STONES FROM ANOTHER MOUNTAIN: A CRITICAL-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF CHINESE AND U.S. HIGH-IMPACT LEARNING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The Association of American Colleges and Universities promotes 11 high-impact practices for undergraduate learning that have been widely adopted in the U.S. This study investigates the cross-cultural relevance of these practices in 18 Chinese universities, based on reports from 20 mid- and high-level higher education administrators employed in a varied set of universities throughout China. Findings indicate that the U.S. practices are either absent in Chinese higher education or are present in significantly different forms. Results also include distinctly Chinese high-impact practices. A critical-cultural "trans-positional" analysis focuses on how Chinese and U.S. colleges and universities might translate potentially useful practices across cultures according to each country's distinct sociocultural context and postsecondary goals.

Keywords: high-impact practices, Chinese higher education, critical-cultural analysis, trans-positional analysis

In 2005, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) published its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, prompted by increasing pressure on undergraduate liberal arts education in the United States to respond to growing social, economic, and political challenges posed by globalization (AAC&U, 2005, 2007). LEAP prescribes the following "high-impact practices" (HIPs) as the most effective means for colleges and universities to fulfill essential undergraduate learning outcomes: 1) first-year seminars and experiences; 2) common intellectual experiences; 3) learning communities; 4) writing-intensive courses; 5) collaborative assignments and projects; 6) undergraduate research; 7) diversity/global learning; 8) service-learning; 9) internships; 10) capstone courses and projects; and 11) ePortfolios (Eynon & Gambino, 2017; Kuh et al., 2017; NSSE, 2006). A robust body of empirical literature suggests that student engagement in these practices is associated with positive outcomes such as higher retention (Kuh, 2008; Provencher & Kassel, 2017; Zilvinskis, 2019), career attainment (Miller, et al., 2018; Zilvinskis, 2019), and compensatory benefits for historically underrepresented student populations (Kuh, 2008).

Although the AAC&U practices have been widely adopted in the U.S., research regarding their cross-cultural applicability is limited. Comparative research is imperative because of the tensions between indigenous and isomorphic forces in international higher education (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hayward & Siaya, 2001; Siaya & Hayward, 2003). The case of China offers a key example of a large system of higher education that has intentionally imitated many Anglo-American practices but whose sociopolitical and cultural context differs sharply from the U.S. (Hayhoe & Bastid, 2017; Huang, 2019; Marginson & Yang, 2021). The current study aims to investigate the localization and applicability of the HIPs in Chinese higher education institutions. Firstly, a brief introduction of the culture and purpose of the Chinese higher education system is offered, as well as the analytical and theoretical frameworks involved in the analysis and discussion of the data. Then, research methodology and findings from the data are described, which are student essays written by higher education practitioners taking an Ed.D. course at Peking University. Finally, findings are discussed from a critical-cultural perspective.

THE CULTURE AND PURPOSE OF CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION

The massification of postsecondary education began in the 1940s in the immediate postwar era with the United States taking the lead, enrolling about 30 percent of its suitable age cohort into its higher education system. Afterwards, similarly in response to the various demands of the modern society, many European, Asian, and African countries, especially those industrialized, also experienced a dramatic expansion of their higher education system in the second half of the twentieth century (Altbach, 1998). In an attempt for economic development and international competitiveness, China also began its massification of higher education in the 1950s, but such transition had been interrupted by multiple political and social events. The current landscape of the Chinese higher education system was shaped by the modernization goals proposed in the 1990s (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). Specifically, the modernization of Chinese higher education was marked by accelerated massification and internationalization.

China's massification of higher education outpaced that of most developed countries,

hitting the conventional benchmark of 15% higher education participation rate in 2004 (Shan & Guo, 2014). Simultaneously, the pattern of the massification process was distinctive in ways other than its rapidity. Zha (2011) traces the U.S. origin of the massification of higher education, which was facilitated by the decentralization of control, the pluralism of institutional types, ideals, and goals, as well as the diversity of sources of funding, and compares it with the differential higher education development patterns around the world. He analogizes the evolution of the Chinese higher education system to the East Asian (or Confucian) model of higher education development, where academia is closely tied to state management and emphasizes central control (Marginson, 2011). In other words, in consistency with Confucian traditions, higher education has been deployed as an instrument for social development and global competitiveness (i.e., state instrumentalism) in China (Zha, 2011).

Nevertheless, the development of the Chinese higher education system is distinguished from that of other East Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea, for its intentional commitment to internationalization (Altbach, 1998; Zha, 2011), through dispatching students abroad, adopting foreign academic models, and forming partnerships with foreign institutions (Lin, 2019; Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). Particularly, numerous efforts to internationalize higher education have been subject to Western influences since the Chinese economic reform (Altbach, 1998; Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). Studying Chinese college students' experience with internationalization at home, Guo and colleagues (2021) found that students typically perceived internationalization as westernization. In addition, Yang (2014) characterizes Western influence on the Chinese higher education system as one of the "two cases in which foreign influences brought to Chinese culture had such a great impact that the host culture was fundamentally changed" (p. 59).

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the United States has been increasingly influential on Chinese higher education in the past several decades. For instance, in studying Chinese higher education institutions' adaption of globally held ideas about research, Yoder (2010) found that Peking University and Beijing Normal University, which are both prestigious universities in China, explicitly encouraged integration of U.S. faculty and curriculum. Additionally, Tsinghua University initiated the Student Research Training (SRT) program, one of the first undergraduate research programs in China, after visiting the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) program at MIT in 1995. Funded by the Ministry of Education in 2000, Peking University also visited multiple U.S. institutions (e.g., UCLA) to investigate their undergraduate education and subsequently developed their own undergraduate research program (Lu, 2000). Apart from these institutional changes, U.S. ideas and practices also seamlessly permeate the Chinese higher education system. For example, an increasing number of Chinese universities adopt a general education curriculum that is similar to the liberal arts education of U.S. institutions. Additionally, the U.S. has become a major destination of Chinese international students, many of which return to China for faculty or staff positions with what they have learned in the U.S. higher education system.

Massifying its higher education system with a strong orientation of westernization and even Americanization in an attempt to achieve national prosperity and central control, the development of the Chinese higher education system presents an intricate picture of the adoption of Western policies and practices. Previous scholars have made some

preliminary attempts to understand the adoption of Western and specifically American models in the Chinese higher education system. Mohrman (2010) discusses five aspects of the U.S. higher education system that Chinese universities should not learn from, including sole concentration on research and publications, overemphasis on ranking and size, and the misuse of financial aid, due to certain inherent problems and structural differences. On the other hand, Yang (2013) evaluates China's incorporation and indigenization of the Western conception of university from a cultural perspective. Specifically, he points out that overreliance on U.S. experience to reform the Chinese higher education system while overlooking the fundamental cultural and ideological differences produces an arbitrary separation of structure and substance. Moreover, increasing emphasis on socialist values on the government's political agenda (Zhu & Li, 2018) intensifies the tension between the internationalization and indigenization of Chinese higher education. While the call for "higher education with Chinese characteristics" signifies elevated attention to the consistency between social and cultural contexts and higher education policies, it is important to examine how some Western-centric practices have been implemented in Chinese institutions.

Given the apparent tension between the Confucian traditions of state instrumentalism and the intentional westernization, especially Americanization, of academic models in Chinese higher education since the 1990s, it is necessary to further the understanding of the use of Western-centric practices among Chinese universities and colleges. At the same time, provided the lack of scholarship on the adoption of practices on institutional level, compared with policies on national and provincial levels, the ability to study this particular comparison between the implementation of HIPs in two such different contexts are ideal for investigating HIPs in a global perspective. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine whether and in what form the U.S. high-impact practices are in use in Chinese universities, to uncover any indigenous Chinese high-impact practices, and to consider these results in light of a cultural-critical framework.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

We employed Bray and Thomas' (1995) framework for comparative education analyses to examine the application of HIPs in Chinese higher education institutions from an international comparative perspective. Bray and Thomas' framework is illustrated as a cube composed of smaller cubes (Figure 1), where the three dimensions of the cube represent three foci of comparison: 1) geographic/locational levels, 2) aspects of education and of society, and 3) nonlocational demographic groups. Bray and Thomas' framework calls for "multifaceted and holistic analyses of educational phenomena" (Bray et al., 2007, p. 8), which makes it suitable for examining the cross-cultural applicability of such Western-centric practices as HIPs in a Chinese context. Specifically, a strength of this present framework is that the wide range of aspects of education and society, including curriculum, teaching methods, management structures, and so on, speaks to the comprehensiveness of HIPs. For instance, first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, and writing-intensive courses elaborate the curriculum aspect, while service/community-based learning and internships correspond student experiences. At the same time, this framework also takes the political and social factors that influence

the educational practices in China and the U.S. in distinct ways, as discussed above, into consideration. Hence, Bray and Thomas' framework for comparative education analyses was adopted with a focus on cross-country (level 2 on the front face) comparison across multiple aspects of education and of society (side).

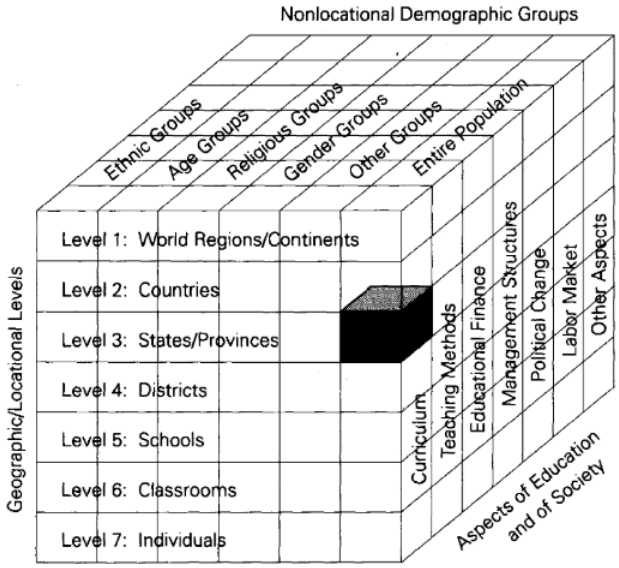

Figure 1

A Framework for Comparative Education Analyses

Source: Bray & Thomas, 1995, p. 475.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A critical-cultural theoretical framework is appropriate for investigating the effects of context on organizational practices in different national settings. Critical theorists foreground the role of structures, systems, and practices within social institutions such as universities (Abes et al., 2019). These social forces, in turn, emerge from and instantiate cultural norms, assumptions, values and beliefs (Guido et al., 2010; Patton et al., 2016). A critical-cultural framing attempts to make visible and question cultural norms and assumptions with the goal of critiquing and redressing inequitable power relations. Relevant to this study, unequal power relations have been evident in Chinese universities' adoption of English language scholarship and selected Anglo-American organizational practices (Hayhoe, 1989, 2017; Hayhoe & Bastid, 2017). The critical-cultural lens focuses description and interpretation on the differences between Chinese and U.S. cultural and socio-political foundations as these might influence the content and implementation of high-impact educational practices. In particular, the administration of higher education institutions by the central government and the Communist Party, which reflects the state instrumentalism of Confucian traditions discussed above, is distinct from the decentralized U.S. higher education system (Huang, 2019). Additionally, the collectivist orientation of Chinese culture, which emphasizes the interests and goals of groups than individuals, also differs from the individualist culture of the U.S. As a result, the elevation of Western-centric practices on Chinese university campuses brought contrasting cultural norms and created complex dynamics, the weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities of which are best examined through a critical cultural perspective.

The study investigated the cross-cultural relevance of U.S. high-impact practices in China by posing the following research questions:

1. What Association of American Colleges and Universities high-impact practices do administrators at Chinese universities identify as operating in their own institutions?

2. How do the same high impact practices differ in the US and China?

3. What high-impact practices are identified in Chinese higher education that are not part of the AAC&U HIPs?

METHODS, PARTICIPANTS AND DATA

The data source was from the final papers written by participants, who were students in an intensive summer course in the executive Ed.D. program of Peking University. The participants were a sample of 20 mid- and high-level Chinese higher education administrators employed in a varied set of 18 institutions around China. The course, co-taught by an American professor and a Chinese professor (see acknowledgements), included reading, lectures, and discussion on the AAC&U HIPs. As the assignment prompt shows (see Appendix B), participants were asked to compare HIPs in their own university to U.S. practices. An IRB review was required at neither Peking University nor Boston College for data collected as a part of a course assignment. However, participants signed a consent form giving permission for the authors to use their papers in future research (see Appendix A).

The characteristics of the participants' institutions were also gathered in a short survey (see Appendix A) and summarized in Table 1. The institutions were categorized based

Table 1

Frequency of Chinese Institutional Rankings Sample by Geographic Distribution of Sample

Geographic region	Institutional ranking	
	Double First-class	Non-Double First-class
North	4	5
East	2	2
Northeast	1	0
South Central	0	3
Total	7	10

*Non-Double First-class institutions may be a First-class institution in one or neither category.

on geographical location and Double First-class status. The Double First-class Initiative (i.e., the development of world-class universities and first-class disciplines) was launched by the Chinese government in 2007 to facilitate the internationalization and global competitiveness of Chinese higher education. Specifically, the Chinese government designated 42 higher education institutions as potential world-class institutions and 96 institutions to focus on building first-class disciplines. Double First-class institutions, which include a total of 42, refer to universities on both lists and represent the top-ranked institutions in China. Such a distinction undergirds the operations of Chinese universities and the present study on the adoption of HIPs because Double First-class universities typically receive greater financial and policy support (Liu et al., 2019).

DATA ANALYSIS

A team of Chinese and U.S. researchers, which included a Chinese and a U.S. professor, and a Chinese and a U.S. student assistant, conducted the analysis, beginning with translating the documents from Chinese to English. A frequency analysis of HIPs by institution type was then produced. The main part of the analysis was a thematic content analysis (Neuendorf, 2018) in which "'theme' can be described as the subjective meaning and cultural-contextual message of data" (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019, para. 3). In keeping with this tradition, the research team employed memoing as the main analytical strategy by engaging in extensive, iterative memo writing in an effort to conceptually connect raw data to abstractions (Birks et al., 2008), which, in this case, were cultural norms and assumptions on which HIPs were based. Such conceptual connections were vital to the present study given the nature of the raw data, which were student essays of varying degrees of subjectivity, criticality, and explicitness of underlying assumptions. The two student researchers each independently read the essays and wrote detailed memos on the themes of each essay. Then, the two sets of memos were compared, contrasted, and discussed with the professors so as to resolve inconsistent interpretations and reach agreement. Additional memos were continuously added about the sources of knowledge, which could be previous knowledge and experiences, used to examine the connections between raw data and cultural assumptions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Keeping the issue of reflexivity in mind, the memos were validated on cultural assumptions that were not explicitly stated in the essay by referring to the literature that discussed the connections between explicit practices and underlying assumptions.

FINDINGS

Chinese higher education practitioners identified the high-impact practices that were present in Chinese universities and colleges. They also discussed the forms in which the practices were operated on Chinese campuses. This section summarizes significant findings derived from the practitioners' essays in response to the three research questions.

HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES OPERATING IN CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

All of the AAC&U high-impact practices were mentioned by Chinese higher education administrators in their essays. Undergraduate research, internships, and diversity and global learning were most frequently addressed by the administrators. They were discussed in 12, 11, and 8 essays, respectively. In contrast, most of the other practices were discussed by only a few administrators. In addition, most administrators also described the China-specific practices that they considered to have high impact on student learning in their own institutions, including academic competitions, ideological education, and administrative class (banjiti). Table 2 shows the frequency of mention for each of the AAC&U practices and the China-specific practices.

Although quite a few practices were not identified as operating in their institutions by the participating administrators, the cultural, social, and institutional factors underlying their rare presence varied from practice to practice across institutions. Institutional ranking, primarily determined by Double First-class status, was one important factor associated with the adoption of certain HIPs. Particularly, aside from a few top-ranked institutions that are experimenting with Anglo-American liberal arts models (Cheng, 2017), Chinese universities do not routinely offer writing-intensive courses, common intellectual experiences (in the form of general education), or service-learning programs. These results are consonant with the mainstream Chinese system of undergraduate specialization and lack of experiential learning (Huang, 2019). In contrast, liberal education involving HIPs has expanded to private and public institutions that were not conventionally considered liberal arts in the U.S., with the goal of promoting both intellectual and practical skills for a broader range of population, especially those historically marginalized (Kuh, 2008). Moreover, although collaborative assignments and projects are common in the U.S., respondents described this practice as just beginning in China. In both countries, students are graded and ranked individually. E-portfolios were described as entirely inapplicable by all of the three administrators addressing this practice, given the prior existence of a comprehensive individual dossier (dang'an) that systematically records personal, academic, and professional information, maintained by universities and government institutions.

Differences in High Impact Practices between the U.S. and China

Despite U.S. and Chinese higher education institutions large overlap in the adoption of such practices as undergraduate research, internships, and diversity and global learning, implementation differed significantly between the two countries. This section presents findings on the differences between the same high-impact practices in the U.S. and China.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Participants indicated thesis research as a common form of undergraduate research that was shared by U.S. and Chinese higher education institutions. Thesis research is typically called "graduation design" and is more widely required for graduation in China. Students usually complete a research project based on their field experience and

conceptual work. Another form of undergraduate research in U.S. institutions is doing research with faculty members, where students typically work on faculty members' research projects. Nevertheless, several participants indicated that it is relatively rare for Chinese undergraduate students to work with faculty on their projects. Indeed, six of the 12 participants that wrote on undergraduate research, as well as two participants that separately designated competitions involving undergraduate research as a China-specific HIP, pointed out that most undergraduate research in China takes place in competitions, where students complete a research project individually or as a group with the advising of a faculty member. As elaborated by two participants who traced the development of undergraduate research practices in China, some top-ranked universities and new universities, in an attempt to learn from the undergraduate research programs in U.S. universities (e.g., the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at MIT) provide research training programs specifically for undergraduate students to gain research skills and experience. Overall, as explicitly named by another participant, undergraduate research was described as an "imported good," either explicitly or implicitly, by the administrators, while the "imported good" was adapted into the form of competitions and undergraduate research programs in accordance with the talent cultivation goals of different institutions with a focus on STEM fields.

INTERNSHIPS

Participants commented that both U.S. and Chinese undergraduates participate in internships to enhance their employment prospects. As a graduation requirement in many Chinese universities, internships are not mandatory for most U.S. academic majors. Most U.S. undergraduates acquire their own internships, sometimes with college-sponsored advising. A holistic analysis of participants' essays suggested that in China, the more selective the university, the more autonomy students have in the internship-searching process. Specifically, two participants from top-ranked Chinese universities suggested that career centers usually function as a platform for employment opportunities, alumni connections, and career advising. Nevertheless, based on the essays of the majority of the 11 participants discussing internships, more common forms of internships in Chinese institutions include university-business partnerships and business-owned universities that provide students with multiple channels to find career-related internships. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that multiple participants pointed out that although internships serve to improve vocational outcomes in both the U.S. and China, the connection between college education and internships is weaker among Chinese institutions. One respondent that discussed the internship practices in three institutions of different types described internships as "employment-oriented, and basically detached from college education." She also compared internship experience to "the bargaining chips of the success rates of getting employed." Such characterization of internships deviates from the AAC&U ideal of internships as experiential learning.

GLOBAL AND DIVERSITY LEARNING

Global and diversity learning practices in the U.S. are relatively homogeneous. In

Table 2
Frequency of Participant-Identified HIPs by Chinese Institutional Ranking

AAC&U High Impact Practices	Double First-class	Non-Double First-class	Total
First-year seminars & experiences	2	0	2
Common intellectual experiences	1	0	1
Learning communities	3	1	4
Writing-intensive courses	2	0	2
Collaborative assignments & projects	2	2	4
Undergraduate inquiry & creative activity	6	6	12
Diversity/study away/global learning	4	4	8
Service learning/community-based learning	3	1	4
Internships	7	4	11
Capstone courses & projects	2	1	3
ePortfolios	2	1	3
China-specific High Impact Practices			
Academic competitions	5	3	8
Ideological education	3	1	4
Administrative class (*Banjiti*)	1	1	2

contrast, analogous practices in Chinese higher education institutions are much more varied. One important form of global learning is study-abroad experience that involves exchange or vising programs, which are similar in Chinese and U.S. institutions. At the same time, there is increasing popularity of short-term, self-funded visiting programs and internships, which may be paid or unpaid, among Chinese universities, while most U.S. undergraduate students study abroad in a university where regular tuition and financial aid apply. Another important practice of global learning among Chinese institutions is international conferences. On one hand, as pointed out by a respondent, in an attempt to increase international reputation, Chinese higher education institutions are holding more

academic conferences on their campuses. On the other hand, lots of funding support is available for students and scholars to travel and attend conferences abroad. Other forms of global learning practices in Chinese universities mentioned by respondents include international branch campuses, foreign partnership programs, and joint-degree programs, which involve, more or less, the presence of foreign faculty members on Chinese campuses.

An issue that is applicable to both Chinese and U.S. higher education institutions is foreign language fluency. Nevertheless, while U.S. students have the choice of attending an exchange program where the language of instruction is English, most Chinese students can only choose programs that are delivered in a foreign language other than Chinese. Chinese institutions may invite international faculty to teach discipline-specific materials in the faculty members' native languages. Such practice is widely adopted but problematic due to the separation of academic and administrative duties between international and local faculty members. In addition, several participants expressed the concern that the delivery of academic content in foreign languages and various pedagogical styles post challenges for students' foreign language skills and adaptability, the lack of which may undermine desired academic outcomes. In general, while multiple global learning programs are provided in Chinese higher education institutions, a variety of factors, as indicated by the administrators, can affect students' actual learning outcomes.

CHINA-SPECIFIC HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES

The participating administrators identified three practices that they regarded as high impact for student learning that are not included in the AAC&U practices: 1) academic competitions, 2) ideological education, and 3) administrative classes. This section discusses how the China-specific practices are operated and in what ways they are meaningful to student experience.

ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

Twelve administrators addressed the prevalence of academic competitions as extracurricular activities in which Chinese undergraduates work on a research or entrepreneurial project individually or in a group. Some administrators separately described competitions in detail, while others weaved what they presented as this China-specific practice into the discussion of other AAC&U practices, such as undergraduate research and collaborative assignments and projects. Typically, as per participants' descriptions, students work on a scientific research project and submit deliverables, for example, research papers, for review. Excellent papers are ranked and awarded at university, city, and province levels. Competitions may involve various fields and disciplines, but most of the Chinese institutions from which the participants came were said to focus on natural sciences or entrepreneurship. One of the largest and most influential competitions in China is the College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Plan, which is carried out at the institutional, city, provincial, and national levels. According to the participating administrators, students have the opportunity to build their collaborative, problem-solving, and research skills by participating in competitions.

IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Compulsory ideological education is integrated throughout Chinese education. In higher education, ideological education penetrates every student's college life from the beginning of their four-year journey. For example, per participants' explanations, most Chinese higher education institutions enact one-month military training and freshman education prior to the start of the first semester. The goals of these practices were described as getting familiar with the campus and the community, as well as the history and core values of communism and socialism. Participants frequently identified lectures and freshman concerts as typical activities involved in freshman education. In addition, when students start their college life, they are also required to take courses on Maoist and Marxist values. These ideas are also delivered in academically oriented courses. As a respondent wrote, "this action is called 'ideological and political theories teaching in all courses'; in this way, the impartation of knowledge and the guidance of values are combined." Other practices of ideological education are reflected in students' extracurricular activities, such as singing competitions.

ADMINISTRATIVE CLASSES (BANJITI)

A final China-specific practice, per the assignments, is the administrative class or banjiti (literally, the "class collective") in which students are grouped together based on year and major for their entire undergraduate career. As described by participants, students in the same administrative class usually take classes together. At the same time, they also share a lot of extracurricular activities, such as sports competitions, singing competitions, and so on. Therefore, they spend much time together on campus, which spontaneously increases their bonds with each other. Respondents viewed administrative classes as a representation of the collectivist culture. Specifically, a participating administrator wrote that the administrative class's "effects are mainly realized through the construction of the organizational system that is suitable for the Chinese collectivism." Furthermore, according to this respondent, a student typically leader is elected as the class monitor to help the classroom teacher with administrative duties. A U.S. counterpart of the Chinese administrative class is learning communities, where students engage in the same learning activities. Nevertheless, the Chinese administrative class is far more comprehensive than U.S. learning communities, and they do not share the same student leadership structures.

DISCUSSION

Identifying commonalities and distinct features of Anglo-American and Chinese higher education can lead to better understanding of one's own context (Marginson & Yang, 2021) and to adapting promising practices through cross-national "dialogue rather than domination" (Hayhoe & Liu, 2010, p. 92). In this spirit, the current study adds to the sparse comparative research on high-impact practices in student learning. Findings indicate that overall, U.S. HIPs are either absent or present in significantly different forms in Chinese higher education. The greatest similarity in HIPs occurs in top-ranked Chinese universities, which have been experimenting with the U.S. liberal arts model (Cheng, 2017; Pang et al., 2020) that the AAC&U explicitly endorses.

A critical cultural lens can help surface the cultural norms and assumptions underlying the similarities and differences between the HIPs practiced in Chinese and U.S. institutions. It is unsurprising that specific institutional practices in undergraduate education fail to translate in exact forms across countries with different societal ideologies, roles of higher education, and cultural norms and practices. The integration of Western, particularly American academic models and Confucian state instrumentalism of higher education that is featured in the development of the Chinese higher education system, is also evident in institution-level practices. In other words, in prioritizing indigenous forms of "higher education with Chinese characteristics" that highlight communist and socialist values (Zhu & Li, 2018, p. 1144) with continuing Western influences (Sporn & van der Wende, 2020), Chinese higher education operates Western-centric practices, such as the HIPs, in significantly different forms. On one hand, some study participants were able to explicitly identify the contextual influences that shaped the student learning practices in Chinese and U.S. institutions. For example, some participants attributed the inapplicability of e-portfolios in Chinese universities to the institutional practice of keeping personal dossiers by institutions and government agencies. They also related to the lack of credibility of portfolios created by students rather than faculty or staff members. At the same time, they also acknowledge the integrative and reflective value of e-portfolios. A few respondents attended to the cultural aspects that formulated certain practices. For instance, they pointed out that a collectivist culture determined the large scale and centralization of the activities involved in first-year seminars and experiences among Chinese universities.

On the other hand, although some respondents did not touch on the differences in norms and assumptions that led to the distinct forms of student learning practices, they were aware of the ideological and cultural foundations on which the practices were based. For example, while participants did not completely agree upon if diversity/global learning was not practiced or practiced differently in Chinese institutions, most of them were aware that diversity/global learning in the Chinese context focuses on international experiences or ethnic groups without referencing diversity in racial or gender identities that are common in Western discourses.

Similarly, participants connected the structural features of undergraduate research, including institutionalization, goal-orientations, and selection purposes, to the talent cultivation goals, which are typically a part of national development plans, of undergraduate research programs in Chinese institutions, without comparing them with the intellectual and interpersonal goals of undergraduate research originally designated by the AAC&U (Kuh, 2008). Nevertheless, a small number of participants assumed a culture-central perspective by placing certain Chinese or U.S. forms of HIPs in a superior position. Overall, a critical cultural perspective sheds light on the ways high impact is reflected in the significant benefits yielded by students in U.S. institutions (Kuh, 2008) and the realization of national development goals among Chinese universities and colleges (e.g., Wen et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2020).

More interesting is a trans-positional view (Sen, 2002) in which institutions consider how to translate potentially useful practices from another culture within their distinct sociocultural context and goals. China, for example, might design opportunities for undergraduate research and collaborative assignments that increase student engagement

toward collectivist, prosocial goals. The U.S. might address the separation of academics and student life by experimenting with undergraduate competitions or by adapting elements of the university-sponsored forms of student governance and intensive academically centered peer connections characteristic of the Chinese administrative class. Although the distinctly Chinese practice of compulsory ideological education might appear entirely inapplicable to an Anglo-American context, U.S. educators and state policymakers have begun to call for increased civic education in postsecondary schooling (Brennan, 2017; National Task Force, 2012).

In both China and the U.S. much more research is needed on the actual effects of presumed high-impact practices. Particularly important are studies that investigate practices from a student view, not just from an organizational or socio-cultural perspective. In carrying out this work, researchers should acknowledge and interrogate how educational practices reflect and promote cultural, ideological, and political norms and values.

A study respondent wrote that the Chinese have a long history of "using stones from another mountain to polish one's jade." Marginson and Yang (2021) echo this idiom by noting that Chinese scholars routinely make use of both Western and Chinese concepts and models but that few Anglo-American scholars draw on ideas from the Chinese context. As they write: "The possibility that more than one tradition can contribute to higher education studies is intellectually liberating" (p. 3). The present study suggests the importance of bi-directional learning about Chinese and US high-impact practices and the value of using this knowledge to consider adapting relevant HIPs in ways that are culturally appropriate for one's own context.

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