Seeing through Civic Engagement among Chinese and American College Students

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ABSTRACT— *Civic engagement is becoming more and more popular among college students, both in the U.S. and in China. This study explores the similarities and differences in civic engagement attitudes and behavior of college students in both the U.S. and China. Three hundred and seventy college students from both countries participated in an online survey with measures of cultural values and of civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. There are significant findings in the study. Data were gathered to determine whether participants' national cultures or cultural values would predict their civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, hypotheses and research questions focused on the relationship among nationality, culture values, and civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. Also which group of participants have higher score in both civic engagement behavior and attitude, and why. Lastly, the findings have important implications for our understanding individualism and collectivism as these relate to national cultures. It also yields practical implications for college teachers and administrators who want to illustrate or want to improve civic engagement either in or outside the class for students.*

Keywords— civic engagement, cultural values, attitudes and behaviors

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every institution of higher education should ask itself—now—what it proposes to do to assure that next year's entering students will graduate as individuals of character more sensitive to the needs of community, more competent in their ability to contribute to society, and more civil in their habits of thought, speech, and action.

-Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993, p. 39

University civic engagement has been receiving more and more attention since the 1980s. Indeed, leaders in the field now conclude, "a movement is emerging" (Maurrasse, 2001, p.131). Democracies require democratic citizens, whose specific knowledge, competences, and character would not be as well suited to nondemocratic politics (Maurrasse, 2001, p. 131). Education for citizenship was one of the major motives for the creation of U.S. schools, which began a century and a half ago (IIE, 2006). Compared with previous generations, scholars today are more likely to agree that well-designed institutions are not enough, but that a well-ordered polity requires citizens with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and traits of character for democratic involvement (Galston, 2001). And it is reasonably clear that good citizens are made, not born.

A current analysis of the importance of civic engagement depicts it as an integral source of communication for public needs, a mechanism for social change, and a way to cultivate a myriad of benefits, both individual and societal (Haste, 2004; Newton, 2001; Skopcol, Ganz, & Munson, 2000; Taylor & Pancer, 2007; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Numerous initiatives within higher education have advanced the practice of civic engagement. These initiatives include service-learning, diversity education, public policy, co-curricular activities, faculty reward systems, community-based research, and university-community partnerships.

Civic engagement is no longer limited to the United States. Following eight years of work to define concepts, policies, and strategies to promote good practice in the area of education for democratic citizenship, the European Union declared 2005 as the European Year of Citizenship through Education (Jacoby & Associates, 2008). How about China?

Though China has one of the world's oldest civilizations and has the oldest continuous civilization (IIE, 2006), how is the country's civic engagement atmosphere?

The purpose of study is to provide a deeper understanding of civic engagement from the Chinese and American perspectives, with a historical background. In particular, the study focuses on cultural values, individualism/collectivism, along with civic engagement behavior and attitudes, to determine the relationship between civic engagement and Chinese students. Finally, presents the results shows that Chinese college students are more civically engaged than American college students. Implications for future research will be discussed at the end.

2. RATIONALE AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 The Scope of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a term utilized within the realm of higher education to address a number of community and social interaction concepts. Generally speaking, civic engagement represents citizen involvement in public life. An expanded definition classifies it as "the expanse of activities, in which participation in social life with other citizens takes place, involving the pursuit of common goals related to the betterment of the community" (Sobieraj, 2006, p. 66). Additional clarification has been made regarding the "important fault line" in civic participation between political and civic activities (Flanagan & Faison, 2001, p. 35; Pancer et al., 2007; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Zukin et al., 2006). Political activities include voting, working for a candidate or party, protesting, and working to affect policy. Voting is the prototypical activity of this category and is, subsequently, the most often endorsed. The intent of these activities is often either indirectly or directly to affect the making or implementation of public policy (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Zukin et al., 2006). Through civic engagement, individuals as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world (Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership, 2005).

Civic activities are those aimed at increasing the welfare of the community and are intended to solve a problem or fulfill a need in that community (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Zukin et al., 2006). This category of citizen participation encompasses many actions including volunteering in various groups such as the Boys and Girls Club, donating to a social cause, and participating in charity walks/runs. Civic and political activities share a common goal in that they are both intended to effect change for the betterment of society. These two areas of civic engagement are often related and found to coexist across individuals; however, some individuals are more engaged in one realm or the other. Citizens participate in a wide variety of activities, and patterns of participation tend to change both as individuals age and as societal influences fluctuate (Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, Ganz, & Munson, 2000). Civic knowledge is related to civic attitudes and civic participation in that higher knowledge is associated with more democratic attitudes and more active participation (Galston, 2001).

Civic attitudes pertain to beliefs about democratic societies, including the rights and responsibilities of the government and members of society. Civic participation, or civic behavior, is often what researchers are interested in because it is the most obvious civic outcome for a citizen, especially for adults. Civic behavior refers to formal and informal involvement in political and civic institutions, including activities such as voting, volunteering, and attending a political rally.

2.2 The Benefits of Civic Engagement

Even as higher education became more secular in orientation and practice, most institutions continued to include among their educational purposes one or more that underscored the importance of providing students with the opportunity to discover, refine, and test their character. Within the past decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in intentionally promoting civic engagement during college, stemming from several factors in United States (Eyler, 2000; Vogelsang, & Astin, 2000). While participating, students also receive benefits from different types of civic engagement. Students of service-learning courses have reported increases in interpersonal skills, social responsibility, and sense of engagement (Eyler, 2000; Vogelsang, & Astin, 2000). In a national study, Astin and Sax (1998) found that participating in service-related activities during the undergraduate years positively enhanced academic development, life skills, and civic development. Globally, service learning has been shown to increase international understanding (Myers-Lipton, 1996), a prevalent and significant outcome included in many university mission statements. A more recent study revealed the positive influence service learning has on diversity and political awareness, community self-efficacy, and civic engagement related scores over the course of a semester (Simons & Cleary, 2006).

Community service and volunteer programs on many college campuses have long been an integral part of co-curricular programming and outreach to local communities. Many studies have been conducted on the benefits of community service and civic related values and behaviors (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999). More recently, alternative spring break programs (ASB) have become popular on college campuses. These week-long trips focusing on social issues both locally and nationally have been shown to increase students' capacity for understanding community issues and create a clearer sense of social responsibility (Rhoades & Neururer, 1998).

College leadership development programs and courses are widely popular and important curricular and co-curricular experiences on many campuses nationwide. A longitudinal study at ten institutions given grants to implement leadership development programs examined developmental outcomes between participants and non-participants. Five outcomes emerged from an extended factor analysis that showed statistically significant differences between the participant and non-participant groups in the following areas: leadership understanding and commitment, personal and societal values, community orientation, multicultural awareness, and civic responsibility (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001). Several of these factors are civically related; however, civic responsibility had the largest variance explained by leadership programs after controlling for pre-college variables (Cress et al., 2001). Furthermore, the authors also located several themes through qualitative data, including: a strong connection with the mission of the institution and leadership programs; a philosophical focus on ethically and socially responsible behavior; and common practices of service-learning, community service and volunteer experiences shared among faculty, staff, and students.

As our society and college student population continues to become increasingly diverse, the number of training programs to prepare graduates to become engaged citizens of a diverse society and democracy has increased (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Studies examining the impact of initiatives including inter-group forums and dialogues, racial awareness workshops, and diversity courses on student outcomes suggest that these programs positively impact student civic and racial engagement (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Pascarella& Terenzini, 2005).

2.3 Civic Engagement in United States

In America, joining for a good cause is respected, and Americans are "joiners." Over 150 years ago Alexis de Tocqueville (1945) found Americans always getting together to make their lives better:

> As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have taken up an opinion or a feeling which they wish to promote in the world, they look out for mutual assistance; and as soon as they have found one another out, they combine. From that moment they are no longer isolated men, but a power seen from afar, whose actions are seen from afar and whose language is listened to (p. 78).

More recently, Putnam (1993a) has extolled the benefits of joining: "Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors." Putnam and other exponents of "social capital" argue that communities and nations with high levels of civic engagement are more trust, happier, and more prosperous. Social capital, as Putnam sees it, is an interlocking and mutually reinforcing set of values, and norms of behavior, civic engagement, and cooperative behavior that constitute a "virtuous circle." Together these components of social capital lead people to cooperate with each other and to produce a society that is healthier, wealthier, and wiser (Cohen et al., 1997). The values and social connections underlying social capital help build bridges across diverse groups of people. When people interact with each other, they can work together to solve common problems (Cohen et al., 1997).

Social capital produces lots of good things and it is an undemanding master. To gain the benefits of social capital, people do not have to work hard in civic associations. All sorts of social connections will do the job, including informal social ties and apolitical groups such as choral societies and bowling leagues (Putnam, 1993a). A prosperous community depends on how many organizations people join (Cohen et al., 1997).

2.4 Individualism-Collectivism

In-group/out-group belonging is often considered to be an aspect of individualism-collectivism. Individualism-collectivism is a construct that has received a lot of attention in cross-cultural research. The terms individualism and collectivism were created by social theorists as far back as the 19th-century (Watson & Morris, 2002). More recently, Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1990, 1995) made important contributions to the conceptual framework of individualism and collectivism as value systems.

According to Hofstede (1991), in individualist societies, the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone in an individualistic society is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family. Within individualistic cultures, the needs, values and goals of the individual takes precedence over that of the in-group (Gudykunst, 1997). Triandis (1990, 1995) defines individualism as a social pattern that comprises loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives and are primarily motivated by their own experiences, needs, and rights and the contracts that they have established with others.

Triandis (1995) argued that collectivists have strong ties to the collective, such as family, country, and so forth. For the collectivist-oriented person, self is defined in terms of others, and behavior is regulated by group norms. Strong distinctions are made between in-group and out-group members.

Triandis and Gelfand (1998) believe that it is important to make the distinction between vertical and horizontal collectivism and individualism. Horizontal collectivism is a cultural pattern in which the individual sees the self as an aspect of an in-group, whose members are extremely similar to each other. In this pattern, the self is interdependent and

the same as the self of others. Equality is the essence of this pattern. Vertical collectivism is a cultural pattern in which the individual sees the self as an aspect of an in-group, but the members of the in-group are different from each other, some having more status than others. The self is interdependent but different from the self of others. Inequality is accepted in this pattern, and people do not see each other as essentially the same.

Collectivism and individualism play different roles in people's life based on their cultural background. Traditionally, scholars have treated China as having higher acceptance of social status (power difference) and collectivism than the United States (Hofstede, 1991; other sources?). In Triandis' terms China would most likely have higher vertical collectivism, with the United States tending more toward horizontal individualism. However, simply having these differences does not explain how such values have come about. Cultural researchers focus on the role of history and philosophy in influencing cultural values. Thus, a likely contributor to the values of individuals and collectivism in these two cultures are liberalism in the United States and Confucianism in China.

2.5 Confucianism and Liberalism

Confucianism and Liberalism and are moral-political philosophies, and they parallel with individualism and collectivism, respectively (Kim, 1994). Confucianism is the dominant moral-political philosophy in China (Kim, 1994). It was founded by K'ung Fu-tse, a Chinese philosopher in the sixth century B.C. E. in order to maintain the social order and harmony (Hurh, 1998). Individuals are seen as embedded in particular roles and statuses. Those roles and statuses are usually predetermined by society, and people are expected to fulfill their duties by achieving the group's interests rather than those of individuals. A strong concern for human relatedness is seen in the Five Constant Virtues of Confucianism. Those are *ren* (humanness or filial piety and submission), *li* (propriety), *yi* (duty), *zhi* (human wisdom), and *xin* (faithfulness; Tong, 2000).

According to Hurh (1998), *li* is the cardinal virtue of Confucianism in the sense that human relationships are subjected to certain ethical rules. These rules are loyalty of subject to king, son's filial piety to father, obedience of wife to husband, the young's reverence for the old, and fidelity among friends. These rules reflect Confucianism's favor toward hierarchy and inequality and sharply contrast to principles of liberalism. In these rules, the self of individuals is unrecognized. The selflessness of Confucianism is also valued in Buddhism. Buddhism is one of the dominant religions in China; it emphasizes the preservation of a moral order through service, self-control, and selflessness (Tong, 2000). Selfish desire is seen as sinful in Buddhism and Confucianism, although people are encouraged to attain through achievements in Liberalism.

Some (e.g., a newo-Confucian scholar, Lau, 2004) believe that Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, should and still does have dominant influences on everyday life in China and moral education in particular, especially through the family, and community lives.

Liberalism is the predominant philosophy that delineates the conception of self and society in most of Western Europe and North America (Kim, 1994). In this philosophy, freedom is highly valued, and individuals are considered to be discrete, autonomous, self-sufficient, and respectful of the rights of others. Thus, the roles of individuals are not determined by society, rather they define their roles through achievements.

Confucianism and Liberalism are not just the moral-political philosophies for China and United States; they are important historical influences that lead the two countries to have different economic and social systems – communism and capitalism.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

China and the United States have different but complicated historical and philosophical backgrounds. Individualism and collectivism have had an impact in China and the U.S, though these values may be changing; regardless, it may be that both national culture and individual values are related to students' belief and participation in civic engagement.

Previous studies indicate that Chinese people in a more collectivist culture would care more about their in-group communities, and that American people on the other hand are more individualist. Therefore, this leads to my first hypothesis regarding cultural differences between Chinese and Americans on cultural values:

H1: Chinese students will score higher on collectivism index than American students.

Beyond prediction by national culture, the literature suggests that we also need to consider individual-level variables, such as self-level individualism-collectivism. And Gudykunst et al. (1996) suggest that is helpful to know which makes a better prediction—national-level culture or individual-level cultural values (individualism-collectivism). Some scholars believe that Americans are more individualist than Chinese; however, that may not still be true for college students from both countries. Nowadays, in the new media world, American culture has a strong impact on Chinese student's life. More and more Chinese students become individualist.

Cultural differences may affect civic engagement. Those differences might be based on cultural values. Among

national cultural differences, the impact of communism and capitalism, liberalism and Confucianism, might be related to one's civic engagement attitude and behaviors. Specifically, in a liberal culture, people might be more willing to become involved in public society and even in the lives of strangers, even if for individual reasons (Bellah et al., 1985). On the other hand, China poses a contradiction: Collectivism suggests one might be invested only in one's in-group, but Communism has focused on the greater good. Because of this, we cannot be certain which culture would value civic engagement more and be more involved in civic engagement behaviors. So this leads to the following three research questions:

RQ$_1$: How is Chinese college students' attitude toward civic engagement, as compared to that of American college students?

RQ$_2$: How is Chinese college students' behavior in civic engagement, as compared to that of American college students?

The purpose of the present study is to extend our understanding of civic engagement cross-culturally, by examining opinions of both Chinese and Americans. The study will examine civic engagement as it relates to cultural value differences. The overall purpose is to discover whether there are cultural differences in civic engagement and one's motivation to become more civically engaged. Specifically, this study will focus on the correlations between individualism/collectivism and civic engagement behaviors and attitudes.

3.1 Participants

Three hundred seventy individuals participated in this study. They were from both mainland China and Central U.S. Of these participants, 48% (n = 177) were Chinese, and 52% (n = 193) were from the United States. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 28 (M = 20 years, SD = .86). Of the participants, 56 percent were female, and 44 percent were male. Inclusionary criteria for this study were that participants must be Chinese or American college students, English speaking, and age 18 or older.

Participants took part in the study in exchange for research credit through the School of Communication at one of the University in U.S. and School of Business in one of the Universities' in China. Both universities are relatively large and in the central part of each country. Students ranged from freshman to grad school students. They found out about the survey through their academic instructors.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

To provide data for testing the hypotheses, participants completed an on-line questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in English. Since all the Chinese participants spoke English, it was unnecessary to translate the questionnaire. In addition, participants responded to several open-ended questions.

Two separate measures gauged students' social and civic engagement behavior and attitudes. The measurement for students' attitudes toward social and civic engagement was developed by Colby et al. (2007). This measure utilizes a 24-item Likert scale with five response options (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The measure for civic engagement behaviors consisted of 12 items measured on a five-point Likert-type scale. The measure asked participants to respond to the items by selecting the response that best represented their level of behavior ranging from *almost never* (1) to *almost always* (5). Results of the reliability analysis for the present study indicated that the behavior measure had good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .81).

Numerous researchers have developed measures to examine the construct of Individualism and Collectivism. Although sentence completion, value rankings, scenarios, and matrices have been used (Triandis, 1992), the best and most common measures appear to be Likert-type scales that ask participants to indicate their level of agreement with statements that indicate either a collectivistic or individualistic orientation. Although Hofstede (1980) was one of the first to measure and popularize the construct of IC, it was the work of Harry Triandis and his colleagues that established IC as one of the most important cultural syndromes. One of his major contributions was the development of a now widely used scale for the measurement of the construct, the INDCOL (Triandis, 1992). This scale consisted of 23 items thought to reflect themes related to individualism or collectivism, and tested them empirically (using a 7-point Likert scale) on different ethnic and racial groups (Triandis, 1992). Items addressed IC across a broad spectrum, using general questions about values. Once again, to focus this survey on only Chinese and American participants, I picked 15 items total to measure Horizontal Individualism (HI; alpha reliability = .81), Vertical Individualism (VI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), and Vertical Collectivism (VC) dimensions from the original 23study. Specifically, 6 items measured collectivism (alpha reliability .83) and 9, individualism (alpha reliability = .77).

3.3 Data Analysis

After receiving approval from the University's institutional review board, the researcher posted the questionnaire on an online survey tool (SurveySelect). Participants received an invitation to participate in the study via an email with an Internet link directly to the survey. The survey opened with an informed consent, which discussed the basic premise of the research, emphasized that the information would be kept confidential, that they could elect to stop participating in the survey at any time, and that their participation would be completely voluntary. For all data analyses, the researcher obtained the file of responses from SurveySelect and translated those first into an Excel file, and from there, into SPSS.16 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which the researcher used for all analyses. Analyses required reverse coding of certain items on the Civic Attitudes and Behaviors measure (items 4, and 5). Further, I aggregated the items in each measure to create a series of overall score for Civic Engagement Attitudes, Civic Engagement Behaviors, Collectivism (overall and with horizontal and vertical subscales), and Individualism (overall and with horizontal and vertical subscales). In each case, I divided the total score by the number of items in each scale, so that the averages would be more conceptually comparable. Reliabilities (Cronbach alpha) for each measure and sub measure appear above.

This study uses MANOVAs to address Hypothesis 1 and four research questions. First, MANOVAs will allow a demographic comparison to determine mean differences in collectivism and individualism (based on Triandis' INDCOL measure) between Chinese and American students (H1). Second, a similar comparison determined possible differences between Chinese and Americans in terms of civic engagement attitudes (RQ1) and behaviors (RQ2). Multiple regression analyses determined the relationship between the cultural values of individual-level I/C and civic engagement attitudes and behaviors.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Nationality and Individulaism/Collectivism (H1)

Hypothesis one and research question one were focused on which nationality group would score higher on measures of collectivism and individualism. A total of 97.1% of the Chinese students (n = 169), and 97.8% American students (n = 178) completed the measures of collectivism and individualism.

Hypothesis one, predicting that Chinese college students would score higher than American students on the measures of collectivism, was supported. The MANOVA data verified that the mean acts were more from Chinese participants (M = 4.08, F = 1.10) than American participants (M = 3.81, F = 1.10, $p<.05$, η^2 = .98). The data verified student civic engagement. American participants in the overall collectivism score as well as the vertical and horizontal collectivism subscales (See Table 1). Research question one investigated American college students would score higher than Chinese students on the measures of individualism. The result shows that American students (M = 4.15, F = 3.75,) are more individualism than Chinese students (M = 4.04, F = 3.75; $p < .05$, η^2 = .98).

Table 1 *Chinese and American score for Individualism-Collectivism*

Variable	Chinese	United States
Horizontal (IND)	3.36	3.29
Vertical(IND)	2.70	2.60
Horizontal (COLL)	4.23	4.18
Vertical (COLL)	3.28	3.20

*p<.05, n = 370

Hypothesis on postulated that Chinese participants would score higher on both measures of collectivism than Americans. As predicated, the hypothesis was not supported. Specifically Chinese participants did not score higher than American students on either measure of collectivism (vertical and horizontal) from Tirandis;s INDCOL measurement. Actually, the mean differences were nearly identical and both relatively high on a 5- point range. Contemporary changes among Chinese students made it uncertain whether Chinese would, in fact, still are less individualistic than Americans; however, cultural values run deep, so despite social media and globalization, it was also possible that collectivism would remain strong among the Chinese participants. In contrast to some of the earlier studies conducted in the United States that American college students are the most well engaged in civic matters (Lopez and Marcelo, 2008), our findings have proved that Chinese college students nowadays are more civically engaged than American students. This supports the

idea that individualism and collectivism can appear at the same time within a culture, and as an individual value, within the same person.

4.2 Nationality and Civic Engagement Attitudes and Behaviors (RQ1 & RQ2)

Research question two investigated whether Chinese students would value civic engagement more or less highly than United States students. An equal number of students (n = 164) from China and United States completed the measure. The results revealed that Chinese students ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .36$) scored higher than American students ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .36$, p <.05) on civic engagement attitudes.

Research question three inquires whether Chinese students are more or less involved in civic engagement behaviors than Americans. Again, an equal number of students (n = 164) from both countries completed the measure. The results revealed that Chinese students ($M = 3.24$, $SD = .52$) scored higher than American students ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .52$, p <.05) on civic engagement behaviors. Because based on Americans higher individualism, Americans would for sure to score higher on these two variables. However, the results revealed that those Chinese participants value civic engagement more and are more involved in civic engagement behaviors than Americans.

Based on Americans' higher individualism, as suggested in the literature, Americans were expected to score higher on these attitudes and behaviors. However, the results revealed that Chinese participants both value civic engagement more and are more involved in civic engagement behaviors than Americans. Nowadays, civic engagement is no longer limited to the United States. It is growing in popularity and importance all over the world. In this new media age, the global village enables people all over the world to share and do things more quickly and easily (IIE, 2006). China inherited a strong Confucian background, and with a different social system than the United States, was not as involved in civic engagement historically. ON the other hand, the United States was one of the most liberal countries in the world and promoted civic engagement for many decades. Maybe it no longer appears that interesting and "fresh" to the young generation (Lin, et al, 2010).

4.3 Individual-Level Cultural Values and Civic Engagement Attitudes and Behaviors

Research question four relates to the relationship between individual-level individualism-collectivism and civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. Simple Regression ($F = 4.65$, $df = 1,329$) indicated that nationality did not predict participants' civic engagement attitudes. Multiple regression ($F = 29.05$, $df = 3,329$) suggested that nationality was not a significant prediction of civic engagement attitudes and behaviors ($t = - 2.58$, $p > .05$), but individualism and collectivism were ($t = 4.12$, $p <.01$ for individualism, and $t = 4.883$, $p <.01$). After controlling for participants' gender, age, and year in school, their individualism ($t = 4.63$, $p <.01$) and collectivism ($t = 4.57$, $p <.01$) values were still significantly related to civic engagement attitudes. As both individualism and collectivism increase, one's attitude towards civic engagement becomes more positive. Table 2 shows the predictors of civic engagement attitudes.

Table 2 *Predictors of Civic Engagement Attitudes*

Variable	B	SD	Beta	T
Gender	.093	.05	.097	1.861
Year	.003	.023	.008	.112
Age	.017	.007	.148	2.333
Nationality	-.107	.051	-.120	-2.074
Individualism	.272	.059	.267	4.628**
Collectivism	.209	.046	.261	4.568**

**p<.01

Lin et al. (2010) conducted a study on Internet usage among Asian youth yielded some very interesting results. Data collected among youths aged between 12 and 17 in Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, and Tokyo in 2007. The results of this study, although entertainment-related activities are the most popular form of Internet use, the Internet may foster citizenship among Asian youth. 65% of those studied read online news, about half have ever supported or donated online and one in five ever signed an online petition (Lin et al., 2010).

Social networking sites are online forums that breed social bonds. As the name suggest social networking sites encourages networking, allowing people to maintain and build relationship via Internet. College students have stated that they do use these sites to stay connected with friends and form new friendship (Salaway et al. 2008). Perhaps, these sites could enhance civic participation.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Founded on the frameworks of student engagement, this study aims to provide insights into the school and civic engagement of culturally diverse students in China and the United States. The present study investigated the relationship between individualism-collectivism and civic engagement attitudes and behaviors among Chinese and American college students. Data were gathered to determine whether participants' national cultures or cultural values would predict their civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. There are significant findings in the study. Specifically, hypotheses and research questions focused on the relationship among nationality, culture, values, and civic engagement attitudes and behaviors, as well as which group of participants have higher scores in both civic engagement behavior and attitude, and why. Further, the Chinese, like Americans, rate themselves as very individualistic. This suggests that Chinese students may be receiving a big impact from Western culture in terms of individualism.

5.1 Implication

The findings have important implications for our understanding of individualism ad collectivism as these relate to national cultures. Triandis et al. (1988) define individualism as the subordination of a group's gorals to a person's own goals, and state that it is a cultural pattern found in North America and the northern and western regions of Europe. Individuals subordinating their personal goals to those of the collective group characterize collectivism. This cultural pattern is largely found in Asia, including China. The constructs of individualism and collectivism have been extensively studied in cultural research (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995), and several researchers have suggested that the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism is a distinguishing element affecting on one's attitude and behavior (Triandis, 1995; Deal, 2002).

However, the present finding suggest that individualism-collectivism do not necessarily have to be totally opposite from each other; they can even exist at the same time within a culture of individual. Earlier cross-cultural studies (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995) have suggested that Chinese society is a collectivistic society, in which individuals pay more attention to group goals, but have less consideration for personal goals. The findings of the present study contradict the traditional thought that the Chinese are high on concern for the group and low on individual priorities.

This study helps to fill this gap by examining how individualism-collectivism relates to civic engagement for Chinese and American participants. However, the study suggests the following areas of future researches. First, future studies should develop survey items on measures from Chinese participants. The survey instrument for the present study was created by American scholars. None of those questions were hard for American participants; however, some of them may have been difficult for the Chinese respondents to understand. Therefore, future measurements in this area may benefit from Chinese or Asian scholars' work.

Second, this study adopted Triandis'INDCOL measurements on individualism-collectivism. Although Triandis is a well know scholar in this area, his measurement mainly focuses on vertical and horizontal individualism-collectivism. In a future study, measurements from other scholars can be used to examine individualism-collectivism and culture values. Different value dimensions and might provide a richer understanding.

5.2 Conclusion

In summary, as the new media world moves forward toward globalization, and as new markets open up and develop, it is crucial for educators to understand the importance of civic engagement in higher education. China, a nation that has enjoyed the world's fastest-growing economy in recent years, is undergoing a major social and cultural transformation from a more collectivistic society to a more individualistic and materialistic society. Therefore, the importance of civic engagement among young generations becomes more and more important. This research examined the cultural values of a sample of Chinese college students and United States students. Findings of the research provide more evidence that underlying cultural values greatly affect individuals' civic engagement behavior and attitudes. Hopefully, this research will provide insights for promoting civic engagement, which will help future researchers doing research on civic engagement in higher education. The current research will also benefit both Chinese and American colleges as they seek to find more effective ways to motivate students to become involved in civic engagement.

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