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Ambitious and anxious: How Chinese undergraduates succeed and struggle in American higher education. Yingyi Ma. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2020. 312 pp., (hardcover), \$35.00, ISBN: 978-0-231-18458-8.

With the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Trump administration's increasing hostility towards China over the past year, the book *Ambitious and Anxious* published in 2020 provides us with a timely and valuable empirical study on the dilemma of Chinese international students on American campuses. As the title of the book shows, the author accurately captures the complex mentality, i.e., “ambitious and anxious,” of Chinese international students studying in the US, in particular the undergraduate students who have grown up in China's post-reform era.

With in-depth interviews with undergraduate students studying in a variety of U.S. institutions and majors via different admission tracks, the author gathers ample evidence to show the diversity of this new generation of Chinese international students. A central argument of the book is that they share the same ambivalent attitudes and expectations towards their educational journey in the US. The ambivalence is manifested throughout the process of their study-abroad experience, in seeking admission, choosing a major, class participation, social interaction as well as making the decision to stay or return. For example, they wish to shy away from China's test-oriented education, but at the same time attempt to apply Chinese-style test-taking skills to taking the SAT and TOFEL in the American college application process in order to get into a top-ranked American university; they are confident on account of their generally strong mathematical skills, but on the other hand, choose to keep silent in class and stay away from their American peers due to language and cultural barriers; they have a strong motivation and willingness to integrate into American society, but have to turn back to their co-ethnic networks because of American individualistic culture and the “ceiling effect” faced by minority groups in mainstream American society; they are attracted by the prosperity of an imaginary America

with highly advanced science and technology, yet are disappointed to find themselves situated in underdeveloped, not-so-center-of-the-world American rural communities.

A unique feature of the study lies in the fact that the author not only vividly portrays the general profiles and situations of Chinese undergraduate students in the US, but also skillfully puts their educational stories in the context of broader discussions of China and the US in terms of the two nations' educational systems, cultural values and socioeconomic developments over the past decades. Having been a former Chinese international student and been working in an American university ever since, the author is familiar with China's economic and social changes on the one hand, and with U.S. immigration policies and stereotypes about China and the Chinese on the other, both of which have an important impact on the learning experiences of Chinese students in the US. Knowledge and information at the cross-national and cross-cultural levels provide the author with a macro-comparative lens to interpret and analyze ambivalent attitudes among the Chinese international students at an individual level. At the same time, dialogues between the author and the existing scholarship on international students worldwide permeate the empirical discussions of each chapter and add theoretical strength to the book.

Overall, the book covers almost every stage of Chinese international students' study-abroad experiences, presenting readers with a panoramic view of this group of students and calling the attention of policymakers from both the American side and the Chinese side to them. However, the book does not provide specific guidance for Chinese parents/students to consider in taking the study-abroad path, nor feasible policy suggestions to enable American educational institutions to better help Chinese international students. In addition, although the author presents a rich enough picture of the cultural shock and educational plight that Chinese international students commonly face, most of the findings are not new to Chinese domestic readers. The author could have gone beyond the social and economic reasons on the surface and delved into the underlying logics of capital and value in global higher education to account for Chinese students' passionate study-abroad endeavors. In the meanwhile, with the boost of Chinese universities in terms of educational quality and international

ranking on the one hand and the impact of U.S. closing-door politics on the other, the pattern of study-abroad might be, and indeed is, undergoing drastic changes in the post-pandemic era. It remains to be seen whether the findings of the book will still hold their ground in future in the wake of these new trends.

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民国社会教育研究 [*Research on social education during the Republican period*]. 周慧梅 [Zhou, Huimei]. 长沙, 中国: 湖南教育出版社 [Changsha, China: Hunan Education Publishing House], 2019. 659 pp. + Preface + Bibliography + Afterward, (hardcover), ¥215, ISBN: 978-7-553-96532-1.

The creation of a strong and modernized nation-state had been the objective of Chinese statesmen since the Qing Empire's defeat in the First Opium War of 1842. A modern country, one able to compete with rival powers, requires a vigorous citizenry capable of meeting the demands of its political leaders.¹ Recent works by eminent historians have shed light on educational campaigns orchestrated by rulers, officials, and educators to mould ordinary Chinese men and women into patriotic citizens who were able and willing to defend China when it was confronted by either internal division or external danger.² In this

¹ See Stephen R. Halsey (2015). *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the Making of Chinese Statecraft*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

² See Chen Xiuxia (2005). *Life and Works of Chinese Educator H. C. Chen (1892–1982)*. Beijing, China: Beijing Society on H. C. Chen's Educational Theory and Practice; Margaret Mih Tillman (2018). *Raising China's Revolutionaries: Modernizing Childhood for Cosmopolitan Nationalists and Liberated Comrades, 1920s–1950s*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press; Peter Zarrow (2015). *Educating China: Knowledge, Society and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902–1937*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.