



Comparative Study of Rural Chinese Left-Behind Children and Immigrant Chinese High School Students



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INTRODUCTION

TOPIC: To compare and contrast the emotional well-being and educational outcomes of two groups: left-behind high school students population (i.e., children who have at least one parent who left their rural homes to pursue employment in wealthier urban areas to support the family) in rural China, and the immigrant Chinese high school students who live in the United States at a boarding school, with a host family, or with just one parent.



Both images are of left-behind children in Ningshan, Shaanxi, China

WHO ARE THEY?

Left-Behind Children: Children (in rural China, age 0-18) who have at least one parent who left their rural homes to pursue employment in wealthier urban areas to support the family.
Chinese Immigrant High School Students: Students who were born and received at least up to fifth grade education in China and moved to the US alone, and who are currently staying at a boarding school, with a host family, or with just one parent to receive better education, while the other parent or both parents stay in China to support these students financially.

PROBLEM?

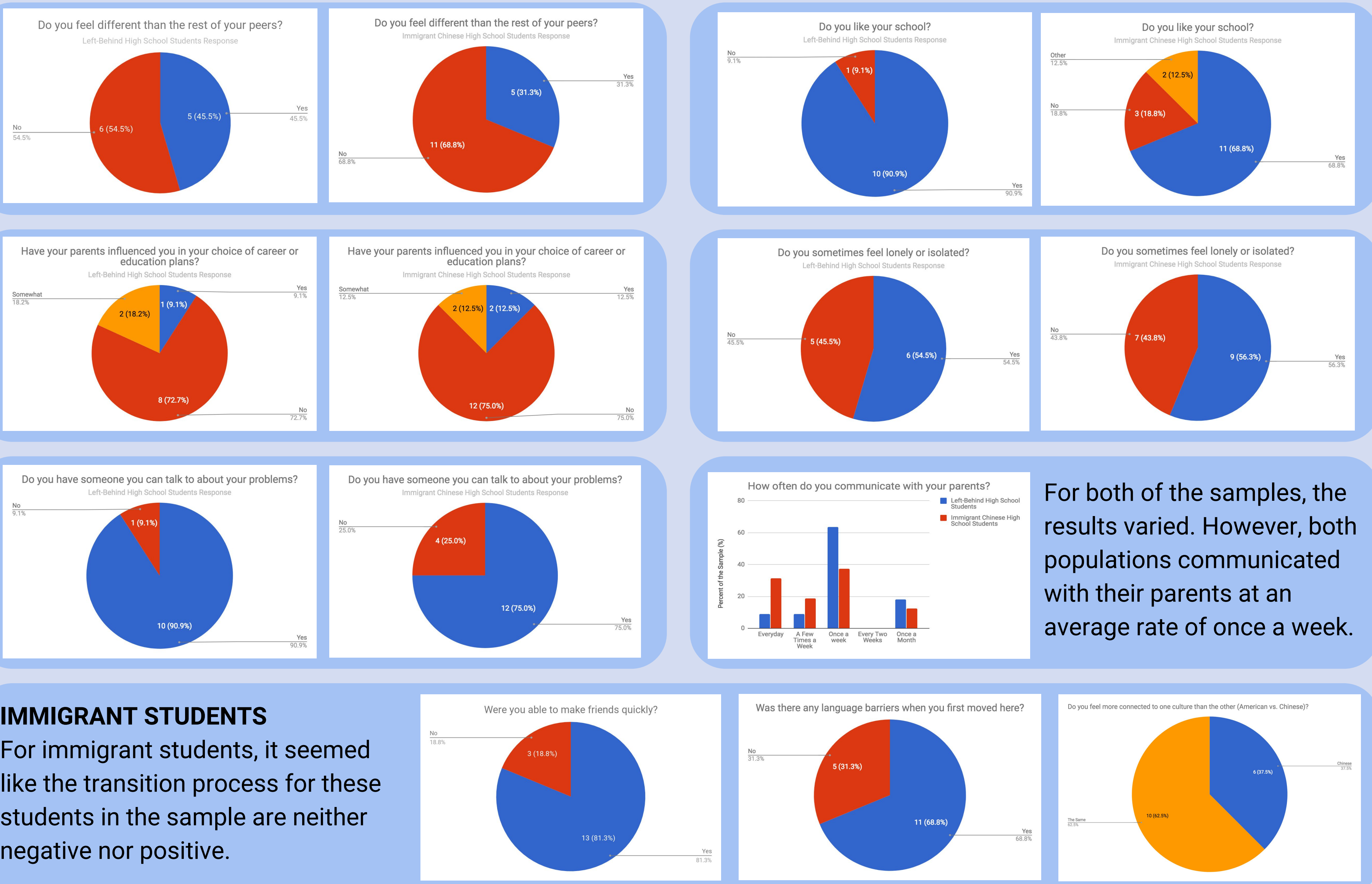
In recent years, problems associated with **mental health** and **education achievements** of left-behind children in China have been brought to national attention in China. Despite the attention and care left-behind children receive from their caregivers (usually grandparents), they still seem to be **negatively impacted** by their parents' out migrations, particularly in terms of their emotional well-being and academic performance (Chang, 2016). The cause of this problem is the **income and care tradeoff**: when the income of the family increases, the care children receive decreases. On the other hand, there seems to be an issue with the mental health and education achievements of **Chinese immigrant high school students** who live in the United States at a **boarding school**, with a **host family**, or with **one parent**. Despite efforts to provide students with academic advising and mental health counseling, Chinese immigrant students still have a **difficult time adapting to the different culture** (Yeh, 2002). This has **negatively** impacted many students' **relationship with peers** and academic performance (Yeh, 2002). A gap in previous studies is that left-behind children and Chinese immigrant children are not compared (both have parents who live far away from them at a young age, and both receive care from someone other than their parents). While the backgrounds and socioeconomic status are different, a lot of the issues regarding their mental health could be similar and worth comparing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

January 8th - January 21st	January 22nd - February 25th	February 25th - March 4th
Crafted and revised survey questions. Sent out surveys to students at Palo Alto and Gunn High School who belong to the immigrant Chinese students population.	Sent out surveys to students who stay with a host family or at a boarding school from other regions in the U.S.	Coded and compared the responses to the survey questions from the two populations. Created graphs.
INQUIRY APPROACH Phenomenological Research (Phenomenology is an attempt to discover participants' lived experiences regarding a specific phenomenon and how they make sense of them.)	DATA TYPE Quantitative and qualitative DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES Summarizing EQUIPMENTS Survey, computer, and phone	ANTICIPATED CHALLENGE It is difficult to find the population of immigrant students, and the participants may not feel comfortable sharing some of their personal experiences.

DATA AND FINDINGS; DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The sample of left-behind high school students in rural China consists of 11 students. 2 of the left-behind children were previously left behind and now are living with both parents, 5 of the students live with neither of their parents, and the 4 remaining students live with their mother (their fathers out-migrated). The sample of immigrant Chinese high school students consists of 16 students living in California, North Carolina, and Massachusetts. 1 student in the sample currently lives with their father, 5 students currently live with their mother, and 1 student lives with other relatives. 4 students attend boarding school while the remaining 5 students stay with a host family.



IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

For immigrant students, it seemed like the transition process for these students in the sample are neither negative nor positive.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The survey asked both groups what they usually talk about with their parents. The parents of left-behind children talk to them about their academics and/or family situation. Some say their migrant parent only asks about school. For the immigrant students, 15/16 claimed that they talk with their family about everything, which includes **academics, extracurricular activities, relationships**, etc. The remaining student said they only talk about academics. From this result, it seems like that immigrant high school students have better, or closer, relationships with their parents than the left-behind high school students. Overall, the quantitative results suggest that the immigrant Chinese high school students and left-behind high school students in rural China have **similar emotional experiences**. The results specifically for immigrant students suggest that they had a **neither positive nor negative transition process**. From the qualitative analysis, it seems that the immigrant high school students have **better, or closer, relationship** with their parents relative to the left-behind high school students in rural China.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

CONCLUSION: Immigrant Chinese high school students and left-behind high school students in rural China have similar emotional experiences. The results specifically for immigrant students suggest that they had a neither positive nor negative transition process. In addition, from the qualitative analysis, it seems that the immigrant high school students have better, or closer, relationship with their parents relative to the left-behind high school students in rural China.

NEXT STEP: Both surveyed samples are rather small (11 for Rural Chinese left-behind children and 16 for Immigrant Chinese High School Students). The next step would be to retrieve data from more students from both of these populations. This would ensure that the results of this comparison study is reliable and unbiased.



Image of left-behind children studying in a rural classroom in Ningshan, Shaanxi, China

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