The Hundred River Review

海纳百川 有容乃大

The ocean accepts a hundred rivers
to contain each one equally

The Hundred River Review is a journal of excellent student writing produced in our core writing courses here at NYU Shanghai. We celebrate essays that challenge our thinking, present us with new ways of seeing texts, build great arguments, and model the writing goals of our core courses.

We believe that students want to share their writing and read the work of their peers, and *The Hundred River Review* provides a space for this exchange.

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are excited to bring you the third volume of *The Hundred River Review*, NYU Shanghai's journal of excellent student writing. Each year, we look for exemplary student essays that display the critical and interdisciplinary approach that characterizes NYU Shanghai's academic mission.

Each of the four essays in this volume engages with questions of identity, education, and communication. The writers do so by drawing on their own multicultural, multilingual, and global perspectives in order to craft compelling arguments. Kelly Marshall explores the world of Chinese hip hop, and the underlying motivations and performative techniques that allow it to pay homage to and distinguish itself from its American counterpart. Zhirui Yao analyzes communicative strategies evidenced in WeChat conversations, and what they suggest about how we engage with each other. Huanci Wang deftly moves between her sources to argue against patriotism as a key criterion with which citizens view the world, and Jiannan Shi uses the distinction between linguistic and cultural development to make a case for increased support to international students in U.S. universities.

Every year, we aim to showcase pieces from core courses *Writing as Inquiry (I & II)* and *Perspectives on the Humanities* that can serve as a model for future student work. We hope that these essays

encourage you to maintain an inquisitive attitude when writing, and serve as an inspiration to enrich your own academic work.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Tomscha and Isa Ho

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Faculty Introduction

Kelly Marshall submitted this paper as his final research project in *Perspective on the Humanities: Sino-Western Literary Exchanges.* The assignment asked students to select and explore a specific case of literary, or more broadly, cultural exchange between China and the West. Kelly accomplished this task rather beautifully. His essay tells the story of how a local Sichuanese rap group, The Higher Brothers, adapted with obvious success the music and themes of American hip hop to the circumstances of their own lives as well as the social and political environment of a rising China. It is an exemplary piece of work not only due to its use of an impressive range of source materials, all well selected and integrated, but mainly because I admire Kelly's ability to manage a comparison that requires him to constantly shuttle back and forth between source and adaptation while constantly keeping his focus on the work of the Chinese artists. It is a challenging move we all face as academic writers, particularly those ambitious enough to cross a major divide such as that separating the cultures of China and the West. Bravo!

Lin Chen
Lecturer in the Writing Program

HIP HOP IN THE CHINESE CULTURAL CONTEXT

KELLY MARSHALL

The noteworthy traits of China's Sichuan are relatively universal and well-known. While pandas and spicy hotpot represent major Sichuanese contributions to the global conception of China, in recent years Sichuan has become notable for a cultural product much less "Chinese." Sichuan's capital Chengdu has become a global center for the hip hop art form, which continues to be a largely American phenomenon yet has increasingly proliferated to other nations and cultures across the world. In particular, Chengdu natives MaSiWei, DZ, Psy.P, and Melo have found themselves at the forefront of a burgeoning local rap scene under the name 海尔兄弟, or the Higher Brothers. Their songs, most of which are concerned with aspects of their daily and personal life, have found widespread popularity both within China and the United States, exemplified by their recent full length album titled *Black Cab*. At first it may be difficult to understand what appeal an art form associated with American minorities may carry for Chinese listeners. Because rap music is often spoken of not only as a musical genre but also as a feature of "hip hop culture," the answer to this question lies within both the culture that influences their work as well as the cul-

ture from which they originate. In order to better understand this cultural exchange, I will examine defining aspects of hip hop music and how the Higher Brothers have given them meaning and appeal within the Chinese cultural context by adapting notions which have been thoroughly explored in American hip hop such as economic status, linguistic difference, and political dissonance to the realities of modern China.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of hip hop is its history of integrating the viewpoints of those who have risen from extremely low socioeconomic status. Dating back to its genesis in New York City in the 1970s, the difficulty of living in poverty has been one of the defining themes of hip hop. This can be seen in the work of luminaries such as Grandmaster Flash, who has helped define the sound and message of the genre and whose music consistently "expressed the resentment and anger of people living in poor, postindustrial communities" (CERCL). For these early pioneers, music functioned as one of the few avenues that allowed them to communicate the flawed circumstances in which they lived. As a result, the art form came to embody the struggle of those trapped within the socioeconomic barriers constructed by their environment and the lengths to which they were willing to go in order to escape them. In the American context, these barriers largely reflect racial injustices. However, the experiences of those who have found success by way of rap music allow hip hop to express not only the tragedy of living in poverty, but also the miracle of becoming rich, resulting in a genre which "often straddles the line between extremes of of street

credibility (poverty) and pop celebrity (wealth)" (Harrrison 83). In a fascinating reflection of the values of American society, this transformation is largely represented within hip hop music through an emphasis on brands and luxury goods. For formerly impoverished hip hop artists whose music has allowed them to find great wealth, luxury brands act as powerful displays of luxurious wealth. An analysis of hip hop lyrics found a high frequency of songs in which "There would be a prominent mention of luxury products and brands as artists showcased their achievements as well as some mention of lower or utility products and brands to show advancement from a lower rung on the social ladder" (Baksh-Mohammed). Thus, within hip hop, name brands function as concrete representations of class and success, marking the distinction between one's former and present life. There is no better example of this than "Versace," the hit song released by Migos, a Southern rap group that the Higher Brothers have cited as one of their largest influences. This type of materialism-oriented rap is itself representative of the way in which those of low socioeconomic class are instilled with a reverence for the luxurious life so far out of their reach, always manifested in commercial goods.

These themes can be seen within the music of the Higher Brothers, beginning with their portrayals of their impoverished past. Throughout the *Black Cab* LP, the Higher Brothers' lyrics forcefully convey the life of poverty they experienced throughout their path toward eventual success. Frequent boasts about their now luxurious lifestyle are juxtaposed with allusions to their former hardships in

order to emphasize the narrow odds they were able to overcome, mirroring the rags-to-riches stories that can be found in the discographies of nearly every American rapper. Following in a tradition dating back to hip hop's genesis, the Higher Brothers are able to simultaneously use musical expression as an opportunity to communicate the nature of their economic hardships as well as as a means of remedying these issues and attaining financial freedom. Typical of the group's style, these hardships are conveyed mainly through descriptions of events occurring within rather unremarkable everyday life, such as the album's closer "711." An ode in praise of the commonplace convenience store, the song centers around the critical role that the store plays in their lives, providing affordable food, particularly during late night recording sessions. Throughout the song, their modest means and financial stresses are a central concern, such as in MaSiWei's description, "I'm so hungry I grab it all, but it makes me nervous/No need to worry, it's all so cheap" (Genius). Here, the all-penetrating nature of poverty can be seen in his nonchalant portrayal of his own daily concern of feeding himself as well as the fact that to him the prospect of a cheap meal is itself miraculous enough to merit an entire song of praise. Thus, though the song's topic is seemingly trivial, it effectively establishes a backstory for the Higher Brothers' industriousness while struggling against their socioeconomic position, functioning as an inventive application of a fundamental hip hop theme.

Through their portrayal of poverty in Chinese society, the Higher Brothers apply a key theme of hip hop to confront issues

which are increasingly relevant to their own environment. Although nations such as China may lack the racial element which influences the inequality described in American hip hop, the genre's spread to other countries has resulted in "hip-hop in different parts of the globe, particularly among those who may share no historical relationship with blacks but who find in hip-hop a language, a set of resources, and knowledge with which to articulate similar but not identical struggles and concerns" (Tiongson). Thus, through its removal from the American context, hip hop is able to serve not only as a mode of expression for the experiences of specific American social groups, but also as a more flexible art form that can be adapted to the messages of those dealing with the inequality present in their own societies. In this case, these concerns bear particular relevance to modern Chinese society. In fact, this topic is considered so crucial in the current political climate that at the latest Party Congress, Xi Jinping changed the Party's principal "contradiction," a critical statement of the Party's philosophy outlined in Maoist theory which had remained unchanged for over three decades, to reflect this exact issue. The Party's official contradiction is now between "the people's ever-growing need for a better life" and "unbalanced and inadequate development" (*Beijing Review*). Indeed, while poverty and hardship are hardly new to China's citizens, there is now an extremely wealthy upper class that has divided Chinese society, a development that has no doubt been impactful upon the Chinese psyche. Through their own biographical narratives, the Higher Brothers' lyrics are thus able to portray the perspective of

those left behind by China's economic development.

In order to apply the broad and universal issue of poverty and inquality to their own specific surroundings, the Higher Brothers cannot simply import the subject matter of American rap music into their context. Because economic class and the pursuit of wealth take different forms between different cultures or even within one culture, both the societal pressures causing economic inequality for American minorities as well as the actions taken as a result of these circumstances are in many ways different from what is experienced by the Chinese working class. Though the personal narratives that the Higher Brothers create through their depictions of their past are similar to those of American rappers in that they both stress the extremes to which the narrators were willing to go to escape economic difficulties, the sacrifices they made in order to do so differ significantly. Notably, American hip hop artists' backstories tend to contain reflections upon extremely unethical behavior, such as gang violence and drug dealing, and the moral consequences of their behavior. Similarly, the Higher Brothers lyrics reference their willingness to strive for money; however, the emphasis is placed not on the ethical sacrifices required to do so but rather the furious urgency they placed on themselves to earn money. For instance, the album title itself is a reference to the illicit taxi service the group operated in order to meet their financial needs, a story which is elaborated on in the album's title track, depicting a hectic disregard for anything unrelated to making money. Psy.P raps, "Hurry up hurry up, get in the car, time is not to be wasted/Time is money so I'm

busy everyday with no desire to sleep" (Genius). Contrast this with a typical song by Migos, whose members have each been imprisoned multiple times for charges relating to narcotics and firearms (Golden). Though the business run by the Higher Brothers is in fact illegal, their experience bears less resemblance to the ruthless gangsters portrayed in American rap and instead evokes the modern ethos of the Chinese proletariat in a society where legal authority often fails to outweigh the desire for profit.

When describing the parts of their lives which occur after their newfound wealth, the Higher Brothers, much like their American counterparts, place great emphasis on their access to luxury, name-brand consumer goods. In almost every song on the *Black Cab* album, there are lines displaying the group's fixation with name-brand goods, particularly of Western origin, ranging from high-class European fashion, such as Gucci and Chanel, to well-known streetwear brands such as Supreme and Bape. The obsession is not limited to clothing, with the entirety of the song "Aston Martin" dedicated to the iconic luxury British vehicle of the same name. The hook features DZ energetically requesting the brand, even saying, "Brother I don't like Maserati, give me Aston Martin," and "There's only 76 left on the market, I don't care the price" (Genius). Clearly, the group's notions of success and well-being are directly measured by their ability to attain name-brand items, in this case a single type of car. While this can clearly be attributed to their Western influences, it is important to note that the Higher Brothers need not look any further than their own nation to find an obsession with

brand goods. Research has found that "It has been traditionally associated with a Western lifestyle in the postindustrial world. But nowadays people in developing countries have also adopted material values"(Sun). Thus, the profoundness of the Higher Brothers' hip hop music lies not only in their ability to embody the sufferings of China's lower class but also to describe the tantalizingly improbable dream of overnight success. Because of China's unequal growth, its poorest citizens now witness the stunning, ostentatious success of those who have gained not only wealth, but also the social status that it carries. This materialistic lifestyle is epitomized by the braggadocious descriptions of luxury goods and flamboyant displays of wealth employed by the Higher Brothers which provide an opportunity to observe the rare case in which these otherwise unfulfillable desires are given the means to be realized.

Unlike the West, where market economics and material values are well-developed, this cultural phenomenon has occurred in China over the span of mere decades. Thus, materialism in China is different from materialism in the West, as reflected by the Higher Brothers' ability to give uniquely Chinese meaning to this staple of hip hop culture. Of particular note is their song "Made in China," the Higher Brothers' commercial debut and the one most responsible for launching them into the mainstream. The song's hook lists off a mix of expensive products and cheap consumer goods, from gold chains and designer clothes to alarm clocks and toothbrushes, each followed by the phrase "Made in China," spoken in English (Genius). Here, in their most widely disseminated message to

listeners, they use their platform to juxtapose their own high-class aspirations with China's image as a producer of cheap, low-quality goods. The accumulation of material gains is used to show not just their own rising success, but also that of their entire nation which has similarly escaped poverty to find wealth. This identification with China's ascendance is displayed in lyrics such as DZ's statement that "The responsibility I feel is like the Chinese national team winning respect in swimming"(Genius). Simultaneously, their lyrics point to the fact that the material goods they now enjoy are the same ones that not long ago were produced by China for other nations. By doing this they are able to use rap stereotypes to reflect the fact that although China may mirror the materialism of developed Western nations, due to their rapid development, they may still be regarded as a nation that provides low-value labor.

This insistence on incorporating the characteristics of their native land within their music is, in fact, an aspect of rap music to which hip hop culture places great importance. In American rap, this emphasis is often reflected within the linguistics patterns unique to each region within the country. Due to the highly regional nature of American hip hop as well as the importance placed on authenticity, regional slang and distinctive speech patterns are used as evidence of a rapper's ties to their place of origin. A particularly significant example of this cultural phenomenon is the case of America's Southeastern region. As a result of Southern hip hop's rise to prominence over the last decade, the region's distinctive colloquialisms, once ridiculed for their unpolished sound, have become part

of the subgenre's worldwide success and have influenced America's national vernacular. This phenomenon has been so pronounced that those researching linguistics in the United States find the developments within hip hop culture to be vital to an understanding of linguistic trends, as explained within the Southern Journal of Linguistics:

> Examinations of hip hop have shown that it is essential to consider the genre when analyzing contemporary language change, particularly among young speakers (see Smitherman 2000; Alim 2006). Morgan (1996) stresses the importance of speech communities and the role of place in hip hop; this is especially relevant in this analysis as the south has recently been established as a distinct and unique region in hip hop. (Bloomquist 2)

As seen in this quote, the importance of language use within hip hop is relevant even outside the genre and not only mirrors cultural trends, but influences them as well. Another way in which hip hop artists use their music to represent the communities they belong to is through explicit references to political issues facing their communities. American hip hop is notorious for its consistently anti-authoritarian message and its insistence on confronting issues of police brutality, political misconduct, and racial oppression. In this way, artists are able to perform an important service to their communities by providing a platform to discuss the injustices they may face.

In the case of the Higher Brothers, these cultural practices within hip hop act as important influences which the group utilizes for their own purposes unique to Chinese society. For example, this can be seen in the Higher Brothers' decision to rap in their native Sichuanese dialect. The Higher Brothers are among several Chinese rap groups to use their regional dialects, which are countless in China. Although the decision to rap in a dialect familiar to only a small fraction of Chinese listeners may seem surprising as it is contrary to the group's lofty ambitions of widespread success, the artistic choice is the direct result of the example set by Southern rappers such as Migos. In an interview, "Masiwei explains that they were inspired to embrace their local tongue after watching rappers from the Southern U.S. in the Vice documentary 'Noisey Atlanta'. 'We realized that [using Sichuanese] is an advantage. It's actually really cool to do it,' he says" (Agrawal). Therefore, through their use of hip hop culture, the Higher Brothers have inherited the genre's norms regarding regional languages, even though the use of regional dialects has a completely different connotation within the Chinese culture. In fact, while regional linguistics may have great social importance within the American context, by importing them into China they have gained not only social but also political relevance. In advancing his concept of 'Linguistic Imperialism,' He Baogang notes that "China's language practices and policies have been shaped by the dominance of the Han script (*Hanzi* 汉字)and the state's desire to create and maintain Great Unity (*dayitong* 大一统)" (He). As a result of their desire to culturally unify China through a common

language, the government wishes to discourage the use of local dialects such as Sichuanese. This is accomplished through official efforts to promote the use of Mandarin, which have succeeded in creating a common perception that speakers of regional dialects are uneducated and uncivilized. Because of this stereotype, almost all music released in China is limited to Mandarin, making the Higher Brothers and their rap contemporaries a notable exception.

By creating content that challenges the political and social norms of their society, the Higher Brothers are thus able to embody the political spirit of hip hop while adapting to the suppressive realities of China's political climate. While this stylistic choice may lack the aggressively political tendencies associated with American hip hop, it is a manifestation of the genre's consistently anti-authoritarian spirit which has remained constant as the genre has spread across the globe. As noted by Jeff Chang, "One thing about hip-hop has remained consistent across cultures: a vital progressive agenda that challenges the status quo" (Chang). In particular, this characteristic of rap appears to be incompatible with China's cultural and political climate, a reality made clear when Higher Brothers' Melo was briefly brought into police custody after making a song critical of Chengdu's ban of Uber (Sheehan). This incident underscores a general suppression of Chinese hip hop by the nation's government, a significant challenge to the genre's success. As Liu Xuexin writes, "The Chinese government seeks to control popular music through censorship, but hip hop artists negotiate censorship in order to make their work socially relevant and to attract a grass-roots fan

base" (Liu). Accordingly, the political realities of China restrict the extent to which rap is capable of tackling political topics in China. However, as can be seen with the Higher Brothers' use of regional dialect, artists still use the traditionally political nature of hip hop in an indirect but effective manner.

Through alterations such as these, the Higher Brothers are able to adapt hip hop to their own environment and their own purposes. Hip hop was created as a reaction to the ills of modern Western society as perceived by those most harmed by them. As such, it stands to reason that as China becomes ever closer to a modernity defined by the West, the issues confronted in hip hop will bear increasing relevance to China. However, to blatantly copy and steal from the American original would do no justice to the original art form. It would merely be an imitation that would be recognizable as hip hop yet lack the meaning and importance that hip hop derives from its social context. Instead, by treating the identifiable features of hip hop as tools suitable for their own artistic purposes, the Higher Brothers are creating value for their listeners. It is not simply a matter of adding Chinese characteristics on top of something that is American, but instead selectively using characteristics that are seemingly uniquely American and creatively applying them in such a way as to give them entirely new meaning. Simply put, it is not hip hop with Chinese characteristics, it's Chinese hip hop.

It is because of this uniquely Chinese subject matter that Chinese hip hop is able to appeal so effectively to Chinese listeners. In particular, the Higher Brothers' success is due to their ability to

integrate these messages while continuing to embody the aesthetics and characteristics of American rap to which fans have grown familiar. From gold chains and braided hair to a Southern-influenced rapping style, their images elicit an immediate comparison to American styles. This was the case for a number of American rappers whose reactions to the music video for the Higher Brothers' song "Made In China" were captured in a now-viral video (88Rising). While watching the video, they expressed amazement at how well the group was able to capture the spirit of hip hop while creating something uniquely Chinese. Not only has this resulted in a surprisingly large following in the West, but has also allowed them to attract Chinese youth who have been increasingly enamored with hip hop culture since its introduction through China's coastal cities in the early 2000s (Liu). Now instead of looking overseas for hip hop culture, they enjoy music that uses the cultural forms to which they have become accustomed—in a form to which they can feel a relation and connection. Thus, because the Higher Brothers are able to apply themes familiar to their listeners in a manner that is uniquely Chinese and carries particular importance within a new culture, their appeal is twofold: their music is able to potently reflect realities of Chinese society while simultaneously managing to appeal to Western hip hop sensibilities.

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Faculty Introduction

Huanci Wang wrote "Patriotism Is Not the Best Criterion" for my *Writing as Inquiry* course "Language, Identity, and Community." Huanci weighs the benefits and limitations of patriotism and proposes that we should take a broader, "global" view when considering issues that impact us all, such as trade and the refugee crisis. She constructs a debate between those who advocate for the value of patriotism and those who reject patriotism. She skillfully incorporates and evaluates sources, acknowledging the strengths of others' claims while distinguishing them from her own argument. To support her argument, Huanci uses specific illustrating examples. Her thought-provoking discussions of corruption in China, the trade war between the US and China, and Trump's "America First" policy—as well as her thoughtful, fair-minded approach towards patriotism—are especially timely.

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Lecturer in the Writing Program

PATRIOTISM IS NOT THE BEST CRITERION

HUANCI WANG 王奂辞

Patriotism holds a unique status in the moral systems of citizens, who use patriotism as a consideration when they view national and international affairs. But citizens hardly agree on what exact role patriotism should play in their moral systems. To redefine patriotism's role, one first needs to define patriotism. In her essay "Why I Am Not A Patriot," Carol Nicholson points out "two distinct components of patriotism": "a feeling of love as well as an active expression of that devotion" (23). In other words, patriotism is an intention to protect and benefit one's country. Defenders such as Richard Rorty call patriotism "an absolutely essential component of citizenship" (Rorty, Par. 5), and take patriotism as one of the most needed human qualities that motivates citizens' to improve their countries. Opponents like Carol Nicholson do not see patriotism as a virtue but "a dangerous extreme" (25) that tears the international community apart. However, because citizens with different nationalities are unavoidably subjective and biased, patriotism does not necessarily help citizens to fairly view their own country. While patriotism is an important criterion, citizens should not prioritize patriotism when they view national and international events. Instead, citizens should take a global view and weigh the overall loss

and gain of all people's well-being.

Patriotism is a valuable criterion because it can make people judge events based on the well-being of a community bigger than themselves. This holds true as long as citizens are not blinded by their love and as long as the community's interest does not contradict others' interest. Carol Nicholson goes too far in accusing patriotism of being "a dangerous extreme" (25). Her reason is that "fixing love on an abstraction such as 'country' leads to the erroneous conclusion that one's country is better than all others, which is a recipe for intolerance, hate and war" (25). She equates "love" with "egoism" in her conclusion, claiming that hatred and war are the only consequences of patriotism. Here, Richard Rorty, the author of "The Unpatriotic Academy," argues that "a nation cannot reform itself unless it takes pride in itself" (Rorty, Par. 6). Although Rorty over-praises patriotism, he points out patriotism's positive attribute that is ignored by Nicholson. Love for a country stimulates citizens to improve the country and its people's well-being. Instead of excluding other countries, patriotism can also lead to a just and efficient solution to the problems a country faces. Patriots consider it a matter of pride to protect their home country from invasions, and they also take pride in punishing the offenders within the country that harm the masses. When people cheer for a just verdict on corruption, this is patriotism at work, telling them not to let parasites in the country go unpunished. In such cases, although all citizens are not directly affected by the court ruling, any improvement in social justice contributes to the common good from which all

citizens benefit. Therefore, when people look out for their fellow citizens' well-being, patriotism is a valid consideration.

In fact, patriotism is not completely biased, even in global consideration. When many countries share the same losses and gains, patriotism must also base itself on other countries' interests. During the Second World War, a citizen's intention to protect one's home country and strike the Nazis could be beneficial for his or her allies as well as the larger global community. In the era of environmental degradation, all countries share the same fragile environment, and there is no way to consider one's own country without considering others' well-being. With patriotism, the intention to protect and benefit one's own country, there can not only be improvement of the country itself but also collective progress among all countries. Thus, patriotism is sometimes a valid consideration because it can also show love for a community beyond selves.

On the other hand, patriotism is not the best criterion. Patriotism is unavoidably subjective, and it sometimes means exclusion, selfishness, and blindness. Consequently, citizens should not consider whether a deed is patriotic as more important than whether it is just and beneficial for the global community. Rorty neglects the destructive possibility for actions driven by patriotism. He advocates for joint goals and joint power of American citizens for the country's reform. He states that "a sense of national identity is … an absolutely essential component of citizenship, of any attempt to take our country and its problems seriously" (Rorty, Par. 5). Rorty stresses the constructive power of national pride, but he ignores

the fact that taking pride in one's country means not only changing the country for the better, but also prioritizing the country's interest in the case of national conflict. In her rebuttal, Nicholson writes that patriotism will make "nation against nation in a deadly battle for dominance" (25). Although she goes to extremes to completely neglect the positive outcomes of patriotism, Nicholson is right that there can be selfishness or exclusion derived from patriotism. Citizens must realize that patriotism does not guarantee benefits for the human community as a whole.

For example, the Japanese invasions of China from 1937 to expand Japan's territory for its economic benefit was an eight-year nightmare for Chinese citizens. Today, President Donald Trump's "America First" policies are notorious for being selfish and short-sighted because it isolates America and neglects the good of human beings as a whole. If people view such policies based on whether they are patriotic, or in other words, whether they benefit the American people, then the answer may well be yes, since the economic tariffs and strong national defense might increase domestic jobs and improve national safety. A Politico/Morning Consult poll conducted in 2017 shows that 65% of Americans gave a positive response to this policy (Politico). However, if people consider the well-being of the global community, they will notice that a country that excludes others can hardly contribute anything to the global economy, global environment, or global safety. America's trade war with China damages other countries' economies. Moreover, if America fails to take part in the global effort to construct a better trading environ-

ment, its voice might become less and less influential in the global society. At the Council of Councils (CoC) annual conference last year, delegates from twenty-two countries decided to make their future trade plans without America. It turns out that a policy motivated by patriotism ends up impairing its country. Although those who execute patriotic policies consider their beliefs beneficial to their country, they fail to first weigh the overall impact on the globalized society. Voting based on patriotism alone not only reduces the total profit globally but can also harm the country itself.

Moreover, patriotism can make citizens blind when the love for a country becomes excessive and makes citizens ignore domestic problems. In "Nationalism with Chinese Characteristics," Chengpeng Li demonstrates the case where citizens only see the external conflicts between China and other countries while failing to advocate for punishing corrupt officials or to push the government for solutions to food safety issues (Li). In this case, citizens' patriotism is incomplete and blind. Patriotism makes them see China as a unique nation distinguishable from the rest of the world but not a community responsible for protecting its citizens. Patriotism has even become a cover-up for the country's internal problems and challenges. If patriotism is the only criterion for citizens, then internal justice might be neglected. Patriotism makes it hard to see the deficiencies of one's beloved country.

Rorty and Nicholson provide two ways to comprehend love for one's country. Patriotism can be both a constructive force when citizens show their responsibility towards social construction, and a

destructive one when citizens turn a blind eye to interests beyond those of their own country. Patriotism is one of the possible criteria for viewing national and international events, for it is love for a community, but it is not thorough enough to abandon selfishness and blindness. Citizens should not prioritize patriotism over universal human interests. Weighing global losses and gains, on the other hand, divests patriotism of its subjectiveness that makes it selfish and blind. Take the refugee crisis as an example: if citizens prioritize their own country's benefit, it is plausible for them to reject refugees, based on their perception that refugees might be a financial burden or pose safety threats. This is exactly what many people believe today, and the refugees who are mostly harmless are deprived of their opportunity to live peaceful lives. However, when citizens do not prioritize patriotism and carefully examine the situation, they will notice that some countries with extreme domestic inequality and poverty need to focus on improving their domestic conditions while others are powerful enough to contribute their resources to refugees for their well-being and world peace. This contribution is mutually beneficial in the long run. In this case, citizens are no longer blind and selfish when they carefully examine global issues including their native country's situation and make their best judgment after weighing the outcomes.

Patriotism is love towards one's country. It can either be in alliance with selflessness and justice or become closer to selfishness and egoism depending on its application. Judgments based on patriotism can lead to—but do not guarantee—a fair and globally ef-

ficient outcome. Compared to patriotism, it is more rational to consider the well-being of humanity as a whole as far as national and international affairs are concerned. In a highly globalized world, this is beneficial to not only the global community but also the country itself in the long run. Therefore, when discussing a policy, an agreement, or other major issues concerning other countries in the world, citizens should base their decisions on considerations of the overall benefits to the world rather than merely act on the basis of patriotism. Patriotism is never the best criterion.

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Faculty Introduction

Zhirui Yao's essay comes out of my Fall 2017 second-year humanities seminar, *Perspectives on the Humanities*. The theme for the course was "Language, Identity, and World Englishes," and it provided students with a non-specialist's introduction to linguistic theory before equipping them with the tools to critically interrogate how they use languages to construct and perform various identities and the effects of the global spread of English. Zhirui's essay is in response to the second assignment prompt, which asked students to carry out an autoethnographic, linguistic analysis of how they use their various linguistic resources to perform different identities in online environments.

"Identities and Linguistic Features in Computer-mediated Communication" represents a smart analysis of Zhirui's use of instant messaging platforms, such as WeChat, to perform different selves as context and audience demanded it. She uses the space of this essay to find ways to interface theories from the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics with her own lived experiences. And, in the process, she shows the reader the myriad options that are presented to us by modern affordances when it comes to constructing different, often divergent, selves for our socially significant others.

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IDENTITIES AND LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

ZHIRUI YAO 尧之睿

I. Introduction

Over the last ten years, the internet has developed faster than anyone could have imagined. Along with this development has come the rise of computer-mediated communication (CMC), also known as online communication.[1] Unlike traditional face-to-face communication, people don't have to respond instantly during online communication, which gives them time to think about how they want to present themselves. The identities shown through CMC are, therefore, "more malleable" and "more subject to self-censorship" (Ellison et al. 418). People seem to have more power over their presentation of their identities through the channel of online communication.

In this essay, I will discuss incentives for presenting certain identities and examine how the intentions behind those identities are being carried out through people's various language use in CMC.

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1. Note that I will use both of these terms interchangeably.

Here, identity is defined as the image people show to the outside world about themselves that meets both individual desires and external expectations towards the individual.[2] Desires, here, can refer to "[the] desire for recognition; quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledged; a deep desire for association…," while the expectations denote the anticipation one senses that others have towards them (West 20). I argue that people implement communicative skills that are specific to CMC to build their social identity for the purpose of being accepted by targeted interlocutors or the general public.

2. Methods

I) Data Sources and Selection Rationale

The data selected comes from my WeChat conversations with my friends, and my friends' chat histories. These sources contribute to my discussion by illustrating the different incentives for identity performance. These sources are selected based on the possibility to investigate the actual context of the conversations. This critical selection criterion aims to reduce misunderstandings between the researcher and the data resources, and it adds credibility to the analysis.

Furthermore, in order to understand the identities presented in CMC on a larger scale, I also include one screenshot from Weibo, a mainstream social media outlet in China. The Weibo content

2. This definition is inspired by West. See West 20-23 for more discussions on the meaning, moral content, and political consequences of identity.

selected has been reposted hundreds of times or comes from bloggers with over ten thousand fans online. The widely read materials with special expressive features illustrate typical identities presented in the Weibo environment and lead to the disclosure of repeated cultural patterns behind web language use.

II) Analytic Methods

In order to protect the privacy of the interlocutors in WeChat conversations, their names and relevant identifying information were modified during data preparation. Weibo users' usernames were also masked. When examining WeChat conversations, I adopted the "speaker-driven method," which relies on the specific context of each instance of language use (Clark 152). I interviewed the main interlocutors to find out why they applied certain linguistic features. The special ways of communication in WeChat conversations were categorized to find out the identities being performed. When analyzing the larger groups' conversations in Weibo, I also summarized one of the most frequent identities observed, connecting it to the definition of identity. Lastly, a connection between small group dialogues and large group conversations was made to look into how micro and macro level identities are carried out.

3. Results and Discussion

I) Data and Analysis

Figure 1 is A's conversation with her alumni mentor (B). B is more experienced in the industry than A is, and more impor-
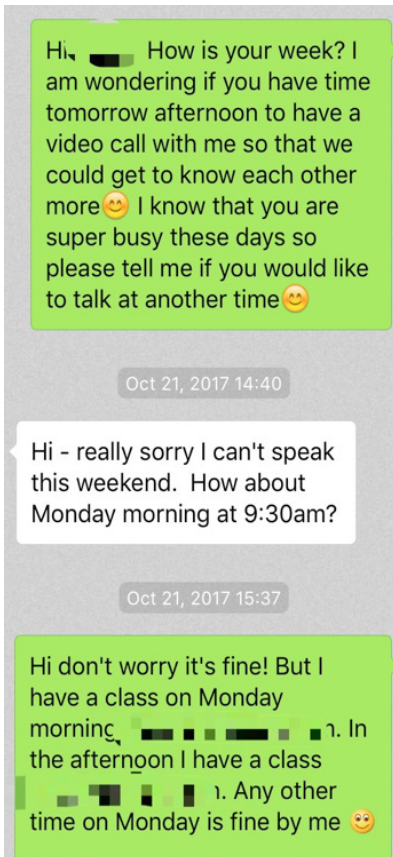
tantly, he occupies a very high position in this industry, which gives him the credibility to give other people suggestions. In this screenshot of the conversation, A is asking B whether he has time to hold a video call with her on Monday to give her career advice. She begins this conversation by politely greeting him so that her request will not seem too abrupt. What is more worth noticing is her use of emojis. In just a few sentences, she uses the smile emoji three times to show that she is genuinely looking forward to having a video call with B. This repetitive use of emojis represents her effort to be a friendly and involved junior who

Figure 1: WeChat screenshot of conversation between A and B

is eager to learn from an expert. Also, A puts all the information in a single block instead of separating it into sentences. This short-paragraph format exhibits her formality when talking to B since she in trying to give B the impression that she has thought thoroughly before sending the messages. Compared to B, A also gives a much more detailed and therefore longer explanation of her plans, while

B simply uses a hyphen (-) to connect two short sentences without giving specific reasons for his unavailability (see the white bubble from B in Figure 1, above). Furthermore, when B makes a proposition, he directly offers his preference by asking a question starting with "how." However, when A makes the request for them to meet, instead of directly asking the question "do you want to meet tomorrow afternoon?" she starts out by using "I'm wondering" to serve as a buffer for her following inquiry for politeness. The use of the present continuous tense in "I'm wondering" implies that there is something on A's mind that makes her undecided about whether her request is plausible, and the reason could well be explained by her following sentence—the assumption that a senior professional, her alumni mentor, must be incredibly busy with his work, and is probably unable to spare some time for her. In contrast with A, B is not too worried about what response his proposal will receive. He gives a specific time on a specific day depending on his availability and waits for accommodation on A's part. Overall, A is putting herself in a position that is lower than B's so that B will be more willing to help her. She performs her identity as a modest learner, a polite and considerate negotiator, and a rookie who desires to be recognized and accepted by her alumni mentor, so she uses emojis, greetings, detailed explanation and complete paragraphs of speech to highlight her intentions. It is not the linguistic features she presents that makes her a student seeking advice. Instead, it is the desire to get help from B that determines her language use in CMC.

A's slight change in attitude after she receives B's response

is worth noting. The power dynamic between A and B is not completely hegemonic, but fluid. After getting the slightly disappointing message from B, A does not use the iPhone smiley emoji but uses a unique emoji that only WeChat provides: a plain smiley face without the smiling eyes and blushing cheeks. This downgraded level of excitement, which in the conventional use of emojis in Chinese WeChat culture is associated with passive-aggression, shows how A is adjusting her attitude to be less ardent in response to B's calmness. Unlike face-to-face communication, CMC gives interlocutors a chance to show their emotions at different levels without being noticed by the other side. People can play with their use of emojis and stickers especially when the responding interlocutor is unfamiliar with the web-cultural context of how such expressions are used. However, it's also clear that A does not want B to take her message to be negative. She chooses an emoji with passive connotations in her own culture but positive meaning in B's culture. A is still trying to perform her identity as the moderate junior like before, despite the covert resistance carried out by the WeChat smiley emoji. From this dialogue, we can observe interesting changes in emotions and the power relation between the two interlocutors that are either purposefully revealed by CMC featured language use, or clandestinely hidden under specific cultural meanings. Speech performance is part of identity performance, and people's desire to be recognized and respected prompts their various linguistic choices.

The same relationship between language use and identity can be observed in my conversation with one of my very close friends

as well (see Figure 2). In this case, our power relation is equal, and we are not asking each other for any specific benefits. Our linguistic features in CMC exhibit more of our attitudes towards each other's expectations. In Figure 2, I send her a terrible selfie of us taken two years ago and describe it as an "epic black photo" ("black" stands for "bad" in Chinese internet language). I exaggerate the degree of ugliness of this photo by using the adjective "epic" and "black" to show my shock towards this photo in a more humorous way. In response to my efforts to be humorous, she replies with a

Figure 2: WeChat screenshot of a conversation with my close friend

long sequence of "ha." While she might be amused by my description of the photo, in real life she would probably not laugh this hard. The use of extra "ha"s is her effort to be a good friend of mine and respond to my jokes. Later on, she asked me which grade the photo was taken in and described the photo as "suffocating (because of its ugliness)." This expression can also be considered a response to my previous use of the word "epic," with the same exaggeration. I also reply with a long sequence of "haha" to show that I appreciate her getting what I want to complain about in this
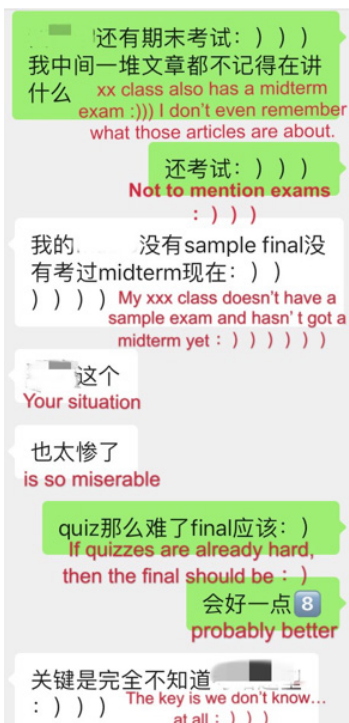
Figure 3: WeChat screenshot of conversation between C and D

photo. Here, both of us have actively responded to each other's words to make the conversation more easy-going and fun, and therefore the identity we both present is "a good friend who gets the other person." It is because of our genuine hope to be more connected with and therefore more recognized by each other that we speak in this way. Language is our medium to embody this desire and perform specific identities.

A similar example is the dialogue between my friends C and D (see Figure 3). In this scenario, the two interlocutors are discussing a final exam and complaining to each other about how unprepared they are. We can see that the green bubble starts out with a series of complaints followed by ":)))", a variation of another passive-aggressive smiley emoticon ":)" for the purpose of emphasizing the intensity of emotion. Later, this pattern of icons is followed by the other interlocutor, as represented by the white bubble. The white bubble even adds more closed parentheses to the original modified smiley emoticon to stress how he feels the same about the exam with the green bubble (see the first and last white bubbles in Figure 3, left). The two interlocutors, while

they might have different speech habits in daily life, exhibit similar expressions as their conversation goes on. Although the green bubble doesn't explicitly state his expectation towards the white bubble that he should empathize with him and follow his use of the smiley emoticon, the white bubble nevertheless responds by putting himself in the green bubble's shoes and behaving according to the green bubble's rules of language, and probably his way of thinking. It can often be observed that people who chat more frequently online have similar speech patterns, and perform similar web personalities regardless of their actual qualities. Just like the above dialogue, our language use is being constantly modified and adjusted when we are facing different audiences. To put it in the CMC context, social media platforms extend our ways of expression. We are not only using words, but also textual portrayals such as emojis and emoticons containing special characters to express ourselves, acting as the active interlocutor the other side may wish to see. Thus, responding to expectations is another critical motive for the language features people present.

The three examples given above describe how in small group conversations, diverse linguistic tools can reflect people's desires and responses to outside expectations. Not surprisingly, people's expressions may also appear to be homogeneous when it comes to larger and more public discussions online. Figure 4 is a screenshot from a fun Weibo post recreating images of ancient Chinese figures. In the repost area, almost all of the repost comments are simply long sequences of "haha" (laughter) and their

Figure 4: Weibo screenshot of the reposting area of one humorous post

variations (see the second user's repost area in Figure 4, Line 3). Although the users are reposting from different people, they concurrently follow the previous format of simply saying "haha." Some even stress their amusement by using more ha's than in previous comments to show their engagement in the public discussion (see the third user's response to his previous repost comments in Figure 4, Line 6). Yet, hidden behind their similar language is their own emotions that may be distinctive from the general public's. Almost

nobody explicitly expresses any other thoughts about this post. Instead, people just laugh simultaneously.

Does this homogeneous linguistic feature mean that people have the same personalities? Not necessarily. But it at least means that people want to present themselves to the world in a shared identity in public discussions. Language endows people with identities. People's use of abundant onomatopoeia "ha" illustrates their efforts to be a "haha dang 哈哈党" (party of haha), that is famous for laughing all the time in Weibo. The logic behind laughing all the time is fairly evident: people want to present a more easy-going character online. The logic behind being part of the "haha" party is also rather simple: since everyone is laughing so hard, one should also do so or otherwise it will make him look offbeat, even if he is only a little amused in real life. In this case, people no longer have control over what linguistic features they can apply, for that particular identity is tied to particular expressions. If they want to share that identity for a sense of security, they will also have to apply the same linguistic features and act according to the same set of online behavior norms. Regardless of the specific identity that people want to present in Weibo, language is their key to having that identity. In this case, language is the tool for people to identify their kind and distinguish others.

II) WeChat, Weibo, and Beyond

There are several observations we can make from the data above. To begin, it is quite clear that the presentation of identity

to the world is a determinant of people's use of language in CMC: "Whenever we isolate language from the people who speak and interpret it and the context in which they speak and interpret it, we are not getting closer to some kind of essential truth about language" (Joseph 24). If people don't have desires or don't care about external expectations, then there is no starting point for people to take on a certain form of language. In fact, it is doubtful that language would even exist.

Furthermore, as Walther has noted, since CMC is "asynchronous" and only "verbal and linguistic cues" that are "most at our discretion and control" are shown, people's self-presentation online is "more selective, malleable, and subject to self-censorship" than face-to-face presentation (20). Therefore, in CMC, people are able to better utilize the linguistic properties of online communication, such as the application of extra onomatopoeia and emojis, the length and density of information, and the corresponding descriptive habits like exaggerating feelings, to consciously present certain identities. It is no longer enough to just consider language as a passive reflection of people's identities. Language's position as a stepping stone to gain a certain identity should be taken into consideration. In postmodernist theory, "people are who they are because of (amongst other things) the way they talk" (Cameron 49). Speech habits constitute identity performance. We may ponder how this phenomenon plays out in contexts other than CMC as well. For instance, scholars often tend to use similar terms and phrases in the academic field when they are talking about their research.

To outsiders of the discipline, this makes them sound professional and worthy of trust. To insiders of the discipline, the use of shared verbal expressions reduces much of the trouble re-stating long and complicated concepts that are already considered common knowledge in the field. Different speech communities[3] are thus formed on the basis of the same habits of expression people share, and people's identities can be reshaped by language in a dynamic manner according to their needs—scholars don't necessarily need to sound the same when they are at home and at work.

Last but not least, some properties of identity itself can be concluded. If the identity people present is subject to people's tactical use of language, it means that the context and the way in which identity is performed can actively influence the meaning of each identity itself. The socially decided feature of identity can thus be seen. Identity can't be interpreted separately without signifying people's position in relation to others. The previous data show that the presentation of identity involves the desire to be recognized and accepted by others (West 20). This desire can also explain why, on larger CMC platforms, people's expressions have the tendency to be similar. Public CMC platforms, such as Weibo or Twitter, are excellent stages for people to see others' responses, and which responses are most welcomed. People adapt similar language features in order to have access to the same identity that secures them a sense of recognition and importance, just like what the "haha" party does

3. See Labov's definition that describes a speech community as a group of people with shared norms and homogeneous linguistic forms (Labov 120-1).

on Weibo. This phenomenon is also common in other social interactions where people are obsessed with labeling each other with the same or different identities. As Golfman has pointed about the development of social interaction, "different acts [are] presented behind a small number of fronts" (17). While these small number of fronts can be the product of social organizations simplifying categories to save resources, they can also be people's conscious choices to be included in a larger community to call for a feeling of protection, security, safety, and surety (West 21).

4. Conclusion

As the previous data and analysis show, language and identity can shape one another. Language exhibits the identity that people want the outside world to know about themselves. Especially in CMC, more communicative skills are applied when it comes to people showing their actual desires and responding to others' expectations. More importantly, language can give people access to different speech communities, where they are able to gain the sense of security and recognition. Almost everyone is using language to simultaneously depict themselves and fit themselves into other social networks. Looking into the relationship between identity and language allows us a clearer understanding of people's intentions behind their language use in CMC and in real life.

Due to project parameters, there is only limited time available to discuss the cause and effect of identities presented through CMC language use. Still, this paper can offer us important insights

into many other social fields. For instance, when conducting identity studies, it is now vital to bear in mind that, on the one hand, we need to be skeptical when studying people's comments posted online and analyzing their identities based on those comments, for they might be filtered or intentionally selected presentations of one's real identity. On the other hand, an intense study of CMC language use may help researchers better dig into the reasons why certain identities are being performed online. The connection between a false exhibition of identity and CMC language use can also add comments to the field of education—young adults need to be guided to more sensibly select their CMC language use and critically reflect on popular comments online, so they are not misled and are not misleading others.

Some further research can be done to enrich the discussion. Behind the "performed" identities there remain two critical questions: why can these specific types of identities give people a sense of security? What are the dominant factors in deciding whether one identity is mainstream or not? A deeper analysis of the underlying social, economic, and cultural contingencies behind identities remains to be done by interested researchers.

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Faculty Introduction

Jiannan Shi's essay comes out of the Spring 2018 first-year writing seminar, *Writing as Inquiry*. The theme for the course was "Language, Literacy, and Higher Education," and it asked students to critically reflect on their educational and language acquisition experiences. Jiannan's essay is a response to the final assignment prompt, which called on students to build a well-reasoned and thoroughly researched argument about a topic related to higher education.

Jiannan's essay sheds light on how globalisation has led to radical shifts in higher education landscapes across the globe. Focusing the United States, which is home to the largest number of international students, Jiannan draws our attention to the unique acculturational challenges faced by Chinese students who choose to study in the United States. Going further, Jiannan calls on American universities to see their international students as critical assets and to assist them by offering acculturational support to facilitate their personal, professional, and academic success.

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UNIVERSITIES IN THE U.S. SHOULD OFFER THEIR CHINESE STUDENTS MORE CULTURAL ASSISTANCE

JIANNAN SHI 石剑南

Globalization brings connectivity to the world, which influences higher education in making its student body international. In this context, international students are becoming an indispensable part of modern universities. Among the international students studying in the U.S., students from China constitute nearly 33% of the total number, ranking first among students from all other countries (Institution of International Education). However, even for the largest population among international students, living and studying abroad might not be easy. Research has shown that due to a huge difference between Chinese culture and American culture, students from China face considerably more difficulties both academically and socially compared to students from other countries (Leong 459). Such a large student population should not be ignored, but the current assistance for this population merely addresses the issue from the linguistic perspective. Focusing on this largest international population, universities in the U.S. should offer their Chinese students cultural assistance. Through this assis-

tance, Chinese students can get help in both academic and non-academic settings, and universities can also benefit from increasing their diversity.

In academic settings, linguistic assistance is essential if universities want to offer help in improving the livelihood of those whose first language is not English, including Chinese students. In fact, universities in the U.S. have already paid attention to international students concerning potential linguistic deficiency, as is shown not only in the admissions process but also in curriculum design. According to the admissions policy adopted by the vast majority of U.S. universities, international students are supposed to get a certain score in English language evaluations, like TOEFL, before they go into the application pool. With standardized language tests as the threshold, most of the Chinese students living on American campuses should have the basic ability to understand English in the academic context. Some universities also offer courses like "English for Academic Purposes" to hone students' academic English skills. In fact, research has found that non-native English-speaking students do feel confident about their academic language proficiency (Myles and Cheng 252). English, then, should not be the biggest focus when universities are trying to provide assistance.

However, if you are a Chinese student, you still might not be confident about your English skills in this scenario: in a lecture, an English-speaking professor asks you repeatedly to rephrase your answer, and sometimes even rewrite your essays. These experiences may make you feel that your English is not good enough. However,

are the constant "redo" requests really caused by a lack of proficiency? Not necessarily. Cultural barriers may cause linguistic problems as well. Linguist James Paul Gee in his book *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* argues, "How one 'reads the word' and how one 'reads the world' are heavily dependent on each other" (62). The difference in cultural background causes a difference in people's literacy, which implies that when second-language (L2) English speakers make speeches, they may be speaking from a different perspective than first-language (L1) English speakers, using different underlying beliefs to justify their ideas. Take the difference in argumentation between Chinese and American students, for example. For native English speakers, the Aristotelian argumentation method is the convention when writing, but it is not conventional for Chinese students, who have been deeply influenced by Confucian and Taoist philosophical traditions and argumentation (Hikel 372). Researcher Eli Hikel mentions that Chinese philosophical traditions lead Chinese students to create harmony between the writer and the reader instead of making explicit statements of an argument (354). However, the urge to make explanations on statements, which is tacit in the Western style of argumentation, is not the case in the Chinese style. When Chinese students write essays using their second language, English, it makes sense that the professor might not understand Chinese logic, even if Chinese students are proficient in English. It explains why professors whose native language is English may not understand international students' answers. It could be that the professors don't understand the students' culture, or it

could also be that Chinese students do not share the same background as the professor and do not understand the host culture.

Therefore, it may be cultural barriers that pose an obstacle to Chinese students. Given that Chinese students must have reached the required English level upon entering the university, cultural rather than linguistic assistance should be provided for Chinese students to better acculturate themselves in the U.S. context. If professors understand that Aristotelian argumentation is not the only way to organize an argumentative essay, they would also understand from a cultural perspective why their Chinese students fail to write strong essays. If there were institutionally-supported platforms as cultural assistance for improving multicultural understanding between both professors and students, both students and professors may benefit.

At the same time, the difference in cultural literacy can cause problems in evaluating students' academic performance. Chinese students may be upset if they perceive that their grades are marked down because of cultural misunderstandings. Implementing cultural assistance may alleviate this problem. When evaluating one's academic performance, professors should first consider how to examine the students' perception, comprehension, absorption, and critical thinking on the knowledge that they have been taught. However, in reality, exam questions are often designed in such a way that they make better sense to students familiar with an English culture than to those from elsewhere. In his article, "Why we need to stop talking about 'foreign' students," James Cardwell mentions a case from his recent research project on experiences of UK and non-UK

students in university assessments. A student from Southeast Asia studying in the UK said that non-native speakers find it difficult to answer questions that assume some "general knowledge." According to that student, a question in a law exam assumed that participants knew that whiskey was a traditional Scottish product, which was not clear for all the other non-UK students. Gee also points out that literacy does not equal intelligence (55). In such exams, some students might not be able to finish answering some questions because they do not possess the presumed literacy. This literacy gap may hinder these students from improving their grades. Providing necessary cultural assistance for students may help to alleviate this problem. If professors can design courses and exams that make sense across cultures to examine intellectual performance, excluding potential errors caused by different cultural literacies, Chinese students may achieve greater academic satisfaction, and even show a greater passion for learning.

By "providing cultural assistance," I do not mean that universities should assimilate all Chinese students into an American culture. Even if Chinese students compose their essays based on Chinese philosophical mindsets, the argumentation style itself should not diminish their academic performance, and professors should not blame them for not conforming to an American way of writing. Ha Jin, a Chinese-American writer who often sets his stories and novels in China but writes in English, argues in the article "In defense of foreignness" that English is glorious partially because it "has a body of literature created by writers to whom English is

not a given but an acquisition" (461). The identity shown through lexical usage and ways of organizing language is unique and needs to be cherished (Jin 468). In this sense, Chinese students are able to contribute to English literature by utilizing their cultural heritage.

Although the form of cultural assistance may vary, it should aim at familiarizing different groups of people, and creating mutual respect. Providing cultural assistance does not mean that Chinese students should always follow typical Chinese tradition and refuse to learn about the American way of argumentation everywhere in their academic life, because doing so may only cause misunderstanding among the students. Cultural assistance is only meant to help students better understand each other. Therefore, such assistance should ask Chinese students to understand how native speakers organize their speeches and to understand what to say, what to write, and how to respond during exams so that others may understand them better.

As a college student, focusing only on academics, of course, is not enough. I also believe that for Chinese students, getting a degree in a university in the U.S. is not their sole purpose for studying there; they also want to communicate with domestic students and build connections with them. The lives of Chinese students may not be easy in non-academic settings either: they may suffer from psychological burdens and problems with socializing. A 2013 research by Han et al. states that at Yale University, 45% of Chinese international students claimed that they have the symptoms of depression, and 29% of them reported symptoms of anxiety (5). Compared

with a depression and anxiety rate of 12.8% and 13% respectively in the general population in American universities, 45% and 29% are startling (Han et al. 5). Although this data does not reflect the whole picture of what the living conditions are like for Chinese students, it implies that Chinese students suffer from psychological burdens. For Chinese students, living in a campus far away from their homeland means living in a brand-new, or even strange, cultural environment. Research shows that cultural distance and psychosocial distress are positively correlated (Yan 23). So, it may be the case that the huge cultural distance between China and the U.S. results in the psychological problems found among Chinese students.

Besides psychological burdens, students might also encounter problems when socializing, and Chinese students' cultural background may prevent them from adapting to American society. On the one hand, Chinese students face challenges as a result of cultural difference. Research has shown that international students, especially Chinese students, may experience disorientation regarding food, roommate situations, friendship formation, and dating; East Asian students have an especially difficult time when adjusting to social life given the cultural barrier (Leong 464, 466-470, 472). If Chinese students are well-adapted to an unfamiliar environment by adjusting themselves, they will face fewer challenges in their non-academic life. On the other hand, the reality is that some students' cultural backgrounds may prevent them from adapting to the host culture. Research also uncovers that Chinese culture may be an actor in diminishing students' agency when confronting problems. From

the perspective of Confucianism, to endure is the best way to solve problems (Yan 27). Meanwhile, the Taoist philosophy may lead Chinese students to think that if things happen, let them happen, which diminishes students' willingness to accustom themselves to the host culture (Yan 27). These two thoughts affect Chinese students' attitudes towards life and may compound their already disadvantaged position when integrating themselves into the host culture.

From the perspective of the university, I argue that if the university could provide cultural assistance in helping Chinese students, it would benefit from increasing diversity. Psychologist Peter Levine writes in Educational Leadership that "by talking and listening to people different from ourselves, we learn and enlarge our understanding" (Levin, as cited in Kelly). Diversity in college can provide its students with the opportunity to work with peers who come from different social and cultural backgrounds. Conversations among students may promote their reflection and growth. Research also marks that cultural diversity is conducive to the development of students' critical thinking, which is a skill that higher education expects its students to master (Pascarella et al. 90). When American students meet and talk to peers from different backgrounds, they make comparisons intuitively between their culture and others, so that they have a more comprehensive view towards their own culture. However, if the university wants to realize the ideal goal of diversity, Chinese students should be able to contribute their voices on campus. This condition suggests that it is not enough for the universities to enroll more international students; universities

should also think about how to lead these international students to contribute their voices to campus life. As stated previously in this essay, cultural barriers are key in preventing Chinese students from expressing themselves. Therefore, to make voices in the university diverse, universities need to provide international students, including Chinese students, with cultural assistance for the sake of helping them to adapt to a new life.

As the number of Chinese students studying in U.S. universities increases, their significance regarding the student body of a university is also increasing. Meanwhile, it is becoming increasingly important for Chinese students to adapt to American society, a process that the university should offer assistance for. Chinese students will also accept assistance from the university because, at least, the university is giving them a sense of membership in the community in which they will be living, studying and socializing. By doing so, Chinese students are able to grow with care from the university, and the university itself can grow and develop.

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