

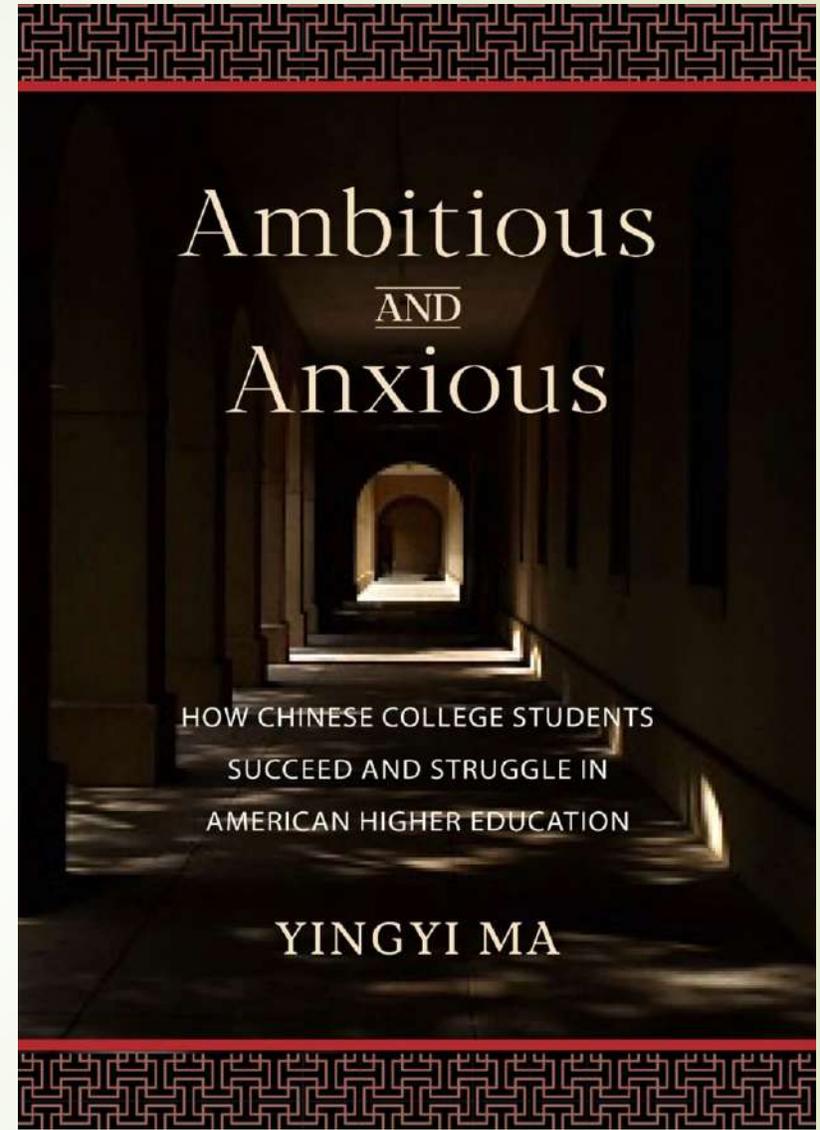


**Yingyi Ma, Ph.D**

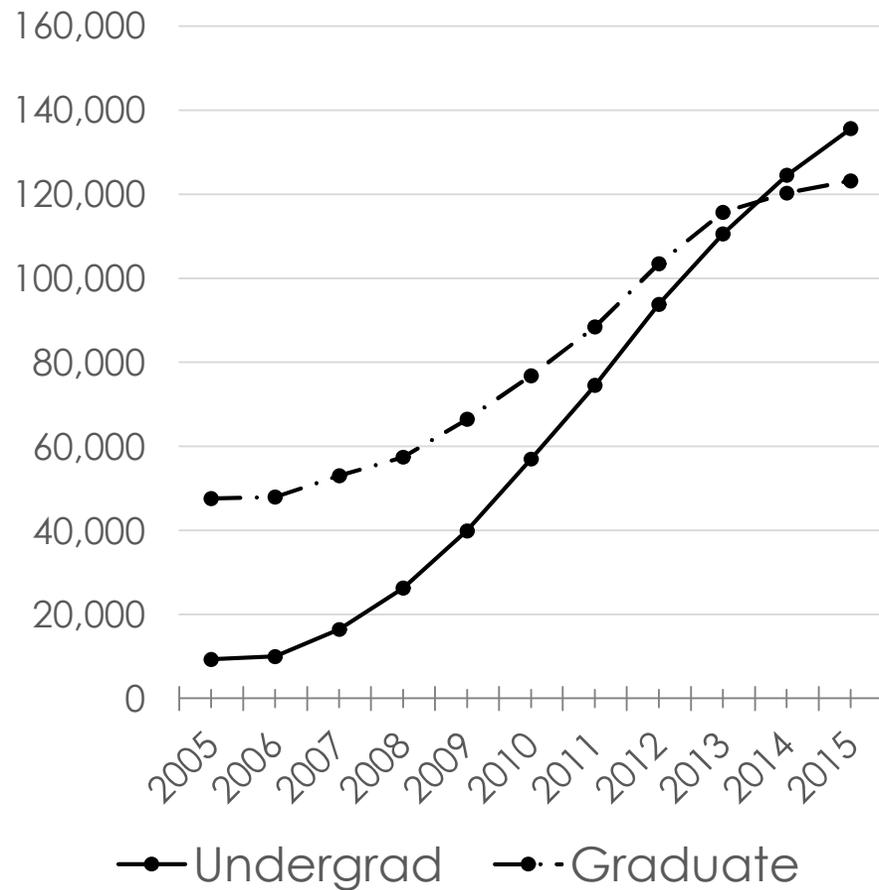
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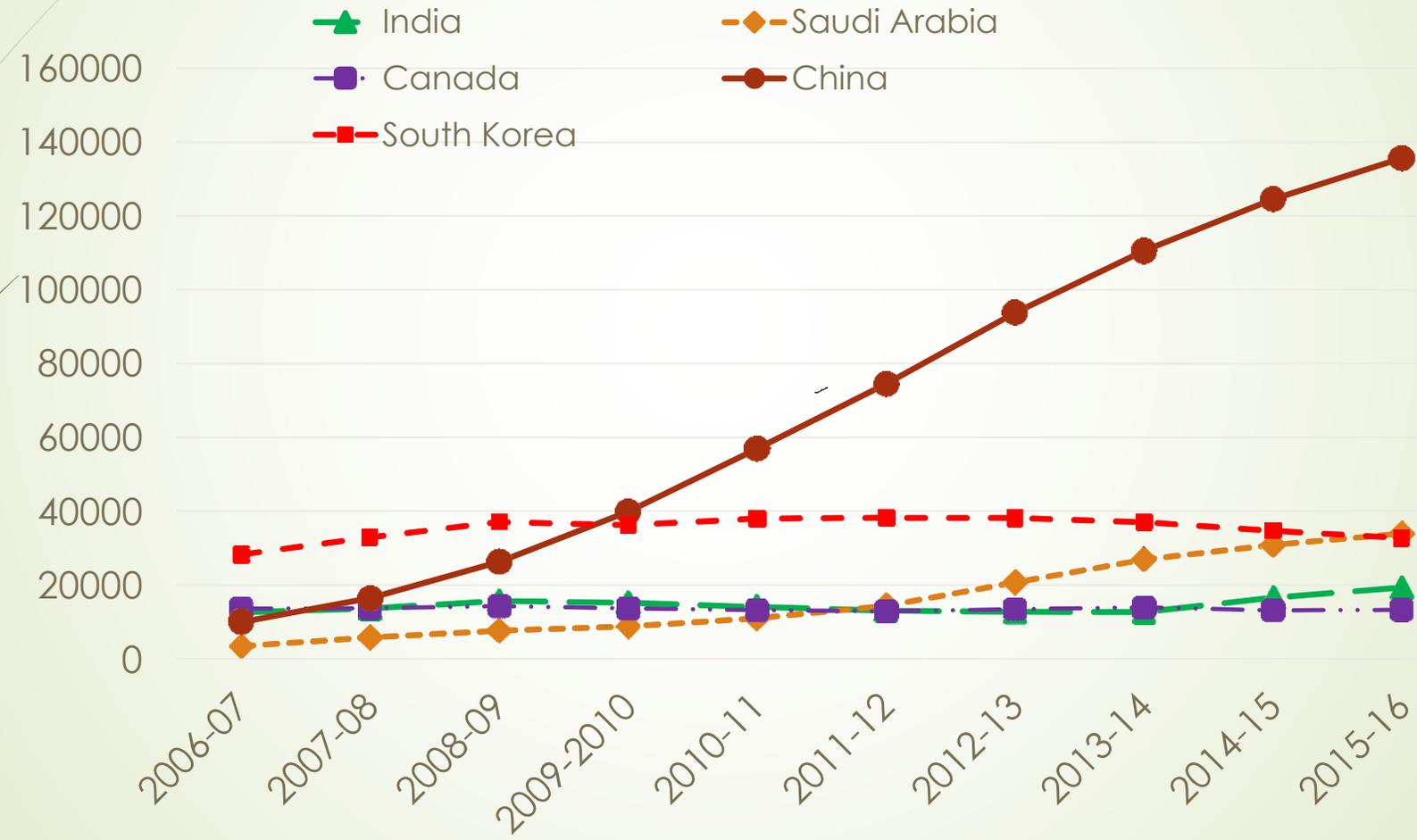
## The Dramatic Increase of Chinese Undergraduates at American Universities (Source: IIE)



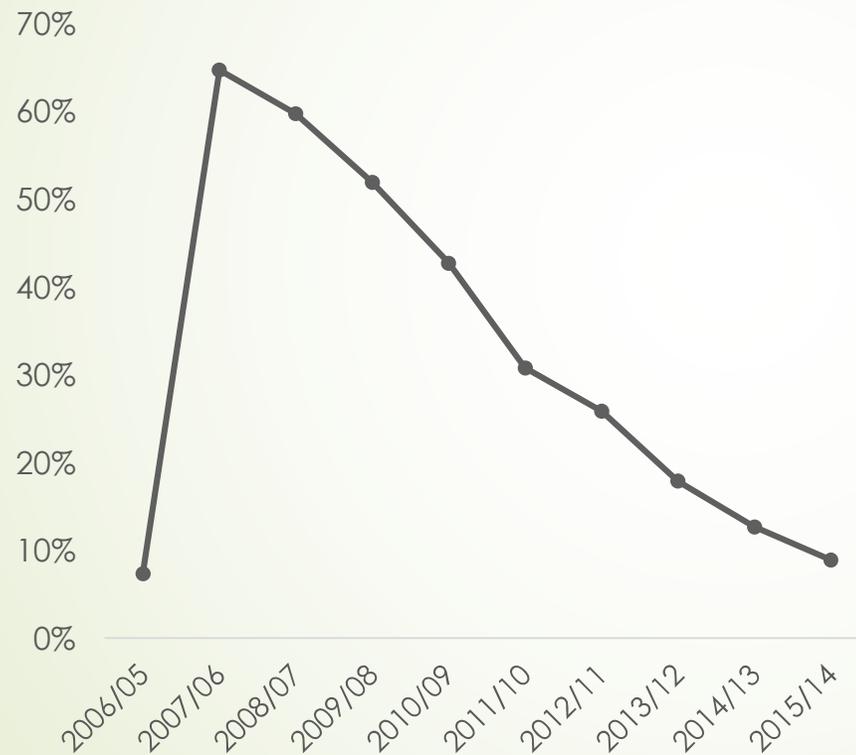
### ❖ Most recent stats:

- ❖ In 2016-2017, Chinese student enrollment increased by 6.8 percent
- ❖ In 2017-2018, Chinese undergraduate enrollments still grew by 4 percent
- ❖ 372,500 Chinese students in American higher education in 2019
- ❖ 43 percent drop of international students in 2020
- ❖ 18 percent drop of Chinese applicants in 2021

# The Top Five Sending Countries of Undergraduates to the U.S



## The Growth Rates of Undergraduate Chinese Students in America from 2005-2015 (Source: IIE)



- ❖ The turning point occurred during the 2006-2007 academic year, **before** the financial crisis.
- ❖ The relaxing student visa policies during the later term of the George W. Bush's administration.
- ❖ The RMB appreciated by 36% from 2005-2014

CHINA U

# China's Nouveau Riche Have Landed on America's Campuses

Chinese students abroad used to be seen as diligent, penny-pinching, and idealistic. No longer.

BY YI-LING LIU | SEPTEMBER 1, 2015, 3:10 PM

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ANNALS OF WEALTH

## THE GOLDEN GENERATION

*Why China's super-rich send their children abroad.*



By Jiayang Fan February 14, 2016



A lust for speed: Young, rich and Chinese in rural America



By Mark Johanson  
8th June 2016

The latest obsession for China's 'Great Gatsby generation' in the US? They come to study but they also spend big on luxury cars.



# Motivation of the Book

- ❖ Move beyond the uni-dimensional and dehumanizing coverage in the media
  - ❖ Provide a more balanced and nuanced portrait of this new wave of Chinese students
  - ❖ Examine a diverse set of Chinese students, with different family backgrounds, traveling along distinct educational trajectories.
- 



# Research Questions

- ❖ **Before arrival:**

- ❖ Why and how do these students choose to study in the U.S.?

- ❖ **After arrival:**

- ❖ In what respects do they think their prior schooling in China has helped or hurt them in their education in the U.S.?
- ❖ How are their college major choices similar to or distinct from those of their peers in China and in the U.S.?
- ❖ Do they have close American friends? What are the barriers?
- ❖ What are the barriers for their classroom participation?

- ❖ **Looking back and ahead:**

- ❖ how do their study in the U.S change them?
- ❖ how do they deliberate about their future place of living after getting a degree?



# Main findings: the duality of ambition and anxiety manifested in the following

- ❖ Ranking guides the way of college choice
- ❖ Testing culture is not alleviated, but just replaced by new tests and more tests
- ❖ The unfulfilled needs of social integration
- ❖ The tension of competing values in choosing college majors
- ❖ The dilemma of speaking up in classroom
- ❖ The vexing decision of stay vs return



# Research Design: Mixed Methods

- ❖ Study pop: full-time undergrads at 4-year institutions
- ❖ Macro-level data from the Chinese Ministry of Education and the Institute of International Education in the U.S.
- ❖ Micro-level data from online survey and in-depth interviews
- ❖ Fieldwork in seven Chinese public high schools with international divisions and one private school in six cities

# Data

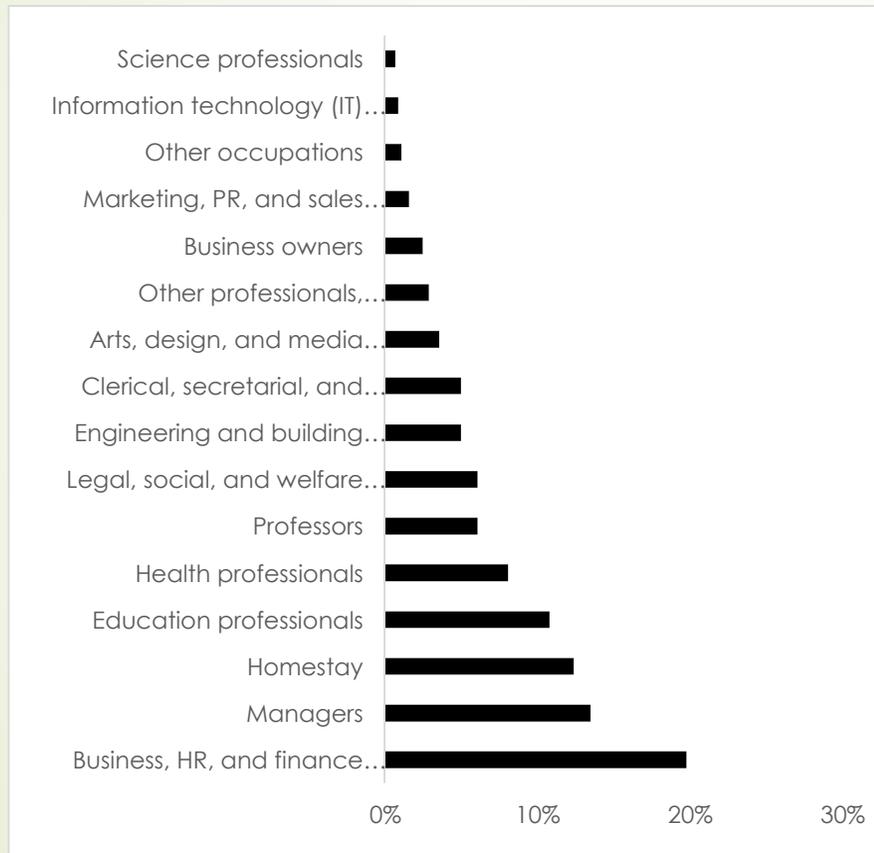
- ❖ Online surveys: N=507
  - ❖ From 50 colleges and universities
- ❖ Semi-structured Interviews: N=108

Interviews	N
Chinese college students in America	65
High school students in China	20
High School counselors in China	10
High school principals/heads in China	8
Foreign teachers in China	5
Total	108

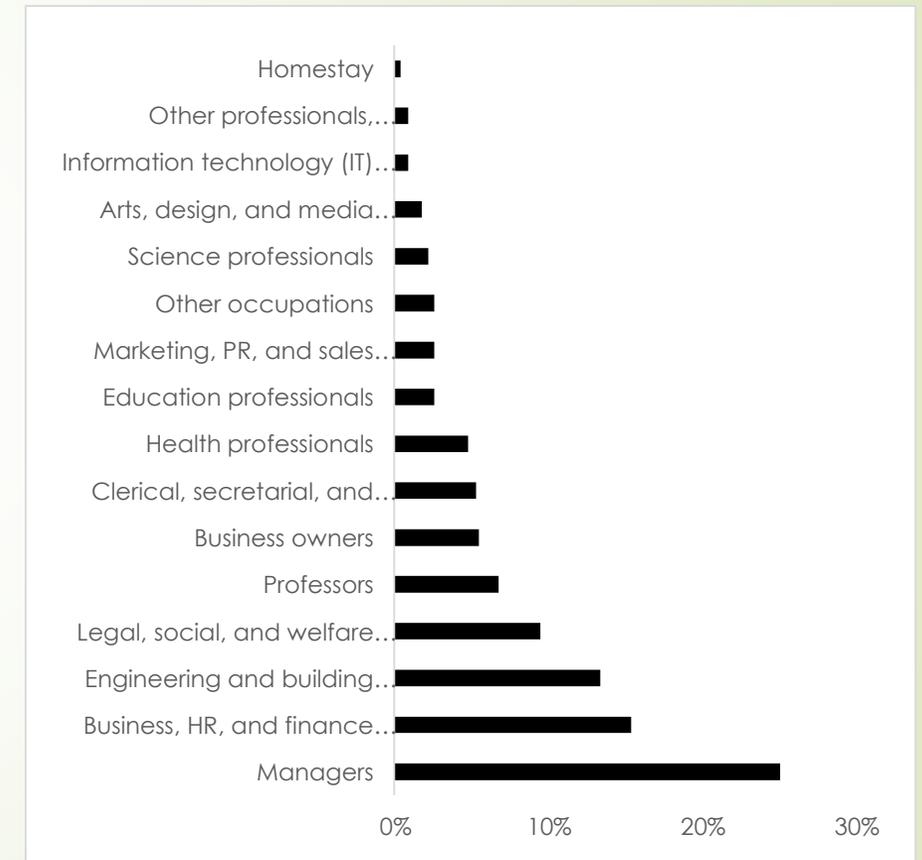
## Survey Sample Characteristics: Privileged but Diverse

			Percentages
Female			50.7
Urban			94.5
Taking Gaokao			32.2
Parental education			
less than high school			5.7
high school			11.4
college			47.1
graduate			35.7
Arrival time in the U.S			
high school			18.3
freshman			56.6
sophomore			8.7
junior			16.5
Perceived English			
Poor			7.1
Fair			34
Good			42
Excellent			16.9
Finance education			
family funds			91.7
scholarship			6.9
loan			1.4
Institutional types			
selective			41.3
major research			88.4

## Mother's occupations



## Father's occupations





# Students from working class backgrounds

- ❖ Peter, from Shanghai, his father is a driver; his mom is a cashier.
- ❖ Peter had never boarded a plane until he went to take the SAT in Hong Kong.
- ❖ His father has never taken a plane himself, although driving to airport countless times.
- ❖ His family could only send him to study in the U.S by selling their only apartment in downtown and moving to the margin of the city.

*“Chinese parents tend to sacrifice for their children and want the best for them. Here in Shanghai people consider studying in the U.S is the best. It is just **natural** to follow the trend.”*

---Peter, at UCSD



# Study abroad: the new education gospel in urban China

- ❖ The old gospel: the *Gaokao* used to determine exclusively college placement in China
- ❖ Studying abroad offers salvation
  - ❖ rescues them from their undesirable *Gaokao* scores and the lackluster college placement
  - ❖ liberates others from an oppressive test-oriented education system in China



# Higher education access in China: expanded but stratified

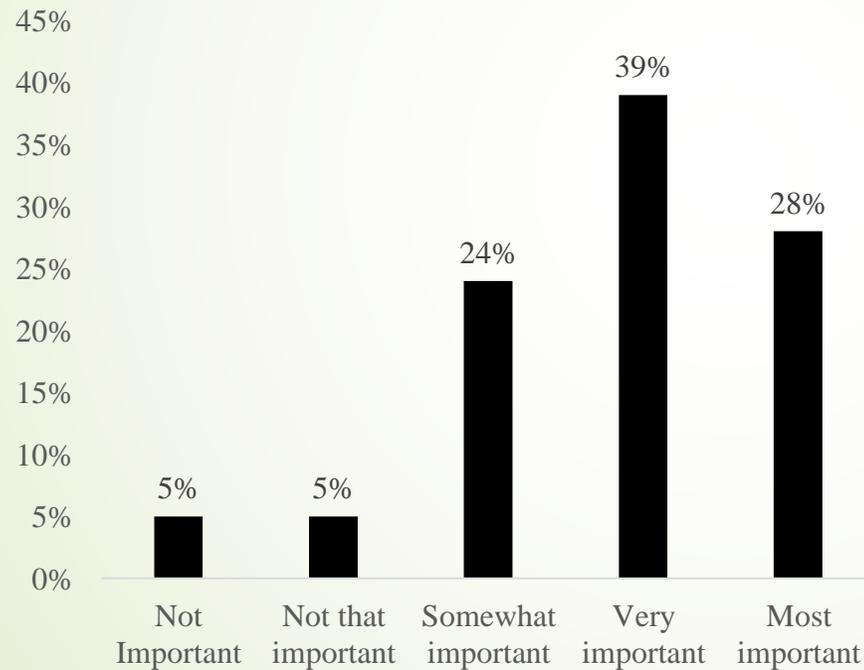
- ❖ Higher education expansion in China (Yeung 2013; Wu and Zhang 2010)
  - ❖ In 1999, the Plan for Revitalizing Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - ❖ Annual college enrollment increased from 1 million in 1998 to 6.4 million in 2009
  - ❖ In 2004, China surpassed the U.S in the total higher education enrollment
  - ❖ Super-competitive to get into top schools (Ma and Wang 2016)
- ❖ Unintended consequences: dire college graduates labor market (Li et al 2008)

**Table 2 Regional Admission Rate of Tsinghua University in 2011**

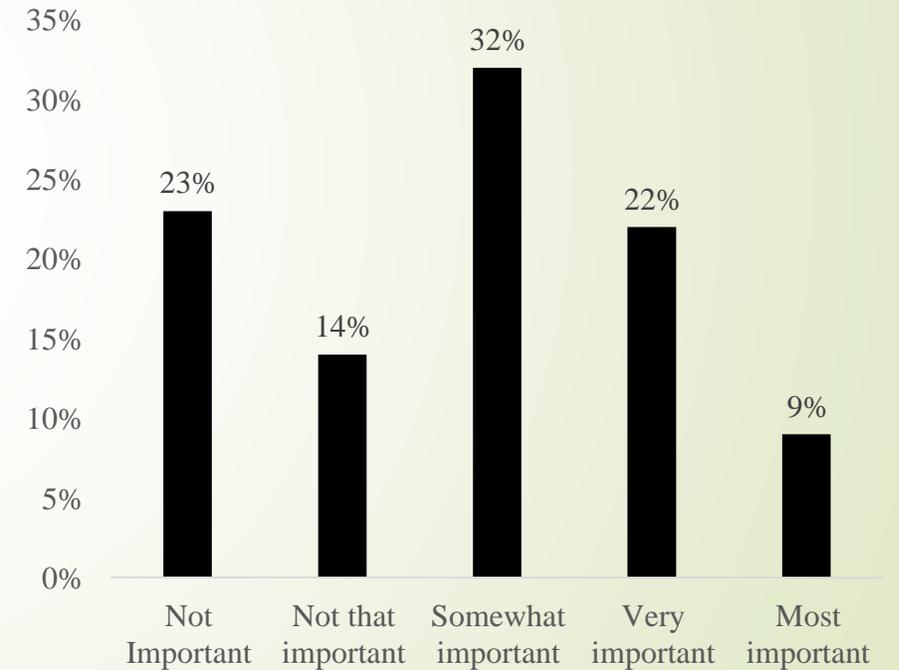
<b>Regions</b>	<b># of Admitted</b>	<b>Total participating in Gaokao</b>	<b>Rate</b>
Beijing	339	70,800	0.479%
Jiangsu	139	500,000	0.028%
Henan	135	855,400	0.016%
Hunan	134	378,000	0.035%
Liaoning	127	256,000	0.050%
Shandong	132	576,300	0.023%
Zhejiang	107	299,000	0.036%
Shanghai	85	61,200	0.139%
Hubei	107	484,000	0.022%
Sichuan	106	514,300	0.021%
Hebe	98	485,000	0.020%
Guangdong	99	655,000	0.015%
Shaanxi	98	383,000	0.026%
Anhui	102	540,000	0.019%
Heilongjiang	91	208,000	0.044%
Jilin	77	159,000	0.048%
Shanxi	81	340,000	0.024%
Jiangxi	73	288,600	0.025%
Fujian	71	267,100	0.027%
Tianjin	68	64,600	0.105%
Chongqing	62	216,400	0.029%
Inner Mongolia	51	205,700	0.025%
Guizhou	52	243,000	0.021%
Guangxi	49	292,000	0.017%
Gansu	44	297,000	0.015%
Xinjiang	33	147,700	0.022%
Yunnan	41	224,000	0.018%
Qinghai	23	38,000	0.061%
Ningxia	20	60,000	0.033%

# Factors in the choice of a college in the U.S.

## The importance of ranking



## Parental suggestions





# Ranking drives school transfer

- ❖ Jack, from Fisher College in Boston to Bentley in Boston;
- ❖ Vanessa, from the University of Washington at Seattle to Johns Hopkins;
- ❖ Joey, from the University of Missouri at Columbia to Johns Hopkins;
- ❖ Samantha, from the University of California at Riverside, who moved to Indiana University at Bloomington.

*“Almost all my mom's friends' children are enrolled in elite schools in the U.S. So when I could only go to University of Washington at Seattle, we were a bit disappointed ... so after two years, I transferred to Johns Hopkins.”*

*--Vanessa at Johns Hopkins University*

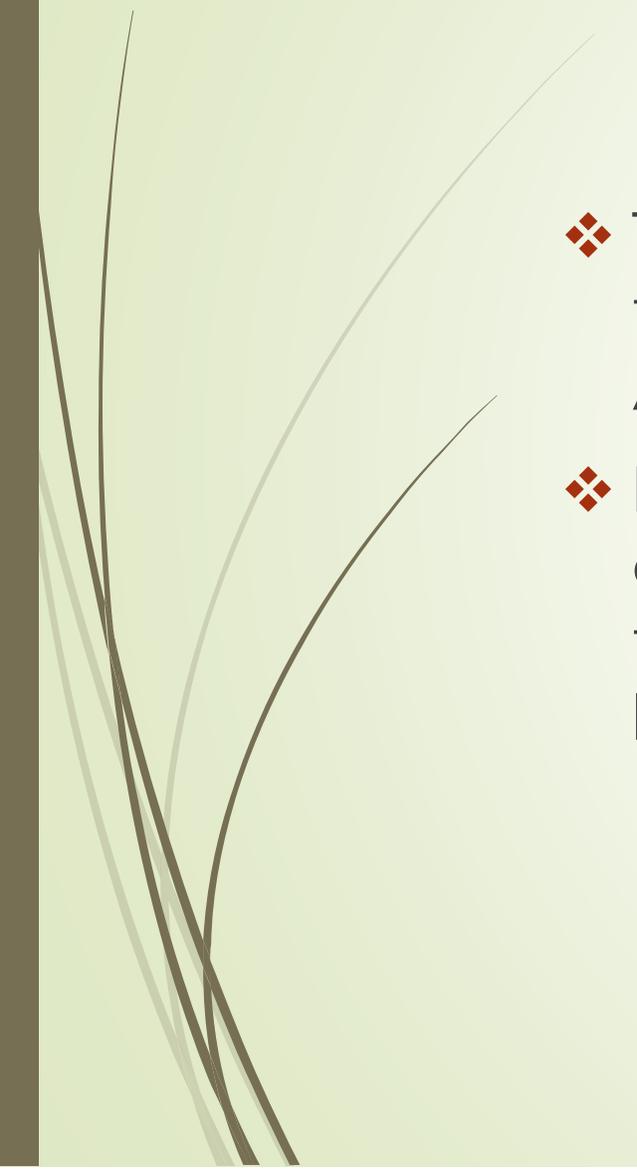


# Pathways to undergraduate study in America

- ❖ Stratified by economic resources, the first pathway entails the least cost, and the last more expensive
  1. From regular classes in Chinese public schools to American colleges
  2. From international classes in Chinese public schools to American colleges
  3. From Chinese private schools to American colleges
  4. From high schools in America, usually private, to American colleges
  
- ❖ Close to 80 percent of the survey respondents traveled via the first and second pathways to American colleges



# Social class and social reproduction

- ❖ This can be readily seen in the different educational trajectories they follow in their move from China to America.
  - ❖ First-generation college students from China are at a distinct disadvantage in several ways: they are less likely to enroll in selective institutions, speak up in class, or have close American friends.
- 

## First generation college student disadvantages in college placement (odds ratios)

	Selective institutions		Research institutions	
	I	II	I	II
Male	1.096 (0.208)	1.071 (0.207)	3.105*** (1.014)	2.978*** (0.994)
Parents with college education	1.726** (0.467)	1.376 (0.394)	0.564 (0.258)	0.373* (0.192)
Good English		1.893*** (0.390)		1.221 (0.397)
American high schools		0.851 (0.22)		0.310*** (0.11)

# First generation college student disadvantages in speaking up in classroom

	Model I	Model II	Model III
Male	1.172 (0.232)	1.251 (0.264)	1.109 (0.252)
Parents with college education	2.301*** (0.702)	1.612 (0.526)	1.677 (0.612)
Good English		3.913*** (0.948)	3.905*** (1.029)
American high school		1.170 (0.312)	1.161 (0.334)
Interest in program		1.550** (0.328)	1.801*** (0.405)
Selective institutions			1.791*** (0.398)
Research institutions			0.967 (0.340)

# First generation college student disadvantages in making American friends (odds ratios)

	Model I	Model II	Model III
Male	1.124 (0.237)	1.414 (0.324)	1.345 (0.329)
Parents with college education	2.279*** (0.569)	2.045*** (0.562)	2.505*** (0.742)
Good English		2.074*** (0.490)	1.830** (0.458)
American high school		1.200 (0.374)	1.478 (0.510)
Interest in program		1.814*** (0.418)	1.763** (0.427)
Campus Organization		2.636*** (0.612)	2.876*** (0.700)
Selective institutions			0.842 (0.206)
Research institutions			0.991 (0.386)



# Chinese public schools with international division

- ❖ New programs teach international curriculum and prepare students to study abroad
- ❖ Admission: based on *Zhongkao* test scores, plus interviews
  - ❖ Among the seven schools, four had scores 20-40 points lower than the regular classes
  - ❖ Charges as much as \$15k annual tuition
  - ❖ Entails interviews to ensure English proficiency.
- ❖ Students usually opt out of *Gaokao*.



# Selection: student interviews

- ❖ To test their spoken English primarily
- ❖ Parent interview is required in one highly selective school in Beijing with national prestige.

*“We want to make sure that parents are on the same page with us in terms of educational philosophy and their approach towards their children. We want them to understand that their children studying in the international division are going to be educated in elite institutions in the U.S., where equality and individual freedom are core values. We want to select parents whose values are consistent with ours. **We do not want parents who are authoritarian and controlling.** This will not help their children succeed in the U.S.”*

*--Mr. Zhang, Division Head*



# Chinese public schools with international division

- ❖ Is testing culture alleviated?
  - ❖ No, Gaokao is replaced by the pressures of new tests—the TOEFL, SAT and AP—and more tests, because many students would take them multiple times to achieve the best scores.

*“American universities are becoming more and more selective now. Their score requirements are higher and higher. Previously, a TOEFL score of 95 was fine, but now we all agree that it has to be over 100. Previously 100 was considered excellent, but now it is required. Only 110 scores are excellent.”*

--Heng, a 11<sup>th</sup> grader, from Nantong High school in China already taking TOEFL twice



# Chinese public schools with international division

- ❖ Is the threshold for college admissions in the U.S. getting higher and higher?
  - ❖ Yes, at least perceived to be.

*“We started the international division around 2009, and we knew little then. But our average student could go to a top-fifty school in the U.S. We didn’t know much, and the students’ materials were not as polished as they are now. Now we have had more experience, and the students’ application materials are of much higher quality, but it’s much more difficult to get into the top schools now.”*

--Ms. Wang, the director of College Counseling in one of the high schools in Beijing



# The paradoxical nature of educational desires

- ❖ Education desires (Kipnis 2011; Fong 2004, 2011)
- ❖ The paradox of such desires
  - ❖ the desire to get the highest test scores possible
  - ❖ the antithetical desire to escape from the high-stakes testing to American liberal arts education that presumably does not fixate on test scores.



# Overall

- ❖ Ambition and anxiety define the experiences of this new wave of Chinese undergraduates abroad.
- ❖ The gap between the education systems created a large void that drives up the anxiety.
- ❖ American universities need to be proactive in reaching out directly to Chinese students and families and provide more systematic and sustainable support, especially for first-generation students.



# Questions for future studies

- The ease of privilege (Khan 2011) is cast into doubt when we study international students
  - How to evaluate merit in the cross-national contexts of different education systems?
- 

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