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Historical Roots in Positioning Chinese International Students in the US: Race and Culture from 1872-1949

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Abstract

Chinese international students (CIS) have been entangled in a complex narrative of anti-Asian sentiments that dates back to their early interactions in the United States. Yet, a lack of research has focused on the historical roots and racial dynamics that CIS have encountered. This study will focus on the first two waves (1872-1949) to examine CIS experiences, history, and roots of anti-Chinese sentiment. Positioning theory is used as the conceptual lens to examine how CIS located themselves and were positioned by others, delineating duties, rights, expectations, and obligations in the first two waves. Critical discourse analysis serves as the methodology, allowing an in-depth analysis of textual language to uncover patterns of dominance, and power dynamics, to identify the inclusion and exclusion based on language use. The findings contribute insights into the historical aspects of anti-Chinese sentiment, elucidating the multifaceted positionings of CIS within the American socio-cultural landscape.

***Keywords*:** Chinese international students, positioning, historical roots, anti-Chinese sentiment, the United States

The United States is the primary destination for international students pursuing higher education globally, with approximately 948,519 international students during the academic year 2021-2022 (Open Doors, 2022). Over the past fifteen years, China has consistently ranked as the top country sending international students to the United States (Fischer, 2023). However, India has surpassed China and has become the top source of international students in the United States in 2023 due to dynamic geopolitical tensions and anti-Chinese sentiment (Fischer, 2023). Existing research has investigated Chinese international students' (CIS) challenges studying abroad and discriminatory experiences in the twenty-first century (Ching et al., 2017; Heng, 2018; Yan & Berliner, 2011), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hou, 2023a; Lin et al., 2022; Yu, 2021). Notably, Hou (2024) highlights factors such as US-China geopolitical tensions and anti-Chinese sentiment as potential contributors to a decline in the number of CIS. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has also raised anti-Asian sentiment in the United States (Hou & Wang, 2021; Ma & Zhan, 2020; Yu, 2021). CIS have encountered "yellow peril" racism and Sinophobia (Hou, 2023a; Yu, 2021).

Yet, a lack of research has focused on the historical roots and racial dynamics that CIS have encountered. CIS have a rich historical legacy of pursuing higher education in the United States, dating back to the nineteenth century, during which they became entangled in a nuanced and complex narrative of anti-Asian prejudices that has persisted throughout their interactions in the United States (Gyory, 1998; Hou, 2023b). The historical trajectory reveals five distinct waves of CIS studying in the United States: (1) Chinese Education Mission from 1872 -1905; (2) Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and Republic of China from 1905-1949; (3) People's Republic of China and Cold War from 1949-1978; (4) the Era of Modernization from 1978-2017; and (5) US-China Geopolitical Tensions and New Cold War from 2017 to present (Bi, 2018; Bieler, 1994; Hou, 2023b; Lee, 2021; Liu, 2009). This study focuses on the first two waves spanning the years 1872 to 1949, aiming to elucidate the experiences, historical underpinnings, and roots of anti-Chinese sentiments among CIS. With the positioning theory as the conceptual lens and the first two historical waves of CIS studying in the United States, the study is able to understand the historical structural and systematic challenges that CIS encounter due to their nationality, race, and culture (Yao & Mwangi, 2022). International students, particularly Chinese students, tend to be positioned as competitors and threats to the United States (Lee, 2021). Today, CIS has been caught amid the "New Cold War" and racial dynamics (Hou, 2024; Lee, 2021). Re-examining American history reveals "what is at stake today" (Lee, 2020, p. 15). Only by fully understanding the historical trends and nuances of racial dynamics with its causes and expressions, can we interrupt it (Lee, 2020).

The purpose of this paper is to illuminate the positioning of CIS and their positioning within the racialized contexts of the United States, thereby addressing the following research questions: How did CIS position themselves during the first two historical waves of studying in the United States? How were CIS positioned and by whom within the racialized contexts within the United States during the first two historical waves?

Chinese Educational Mission 1872-1905

Following the Qing government's defeat in the First Opium War by the British (1839-1842), China was compelled to sign the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaty of Wangxia (Office of the Historian, 2023). These treaties mandated the opening of five treaty ports for Chinese-Western trade and the allowance of the Western entrance (Bieler, 2004). In order to expand Western influence in China and foster modernization, Western missionaries and educators began laying the groundwork for international educational exchanges, ultimately contributing to the downfall of China's imperial system (Hsu, 2014).

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Yung Wing, often known as the "father of Chinese international students," was the first Chinese student to study in the United States and graduated from Yale University in 1854 (Worthy, 1965; Yao, 2017). Afterwards, Yung advocated for the Qing government to send more Chinese students abroad for Western education (Bi, 2018; Hsu, 2014). In 1871, the Qing government endorsed Yung's educational initiative, establishing the Chinese Education Group (Yao, 2017). Concurrently, the United States eagerly supported Yung's proposal, viewing it as part of its mission to spread Christian values globally (Litten, 2009). Thus, the Chinese Educational Mission was launched in 1872, sending around 120 Chinese students to the United States to study with the goal of self-strengthening by learning sciences related to the Army, Navy, Mathematics, and Engineering (Hou, 2023a; Hsu, 2014; Wang, 1966).

Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and the Republic of China 1905-1949

Approximately 30,000 Chinese students studied in the United States from 1905-1949 (Bieler, 1994). The Boxer Indemnity Fund was used to fund cultural and educational programs and send Chinese students to study in the United States (Bi, 2018; Liu & Zhang, 2023). Chinese students were caught in the middle of international relations where both the United States and China were expected to build "friendship" and strengthen the relationship to leverage against other countries (Bieler, 1994). Chinese students were expected to bring Chinese culture and life to America and return to China with Westernization for the development of China (Hinnershitz, 2013). In this period, most students were able to complete their undergraduate degree, and some even received master's or PhD degrees (Yufa, 2002), most of them in science and technology fields (Bieler, 1994). Notably, an increasing number of female Chinese students ventured to the United States, with aspirations of becoming adept mothers, homemakers, and leaders (Bieler, 1994).

Compared to their predecessors, this cohort of students was often better prepared for life and study in the United States. Some of them were from elite backgrounds and urban areas, where they had received modern education. Some of their families were merchants, teachers, and free professionals (Bieler, 1994). However, despite their admiration of the United States, they encountered significant cultural shocks and faced institutional and societal prejudices (Bieler,

1994). Furthermore, they experienced various forms of racism, such as being called as "Chinamen" and commonly mistaken for Japanese (Bieler, 1994). The American Immigration Act of 1924 further exacerbated the situation, as it fostered a climate of exclusion towards individuals of Asian descent. Additionally, Chinese students faced marginalization within their own country, as their prolonged exposure to American culture led to questions about the loss of Chinese identity and Americanization (Bieler, 2004).

Existing Research on Chinese International Students

Existing research has focused on CIS' experiences around learning, student life, racism, and coping strategies (see Cao et al., 2021; Heng, 2019; Wu et al., 2015). CIS need to adapt to the education system and culture in host countries (Heng, 2018; Will, 2019). Studies have shown that CIS struggle with language, writing, classroom participation, critical thinking, and interaction with faculty and peers (Heng, 2018; Kuo, 2011; Ma, 2020; Wu et al., 2015). In response to those challenges, CIS spend more time working on their language and assignments (Heng, 2018; Hou, 2023b). CIS tend to seek protective segregation for comfort and support from their Chinese peers due to exclusion from domestic peers (Ma, 2020).

Additionally, compared with international students from other countries, CIS tend to encounter discrimination, stereotypes, and prejudice (Will, 2016; Yao, 2018; Xie et al., 2021). CIS are stereotyped as passive, unprofessional, lacking participation in the classroom, and uncritical because faculty is unaware of Chinese culture and CIS' struggles (Heng, 2018; Hou, 2023a; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018). Similarly, domestic peers are prejudiced and perceive CIS as not interested in socializing and annoying (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to anti-Chinese sentiment (Chiu, 2020; Hou, 2023a). CIS has suffered the verbal insults like "Chinese Virus" and "Kung-flu" (Kim & Shah, 2020).

Conceptual Lens–Positioning Theory

Positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove 1999; Moghaddam & Harré, 2010) serves as the conceptual lens to investigate how CIS positioned themselves and how they were positioned by social structures during the first two historical waves. Positioning theory encompasses a nuanced examination of how individuals position themselves and are positioned by societal structures through discursive practices, encompassing oral and written discourse, language use, speech, and other communicative acts (McVee et al., 2011, p. 4). It delves into the intricate nature of local systems of rights and duties, exploring their formation, influence, and potential for change within social interactions (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, p. 133).

Moghaddam and Harré (2010) outline two phases within positioning theory: Firstly, the attribution of qualities related to character, intellect, or temperament; and secondly, the assignment or denial of rights and duties. These phases are grounded in the concept of moral order, which represents a collection of collectively held beliefs regarding what is deemed morally correct. Within this framework, individuals or groups are positioned as dominant, inferior, confident, or powerful (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Positioning theory further comprises a positioning triangle: position, storyline, and social force of speech-acts (Harré & van Langenhove 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Positioning tends to take place within

different contexts of "a specific moral order of speaking" (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 23). Four forms of intentional positioning are used for the study: deliberate self-positioning, forced self-positioning, deliberate positioning of others, and forced positioning of others (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Deliberate self-positioning occurs when individuals want to express their identity or attain specific goals by emphasizing one's agency, understanding an individual's perspectives, or highlighting events in one's biography. Forced self-positioning refers to initiative that is dependent on others, rather than the individual self. Deliberate positioning of others refers to individuals who are positioned by others with either individual present or absent. CIS are positioned as foreigners and threats. Positioning theory as the conceptual lens underscores by whom resources, opportunities, and rights are allocated, as well as challenges faced by CIS. Forced positioning of others involves influencing others to adopt specific stances to position others, which occurs whether the person is being positioned in the presence or not. By employing positioning theory, researchers can gain valuable insight into the systemic and structural hurdles confronted by CIS, enhancing the understanding of their lived experiences and identities within sociocultural contexts. Positioning theory is an important approach to analyzing discourse – "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). It also draws the ties between discursive practices, culture, language, and identity to explore real-world actions and interactions (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010).

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Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2013a) is used as the methodological framework for scrutinizing the positioning of CIS and uncovering how language use (re)produces issues of power and inequity. CDA, as a form of critical social analysis, not only simply describes the social reality, but also explains it by demonstrating it to be "effects of structures or mechanisms or forces that the analyst postulates and whose reality s/he seeks to test out" (Fairclough, 2013b, p. 9). Fairclough (2013a) uses discourse to refer to spoken or written language use as a form of social practice. Gee (2004) uses little "d" as language-in-use, and big "D" as language-in-use with other things, such as actions, ways of thinking, values, and beliefs. The important thing to note in big "D" is that one can be recognized as whom (identity) and engaging in what (activity) through the combination of language-in-use and other social elements (Gee, 2004). This study drew the positioning of CIS by interpreting them through discursive processes (language, policies, practices, etc.) (Gee, 2004).

CDA contributes to establishing connections "between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production, consumption and distribution), and wider sociocultural practice" (Fairclough, 2013a, p. 89). The link between these three dimensions requires the exploration of macro and micro contexts. In the study, the institutional discourses of international students are impacted by national discourses. Higher education institutions are networks of practices that are also networked to other practices. For example, the institutional practices of international students are impacted by national immigration regulations.

Networks of social practices are material processes but at the same time discursive processes as well. Social realities are reflected in how people perceive, represent, interpret, and conceptualize (Fairclough, 2013b). Discursive processes constitute the discourse aspect of power relations within networks of social practices. Fairclough (2013b) defines an order of discourse as "a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of making meaning – different genres, discourses and styles" (p. 11). This study focuses on the ways that news, policies, and media are part of an order of discourse. That is to say, they are the discourse part of networks among practices from various domains of society. Power relations are an essential and critical part of discourse analysis. In the process of examining orders of discourse, researchers are able to identify what and where discourses are in conflict and who controls the dominant discourses. The examination of relationships between institutional discourses on international students may uncover the complexities of power relationships that are hidden. In this study, CDA reveals how institutional and national language, and practices construct the positioning of CIS within the first two historical waves.

Data Collection

The data sources included archives, empirical studies, news articles, and web articles (see Table 1). The key search terms are "Chinese students in the US 1872-1905" and "Chinese students in the US 1905-1949." Data sources were collected from both the United States and China, with only English-language sources being considered. The purposeful sampling technique was used to conduct a comprehensive search and review for the systematic inquiry (Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). This led to a total of 50 documents being retrieved through the search process: 24 relating to the period of 1872-1905 and 26 pertaining to 1905-1949.

Table 1
Data Sources

Category	Number
Archive	12
Empirical Study	27
News Article	8
Web Article	3
Total	50

Data Analysis

Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) positioning theory triangle guided the data analysis. This triangle comprises three key constructs: speech-acts, position, and storyline (Harré & van Langenhove 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Speech-acts refer to the socially constructed meanings conveyed through actions of speech and non-verbal communication (Davies & Harré, 1990). The social meaning of what has been said determines the discursive positions in storylines, and vice versa (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Various discursive positions emerge in the telling of personal stories (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). The first phase focused on speech-acts by analyzing discourse-as-text (Fairclough, 1995). This was completed through reading, re-reading, and line-by-line coding for each document. During

this phase, the researcher also categorized and created checklists to describe the primary contents of the documents related to CIS. The categorization and checklists were informed by the conceptual lens and research questions, which helped the researcher to consider what kind of language, actions, and content were used to describe CIS or on CIS. The language or phrases like "discrimination," "racism", "prejudice," and other related words were recorded as well." For example, the checklist includes the question "Who is included in the context, for what purpose, or for what needs?" The following sentence from the first historical wave further explains that Chinese students were positioned as tools for Americans to extend foreign influence:

> "Americans for the sake of extending foreign influence and Chinese in the hopes of reinvigorating the national economy and polity" (Hsu, 2014, p. 314)

The study then continued with the second construct (positions) with discourse-in-discursive (Fairclough, 1995; Harré & van Langenhove's, 1999), which included how the texts were produced to position CIS in various contexts. According to Harré and van Langenhove (1999), positions can emerge naturally from the conversational and social context. The positionings are fluid; the act of positioning involves "the assignment of fluid 'parts' or 'roles' to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determine as social acts" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). Positioning constitutes a discursive practice; thus, when individuals position others, it inherently implies a positioning of themselves as well. The act of positioning also involves power hierarchies. In this second phase, the researcher re-read the documents and analyzed the checklists to see how they reflected the CIS and in what contexts. At this stage, the researcher combined all the codes and categorizations into three dominant discourses that interpreted CIS as Christian conversion targets, ambassadors for China civilization and U.S. national and economic development, and targets of racial discrimination and exclusion. Each discourse is not mutually exclusive. For example, the following excerpt from Hsu (2014) reflected that CIS encountered exclusion and xenophobia in various societal settings in the United States:

Positioning constitutes a discursive practice; thus, when individuals position others, it inherently implies a positioning of themselves as well.

> The so-called Chinese exclusion laws, which remained in effect until 1943, gave rise to a host of other discriminations, primarily in Western states, in the form of riots, employment and residential restrictions, antimiscegenation laws, and other everyday harassments (p. 23).

The study then used storylines to emphasize and unfold the engagement of CIS in assigning positions to themselves and by others in different contexts. For example, the researcher re-engaged documents, developed analytic and reflective memos, and selected narratives on their connections to the construction of discourse on CIS. These three constructs are mutually affected and allow researchers to study moral orders in social interaction (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Discourses are shaped by symbol systems and moral orders that govern social interactions (McVee et al., 2018). Moral orders manifest across various levels with multi-contexts and multi-dimensions (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Positioning theory helps researchers to explore how the complex of moral orders is (re)produced or challenged in social interactions (Lönngren

et al., 2021). As Harré and van Langenhove (1999) noted, "Not only what we do but also what we can do is restricted by rights, duties and obligations we acquire, assume or which are imposed upon us in the concrete social contexts of everyday life" (p. 4).

Findings

This section discusses the three prominent discourses on the positioning of Chinese students in the first two historical waves. These positionings are not mutually exclusive but overlap and are in a conflict that involves an interaction of process and "display of negotiation" (Tirado & Gálvez, 2008, p. 245). The positioning is dynamic and fluid and is shaped by the different contexts and narratives in which they are constructed. In the first two historical waves, the position of Chinese students was particularly embedded in White supremacy and shaped by the political context. In the first wave, Chinese students were positioned as the targets of Christian conversion and tools to modernize China's scientific and military sectors. In both two waves, Chinese students were positioned as ambassadors for China civilization and disseminating Chinese culture as well as the bridges between China and the United States. Additionally, Chinese students encountered different forms of racism and discrimination since the beginning of their studies in America.

Christianity Conversion Targets, Americanization, and Marginalization

Two main forms of intentional positioning include forced self-positioning and deliberate positioning of others (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Particularly in the first wave, CIS were forced and deliberately positioned by Western Christianity as conversion targets. Western missionaries played an important role in bringing Chinese students to the United States. China was positioned as "the Anglo-Saxons of the Orient" (Hsu, 2014, p. 317) and "the largest field for American Protestant missionaries" (Hsu, 2015, p. 27). Chinese were perceived as "literate, hardworking, and disciplined people who has a great capacity to embrace Christian beliefs and ways" (Hsu, 2014, p. 317). When the British defeated the Qing government in the First Opium War, China was forced to open five southern ports to the Western countries allowing the protestant missionaries to enter (Bieler, 2004). The Western countries believed it was their destiny to spread Christianity and convert others to Christianity to the world (Litten, 2009). The war opened the door in China for Western countries to establish schools and hospitals to attract Chinese for the benefit of Christianity (Hsu, 2014). As the "father" of CIS, Yung Wing was the first Chinese student to study in the United States and graduated from Yale University. He received a free education from a British missionary in China and subsequently attended a university preparatory school where he embraced Christianity (Yao, 2017). In 1872, Yung Wing led 120 Chinese students who were called Chinese Educational Mission (CEM) boys at a very young age to study in the United States. CEM boys were instructed to attend Sunday school upon arrival. Without knowing they were going to church, they thought they were going to a real school. Later on, some students converted to Christianity (Bieler, 2021). This forced positioning identifies the historical and continuing patterns of ideological and religious hierarchy.

White supremacy was shown in different aspects of Chinese students studying in America: the privileged Western values and culture and the expectation of acculturation. CIS were positioned in the "U.S. structures of racially uneven belonging" (Stein, 2018, p. 899). They

were positioned as "foreigners" and "immigrants" who were expected to adapt to the Western environment and experienced difficulties regarding their culture due to power dynamics (Hsu, 2014). Initially, Chinese students felt embarrassed and uncomfortable when their host families hugged and kissed them (Bieler, 2004). Many students underwent forced self-positioning to become Americanized, altering their external cultural traits such as attire, lifestyle, and behaviors. The long Chinese gowns, cue, and braids made them look like girls and were laughed at by American students. Students cut their long braids, abandoned their Chinese clothes, and put on American trousers and coats, which raised concerns from the Chinese government since those are the traditional badges of Chinese scholars (LaFargue, 1987). Additionally, students started to play American sports, date American girls, and neglect their Chinese studies (Hsu, 2014). They were taught Western table manners and disciplines. Some students were not allowed to eat if they could not remember the name of the food in English (Bieler, 2004). For example, Woo recalled his early American experiences,

> "I remember Miss Mary Bartlett was a strict disciplinarian. When we held our knives and forks too low at meals, she would correct us. When she heard us talking in our rooms in the attic after nine or ten p.m., she would call from below, 'Boys, stop talking, it is time to sleep.' Old Mr. Bartlett used to have Prayer Meetings mornings and evenings every day." (LaFargue, 1987, p. 35)

Furthermore, Some Chinese students cut off their braids and took off their gowns to adopt Christianity and criticize Chinese culture. Students started to forget their own language and had little desire to know Chinese classics. Even if Chinese students wished to do so, they could not resist the pressure from the American environment (LaFargue, 1987). Meng, as the first Chinese student studying at Davidson College, recalled that "My Americanization started at Davidson. My many Davidson friends, I dare to think, were a little bit Sinofied in return by me" (as cited in Hsu, 2014, p. 315). Zhang Fuliang recalled his experience with Western meals, "the cold raw milk and ice water chilled my stomach and caused my teeth to chatter and butter and cheese were nauseating with a strong odor of the cow" (as cited in Bieler, 2004, p. 96). Many students neglected the study of Confucianism (Luo, 2013).

Despite attempts to adapt to American culture, many students experienced inner conflict and uncertainty, caught between their Chinese roots and Western influences (Yan, 2017). Although they outwardly embraced Western customs, they retained their Chinese identity internally, leading to a sense of cultural dissonance. As aforementioned, most Chinese students changed their extrinsic cultural traits such as dress, lifestyles, behaviors, and language, while maintaining a Chinese interior. Many students became convoluted about their identities and cultural existence, and they were accepted by either country (Yan, 2017). Most of the Chinese students were isolated from American people. One of the reasons that the CEM students were recalled was students' Americanization and started to lose Chinese identities (Bieler, 2021). When CEM boys first returned to China, they were considered unfit for their homeland and most of them went to humble position (LaFargue, 1987). They were forced to be positioned as "denationalized traitors" and "foreign devils" (Fish, 2020).

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Ambassadors for China Civilization, U.S. National and Economic Development, and US-China Bridges

Chinese students studied in the United States for different reasons and were forced to be positioned in various ways by both China and the United States. First, students were positioned as ambassadors by both countries, expected to learn from America and contribute to the development of China (Bieler, 1994; Wang, 1994). The Chinese government envisioned that these students would return home equipped with knowledge to bolster China's military, business, and scientific sectors without becoming overly Americanized (Bieler, 2021; Luo, 2013). CEM boys took the leading roles in China's modernization regarding railroads, mining, international trade, and diplomacy after their return (Hsu, 2014; Luo, 2013). For example, Mao Yisheng, graduated from Cornell University and Carnegie Mellon University and designed Qian Tang Jiang Bridge in China, which was the first modern steel bridge designed by Chinese (Luo, 2013). Zhong Wenyao became a foreign minister in Qing Dynasty; Liang Dunyan and Tang Shaoyi founded Customs College (Hsu, 2014). Chinese students also positioned themselves to contribute to China after graduation. One student recalled that "generally, Chinese students studying in America all wanted to learn something, and prepared to return to serve for China" (as cited in Luo, 2013, p. 8). In the second wave, students shifted to studying politics, law, art, and literature to reform China (China Daily, 2003). Many students became leading scholars and government officials in China afterward. The U.S. government aims to serve American commercial interests and increase its military and economic power by recruiting Chinese students (Bieler, 1998; Wang, 1994). The U.S. sponsors believed that Chinese students would do well in serving American economic interests in China (Wang, 1994).

Furthermore, Chinese students served in a complex intermediary role and were positioned as diplomats and bridges between the US-China relationships as well as the interests of both countries. CEM boys, such as Liang Cheng and Tang Shaoyi, served as diplomats to negotiate using the form of scholarship from the remission of excess funds in the Boxer Indemnity to bring Chinese students to study in America (Hsu, 2014). For America, the U.S. government aimed to extend the foreign influence on China to reinvigorate the U.S. economy and political power (Hsu, 2014). Studying in the United States was a significant approach for Chinese to appreciate American civilization and friendship, thus bolstering influence in China compared to that of Japan (Hsu, 2014). Students were *bridges* of friendship to "bring to America that which is best in Chinese culture and life, and to take back to China only the best that America has to offer for the further development of China" (as cited in Bieler, 1994, p. 15). However, this bridge was built based on a hierarchical power relation and was caught in an international political puzzle where China and America use friendship to manipulate each other (Bieler, 1994). Chinese students were positioned as tools to change China and U.S. politics and economics. Additionally, female Chinese students started to be included in the second wave to study in America; however, the notion of male superiority was still not broken. The main aim for females to study in America was to educate them to become better wives and support their husbands (Wang, 1994). American-educated sports made a difference in the positions of Chinese females and Chinese people. Women started to participate in sports, shifting the notion that women should be feeble and weak to be pretty (Liu & Zhang, 2023). The primary purpose of sports at the beginning in China was to break the stereotype of the "sick man of East Asia" (Liu & Zhang, 2023).

Racial Discrimination and Exclusion

With the arrival of Chinese students in the United States in the first two historical waves, they experienced different forms of racism, including but not limited to exclusion, hostility, and discrimination. Racial, political, and other power structures shaped Chinese students' experiences in the United States. As aforementioned, Chinese students had to take off their Chinese gowns and cut their long braids to wear American clothes because of discrimination from Americans. Mistreatment, exclusion, and racial dynamics were another reason to cease the CEM (Bieler, 2004, 2021). The derogatory labels assigned to Chinese individuals, including "Chinamen", "Chinks," "yellow-boy," "yellow-belly," and "Yellow Peril," reflect the prevalence of xenophobia sentiment in American discourse during this period (Bieler, 1994; Hsu, 2009; Wang, 1994). Many Americans were prejudiced toward the Chinese and positioned them as "inferior, "backward race" and "morally, economically, and socially undesirable for the United States" (Wang, 1994, p. 71). This racial bias was manifest in diverse portrayals across American society, ranging from derogatory stereotypes to nuanced political commentary. For example, different Americans positioned the Chinese in various ways:

> The average American: "They are Japs."
> The uneducated class: "Well, the Chinaman's chop suey is some class."
> The middle class: "Chinaman eats rats and birds' nests!" (Straw and twigs)
> The intelligent class: "The Chinese Revolution! Premier Kai and Dr. Sen!" (as cited in Bieler, 1994, p. 53)

Chinese individuals were positioned unevenly concerning immigration policies. The environment of Chinese students studying was complex and unstable. The findings indicated that Chinese individuals were positioned in a lower hierarchical order. Chinese individuals found themselves subject to both positive and negative representations within the context of American interests, wherein negative attitudes precipitated exclusionary policies, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, while positive perspectives culminated in the adoption of the Open Door policy, aligning China with American diplomatic and commercial objectives. Both sides positioned China as weak and backward (Wang, 1994). Many Americans also considered the Chinese an economic threat to American workers. Racial attitudes became an important factor in shaping American foreign policy. The Page Act of 1875 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 reflected the American hostility and exclusion to Chinese immigrants (Bi, 2008; University Archives, 2021).

These immigration regulations not only targeted the Chinese as a racial group, but also targeted members who had legal entry rights through "humiliating interrogations, long detention periods, and medical inspections, only to be denied admission" (Hsu, 2014, p. 321). Despite exemptions granted to students, the laws categorized all individuals of Chinese descent as racially ineligible for entry, irrespective of their class or legal standing (Hsu, 2014). Immigration officers in San Francisco maintained a deep sense of suspicion toward all incoming Chinese (Litten, 2009).

Many Americans also considered the Chinese an economic threat to American workers.

The enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act precipitated various forms of discrimination such as riots, employment and residential restrictions, and daily harassment (Hsu, 2014). Furthermore, American nationalism and progressivism exacerbated discrimination against Chinese students (Bieler, 2004). Chinese students tended to be rejected when seeking accommodations due to their nationality and were subject to physical attacks. For example, two Princeton students assaulted Sing Lee and Lee Why and burned them with hot irons and boiling water (see University Archives, 2021). Qihe Fei, a Chinese student who studied at Yale, recalled the mistreatment he suffered in America. He wrote in a weekly New York magazine, "America is not so good a friend to China as I had mistakenly thought, because in no part of the Earth are the Chinese so ill-treated and humiliated as in America" (Fish, 2020, para. 19). It was not unusual for Chinese students to be denied entry and under interrogation in America during this time (Wang, 1994). For example, Evan Soong Ai-ling, the daughter of Charlie Soong was confined in a detention facility for more than two weeks despite possessing a bona fide passport.

Chinese students frequently experienced isolation from their American counterparts, as many American students exhibited reluctance to engage with them. The American Immigrant Act of 1924 heightened the difficulty for Chinese students to forge friendships with American peers, as it advocated for the exclusion of individuals from yellow and brown races, thereby reinforcing the notion of America as a nation primarily for White men. Additionally, some American students often expressed their disapproval by hissing at their American peers who associated with Chinese students, and they actively avoided socializing or sitting with Chinese students themselves (Bieler, 1994).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the historical roots and racial dynamics of Chinese students by examining the positioning of Chinese international students in the first two historical waves. The findings indicate that Chinese students were positioned in a complex intermediary role, positioned between the interests of the United States and China. They were subject to both positive and negative positioning, serving as targets for Christian conversion, ambassadors bridging Chinese civilization with American interests, yet also perceived as racial targets. The deliberate positioning of Chinese students appears rooted in the national interests of both the United States and China, treating these students as "tools" for achieving respective national objectives during the initial historical waves. The expectations from America and China and the treatment of Chinese students underscore the dehumanization of Chinese students, echoing the findings of Yao and Mwangi (2022) regarding the reinforcement of exclusion and othering of Chinese students.

Moreover, this study expands the notion of dehumanization from micro to macro contexts, illustrating that the positioning of Chinese students transcends institutional boundaries to encompass national and international dimensions. Chinese students were expected to learn from the West and bring back to China to strengthen their military, business, and science. On the other hand, Chinese students were expected to serve American commercial interests and increase military and economic power. Chinese students experienced forced self-positioning as they navigated culture and values between the United States and China. They were forced to adopt

American cultural norms and also keep Chinese cultural identity. The findings reveal the impact of external influence on Chinese students regarding their behaviors, experiences, and identities. The findings also indicate that Chinese students have encountered anti-Chinese sentiment since the first beginning they came to study in the United States. For example, they were called different racial slurs and were targeted as a race to be excluded.

Examining the historical positioning and experiences of Chinese students provides valuable insights into their diverse encounters across different historical epochs, facilitating collaborative efforts among institutional and governmental entities to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment (Hou, 2024). Chinese students have been positioned in various ways and in different contexts. They experienced forced self-positioning as they navigated between the values and norms of their heritage and those of the dominant culture. Additionally, they felt compelled to adopt a specific cultural identity in the first two historical waves.

One limitation of this study is that it only focuses on the first two historical waves of Chinese students studying in the United States. It cannot grasp the changes in contexts and CIS. Moving forward, future research should delve into the evolving nuances of Chinese students' positioning across the five historical waves to better comprehend the external influences shaping their identities and behaviors. The following questions should be considered in future research. How are Chinese students positioned differently, by whom, and in what contexts? Throughout history to the present, who has more power in positioning Chinese students? What is the past, present, and future structure that have (will) created uneven and unequal positionings and relationships? How might these positionings and relationships be interrupted? Engaging these questions would help higher education institution leaders better understand CIS from micro and macro perspectives and provide equitable support.

The study contributes nuanced insights into the historical dimensions of anti-Chinese sentiment, shedding light on the multifaceted positionings of CIS within the socio-cultural milieu of the United States. Furthermore, it will empower higher education institutions to re-evaluate existing racial discourse and contemplate strategies to foster an inclusive and transformative environment for CIS by understanding the historical roots and trends of anti-Chinese racism. The study carries several implications for institutions, national policies, and further research. First, governments and higher education institutions must acknowledge the historical context and adopt a humane perspective toward Chinese students, refraining from viewing them merely as victims or scapegoats for geopolitical agendas, especially in light of contemporary US-China geopolitical tensions (Hou, 2024). Second, higher education institutions should collaborate with the community to build a welcoming and safe environment for Chinese students so that they will not be the targets of violence. Third, institutions need to have offices for Chinese students to report racism-related experiences and to provide appropriate support. Research shows that Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are also subjected to different forms of racism and discrimination in higher education institutions. Institutions can also build offices to help the AAPI student community to report racialized experiences and provide support. Last, comparative analysis across historical waves can elucidate the extent of differences in Chinese students positioning, informing strategies for better understanding and supporting their diverse needs within higher education contexts. Acknowledging the positioning of CIS under different contexts would contribute to a better understanding of systems of oppression at various levels that affect

CIS. The dynamic positioning of CIS is shaped by historical, political, economic, technological, and cultural contexts in the first two historical waves. This is important because sending/receiving CIS is based on coloniality and dominance. Positioning theory should be expanded to consider the U.S., China, and individual dynamics while CIS studying in the United States across the five historical waves to better understand the experiences and positioning of CIS.

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