariat of the Party.	1.7	.9	6.9	31.0	52.6	6.9
5. Fang Lizhi was repelled from the Party.	1.7	.9	12.1	27.6	49.1	6.8
6. Lu Jiaxi was ousted from the presidency of the China Science Academy and Yan Dongshen from the vice presidency.	.9	.9	21.6	32.8	29.3	14.7
7. Liu Bingyan was repelled from the Party.	2.6	.9	3.4	26.7	57.8	8.6
8. The propaganda institutions of our country waged an all-out war on bourgeoisie liberalization.	1.7	.9	.9	30.2	57.8	8.6
9. One thousand Chinese students and scholars abroad signed an open letter to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist party and the State Council.	41.4	37.9	11.2	.9	.0	8.6

II. Would you please tell us whether you agree or disagree with each of the following twenty statements. (Please mark one choice for each item.) (Distribution is given in percent.)<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Abbreviations used here include: VPO = very positive; PO = positive; NIM = no impact; NE = negative; VNE = very negative; DK = don't know/no answer.

<sup>41</sup> Abbreviations used here include: TA = totally agree; BA = basically agree; NU = neutral; TDA = totally disagree; BDA = basically disagree; DK = don't know/no answer.

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	TA	BA	NU	BDA	TDA	DK
1. Fang Lizhi's expressed opinions are harmful to the political and economic construction of China.	2.5	3.4	4.3	28.4	58.6	2.6
2. The attacks on bourgeoisie liberalization are aimed at intellectuals.	26.7	37.9	19.0	5.2	7.8	3.4
3. Marxism as a science has been outdated.	12.9	25.9	32.8	17.2	6.9	4.3
4. We should trust unconditionally the Chinese Communist party.	1.7	4.3	15.5	41.4	33.6	3.4
5. We should accept the leadership of the Chinese Communist party.	3.4	24.1	31.9	19.0	17.2	4.3
6. Wang Ruowang is an author whom people don't welcome.	3.4	.0	22.4	25.0	43.1	6.0
7. Only socialism can rescue China.	3.4	16.4	35.3	24.1	15.5	5.2
8. Liu Bingyan should be disciplined by the Party.	1.7	.0	8.6	19.0	65.5	5.2
9. We should not only learn from the West science and technology but also their culture, political and economic system, ideology, and so on.	50.0	35.3	8.6	3.4	.9	1.7
10. The people of all ethnic groups in our nation have long agreed on the correctness of the Chinese Communist party's leadership.	3.4	15.5	23.3	32.8	18.1	6.9
11. It is totally necessary to go against bourgeoisie liberalization.	5.2	5.2	9.5	28.4	48.3	3.4
12. Our country's policy of reform in all areas is not going to be changed.	6.0	14.7	38.8	25.0	10.3	5.2
13. China should practice democratic election.	64.7	26.7	5.2	.0	.0	3.4
14. The economic reform in China should go to the direction of reducing state ownership and increasing collective ownership and private ownership.	26.7	44.8	19.8	3.4	.9	4.3
15. The recent political events in China will not hurt the Chinese Communist party's popularity among people.	4.3	5.2	3.4	28.4	51.7	6.9
16. Universities should be independent of government's control and become centers for independent thinking.	28.4	36.2	19.8	7.8	2.6	5.2
17. Our country should allow people to express their opinions that are different from the government's policy.	76.7	17.2	1.7	.0	1.7	2.6
18. Our country's open-door policy is not going to be changed in the future.	4.3	19.8	39.7	18.1	7.8	10.3
19. Liu Bingyan attacked the Chinese Communist party in his writings.	5.2	5.2	19.8	22.4	41.4	6.0
20. The recent political changes in China will hurt the reputation the Chinese government in the world.	50.0	25.9	3.4	10.3	6.0	4.3

III. In the last month, on average how many hours per week did you spend with each of the following media?

	Mean Hours	SD
<i>People's Daily</i>	3.55	2.7
<i>Outlook</i>	.12	.4
<i>China Spring</i>	.73	1.0
<i>Cheng Ming</i> (Speaking out)	.15	.4
<i>Center Daily</i>	1.35	1.8
Letters from home	.99	1.5
<i>Wisconsin State Journal/Capitol Times</i>	1.07	1.8
Television news	2.45	2.3
Radio news	.88	1.5
<i>New York Times</i>	.73	1.3
<i>China Daily</i>	.37	2.1
Other media	.64	1.5

V. Demographic variables. (Distributions are given in percent.)<sup>42</sup>

	Missing Included	Missing Excluded
Visa type:		
J-1	68.1	68.1
J-2	6.9	6.9
F-1	18.1	18.1
F-2	.0	.0
Other visa types	6.9	6.9
Financial sources:		
Chinese government	37.9	37.9
Foundations	6.9	6.9
University (Wisconsin— Madison)	32.8	32.8
Self-support	11.2	11.2
Other sources	11.2	11.2
Gender:		
Male	73.3	81.0
Female	17.2	19.0
No answer	9.5	...
Age:		
21–25	22.5	31.0
26–30	31.0	42.8
31–35	12.1	16.7
36–55	6.9	9.5
No answer	27.6	...
Academic status:		
Graduate students	74.1	80.4
Visiting scholars and postdoctoral scholars	11.2	12.1
Other	6.9	7.5
No answer	7.8	...

<sup>42</sup> Section IV of the original questionnaire has been omitted.

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	Missing Included	Missing Excluded
<b>Date of graduation from college</b> (in China):		
1958-70	7.8	10.2
1975-80	10.3	13.4
1981-82	42.2	55.0
1983-87	16.4	21.4
No answer	23.3	...
<b>Date of arrival in the United</b> <b>States:</b>		
1979-82	8.6	10.6
1983-84	17.2	21.2
1985	23.3	28.8
1986-87	31.9	39.4
No answer	19.0	...