

## Progress Report for CDS Grad Student Grant

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My project is about examining Chinese undergraduate students' conceptualization and experiences with critical thinking concept in studying at University of Delaware. University of Delaware has a large number of Chinese international students, however, the university knows little about those students, especially how their cultural backgrounds affect their studying while in the United States. Critical thinking concept then becomes an interesting construct for this population because it is assumed, by some U.S. faculty and educational scholars, that Chinese students may lack critical thinking capacity due to their educational experiences in China, or they may demonstrate different kinds of critical thinking because of their cultural backgrounds.

The plan of this project is to conduct a qualitative study that involves interviewing Chinese undergraduate students in terms of their expectations, experiences, understanding, and impression of studying at UD. I also plan to interview UD faculty in terms of their expectation and experiences of the Chinese students. The hypothesis is that there might be some differences between their expectations and experiences and I would like to bridge the difference using this project.

After receiving the CDS student funds, I have conducted 9 student interviews and 6 faculty interviews at UD. Some of the students were recruited through international students' office, other students were recruited through faculty recommendations. (Each student has received an Amazon gift card that I purchased for them using CDS funds.) All the faculty were recommended by the students.

All the interviews has been recorded and transcribed. Some interviews that were conducted in Chinese were transcribed by myself. The interviews in English were transcribed by GMR transcription.com using CDS funds. )

After the transcription, I have uploaded all the files to NVivo and is conducting open coding process to analyze the data. At this point, I only have some preliminary result. My preliminary result at this point is: While for Western students, critical thinking is about higher-level thinking skills, questioning status quo etc. for Chinese students, adaptation to Western culture plays a role in faculty's evaluation of the students' critical thinking.

Specifically: Out of the 6 professors who were interviewed, three professors believe that critical thinking, defined as problem-solving, promotion of humanity and human rights and writing logically, is one of their goal of their teaching. One professor said: "My course is all about critical thinking". However, when asked to describe the exceptional Chinese students in their courses, they were searching for the students that participate in other extra-curriculum activities, that stayed with American host family and maintain good relationship with host family for a long time, the students that step out of their comfort zone and took a variety of classes. For my analysis, the professor was looking for the students that have an understanding and awareness of American academic culture.

However, for the future months ahead, I will conduct another 6 student interviews and 9 faculty interviews. In those interviews, I hope to gain more data about faculty and students' experiences. After all the data have been collected, I will write a manuscript for an international study journal.

I have also submitted an proposal for AERA (American Educational Research Association) conference. I am awaiting for the results of the proposal.

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