



Sarah Lorraine Burn

Experiences of Acculturation

Chinese Student Sojourners
at the University of Macerata in Italy



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Contents

7	1. Introduction
8	1.1. Literature Review
13	1.2. Research Aims, Significance, Questions, and Methodology
16	1.3. Structure of the Thesis
19	2. University student sojourners
20	2.1. Mobility and Hosting of Student Sojourners Worldwide
27	2.2. Factors Affecting the Acculturation Process
33	3. ABC Framework of acculturation
36	3.1. Affective: Stress and Coping with Stress
40	3.2. Behavioural: Cultural Learning
41	3.3. Cognitive: Social and Cultural Identification
45	4. Methodology
45	4.1. Qualitative Research
47	4.2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
51	5. Data collection
51	5.1. Macerata, Italy and UNIMC
52	5.2. Subjects
53	5.3. Position of the Researcher
54	5.4. Interview Procedure
57	6. Empirical findings and analysis
58	6.1. Academic Life at UNIMC: Stress, Coping, and Cultural Learning
67	6.2. Daily Life in Macerata, Italy: Stress, Coping, and Cultural Learning
88	6.3. Social and Cultural Identification
98	6.4. Discussion
103	Conclusion
107	Works cited

115 Index of Figures and Tables

Appendices

- 117 Appendix 1. Intercultural Experiences Interview 1, August 2015
119 Appendix 2. Intercultural Experiences Interview 2, December 2015
121 Appendix 3. Intercultural Experiences Interview 3, July 2016

1. Introduction

An increasing number of higher education students, Chinese students especially, are living abroad now as international/exchange students to further their education, and experience another cultural environment. The beauty, but also the challenge, of the world in which we live in, is that it is both environmentally and culturally diverse. People who grow up in different social, cultural, and physical environments have different life experiences, which shape their overall cultural perspective, behavioural practices, and personal identity. By living and studying in a foreign community for an extended period, international students are able to experience and understand the beauty of the foreign local culture as a local resident, but they are also likely to experience challenges during their cross-cultural transition.

Moving to a new and unfamiliar environment is both exciting and stressful as it challenges a person in ways never experienced before. After leaving familiar comforts and cultural routines, individuals will experience new encounters and ways of living, thinking, and behaving. The overall experience is rewarding, but also challenging in both psychological and sociocultural ways. First-hand continuous contact with a different culture causes adjustment changes to take place within the individual in a process known as “acculturation” (Ward *et al.* 2001, 99). As international students transition to a new community and educational system, they go through a psychological coping process of social identification and adjustment to affective feelings of acculturative stress. They also experience a sociocultural adaptation process that involves learning the social and cultural behaviours of the host society (Ward *et al.* 2001, 42).

Experiences of Acculturation

Chinese Student Sojourners at the University of Macerata in Italy

Experiences of Acculturation: Chinese Student Sojourners at the University of Macerata in Italy presents theoretical research on Chinese students from Chengdu Institute, Sichuan International Studies University (CISISU) studying abroad at the University of Macerata (UNIMC) in Italy. Ward et al.'s affective, behavioural, and cognitive (ABC) theoretical model of acculturation is used to holistically understand the CISISU students' academic and daily life cross-cultural transition. Qualitative results express the students' affective feelings of stress and coping; behavioural experiences of cultural learning; and cognitive thoughts of sociocultural identification between their home society in China, and their host society in Macerata, Italy. The research was conducted while the author was an Erasmus intern, and exchange student, at UNIMC.

Sarah Lorraine Burn currently works in the International Education department at Vancouver Island University (VIU) on Vancouver Island in Canada. Sarah completed her Master's degree at the University of Vaasa (UVA) in Finland in Intercultural Communication and Administration, her B.A. in Anthropology from VIU, and her Certificate in Canadian Immigration Laws, Policies, and Procedures from the University of British Columbia. She also completed her Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Cambridge while in Thailand, and has taught English as a second/foreign language in Canada, Europe, and Asia.



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