

MY PH.D. RESEARCH JOURNEY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (UBC)

GANG LI



OVERVIEW

- Steps to completion in the Ph.D. program
- My doctoral research
- Relevance to China's governance
- Q & A session



STEPS TO COMPLETION IN THE PH.D. PROGRAM

1. Admission (**Ph.D. Student**)
2. Coursework
3. Comprehensive examination
4. Formation of **Research Supervisory Committee**
5. Development and approval of research proposal
6. Admission to doctoral candidacy (**Ph.D. Candidate**)
7. Approval of research protocol by **Behavioural Research Ethics Board**
8. Complete research
9. Write and revise thesis
10. Nomination of **External Examiners**
11. Nomination of **University Examiners**
12. **Chair of Examination Committee** appointed by Faculty of Graduate Studies
13. Final oral examination
14. Approved thesis submitted to Faculty of Graduate Studies (**Ph.D. Holder**)
15. Graduation



KEY PERSONS IN MY PH.D. RESEARCH JOURNEY

- **Research Supervisory Committee:**

1. Dr. **Claudia Ruitenberg**, Professor, Department of Educational Studies, UBC (Co-supervisor)
2. Dr. **Taylor Webb**, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies, UBC (Co-supervisor)
3. Dr. **Glen Peterson**, Professor, Department of History, UBC (Supervisory Committee Member)

- **University Examiners:**

1. Dr. **André Mazawi**, Professor, Department of Educational Studies, UBC
2. Dr. **Timothy Cheek**, Professor, Department of History, UBC

- **External Examiner:**

Dr. **Ruth Hayhoe**, Professor, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, University of Toronto

- **Chair of Examination Committee:**

Dr. **Timothy Brook**, Professor, Department of History, UBC



MY DOCTORAL RESEARCH

- **Research scope:**

To examine how Chinese international students are produced politically through their engagement with democracy while pursuing degrees at universities in Canada and the United States

- **Research questions:**

1. How do Chinese international students engage with democratic discourses and practices in Canada and the United States?
2. How does this engagement affect the students' thoughts on and/or actions towards democracy?
3. How do the students become and/or how are they made into political – and possibly democratic – subjects?



MY DOCTORAL RESEARCH

- **Methodology:**

Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the study recruits twelve students from two sites, one on the Canadian West Coast and the other on the U.S. East Coast.

It collects data on participants' engagement with democratic discourses and practices in their two host countries with three methods (i.e., qualitative interviewing, observations, and document gathering).



MY DOCTORAL RESEARCH

- **Key findings:**

Findings demonstrate that international mobility in higher education has significant bearings on participants' political subjectivity. Particularly noteworthy is that half of the twelve participants emerge with increased commitment to democracy and increased competence to effect democratization in China.

Increased commitment and competence were closely related to students' engagement with three kinds of democratic practices: 1) those associated with learning and unlearning about democracy, 2) those associated with democratic elections at the regime level, and 3) those associated with organization design and management.

Further, students' engagement with democratic practices occurred largely in two spaces related to their education: 1) the conceptual space entailed in disciplinary studies, especially those in the social sciences, 2) the structural procedural space entailed in the electoral politics of the two host countries and politics in Chinese international student organizations.

Finally, the dissertation research illustrates how democratic practices were related to different spaces, including conceptual and structural procedural spaces.



RELEVANCE TO CHINA'S GOVERNANCE

- **Literature review:**

Governance improvement has become an important, if not central, task in China's political reforms in the Post-Mao era (1976 – present).

- **Theoretical framework:**

In the 21st century, China offers an alternative economic and political model, often referred to as the China Model, the key feature of which is an emphasis on good governance instead of electoral democracy. The China Model is often applied to the field of international development. Thus, good governance, here, primarily denotes a process of decision-making and decision implementation through which a developing country can effectively address its development problems and challenges to ensure its sustainable development, regardless of whether its government is authoritarian or democratic.



RELEVANCE TO CHINA'S GOVERNANCE

- **Findings related to governance of local associations:**

1. Most participants recruited in the United States engaged with governance of the three Chinese international student organizations where they held membership.
2. Such engagement revolved around the processes of organization design and organization management.
3. Constitution writing and decision making stood out as two salient practices.
4. Cultural norms of China and those of the United States, particularly those related to leadership transition and meeting protocols, competed to constitute participants as political subject in the governance of each organization.



RELEVANCE TO CHINA'S GOVERNANCE

- **Some theoretical insights:**

1. A distinction can be made between electoral politics and governance politics.
2. This distinction seems to be able to create not just conceptual possibilities, but more importantly, practical possibilities for the Chinese people to effect socio-political changes in China by actively engaging with issues that affected their individual interests as well as public interest.
3. Deliberation appears to be a feasible and effective way for the people to participate in China's governance politics.
4. The Chinese people should be particularly concerned that their voices at the local level are often not heard in the decision-making processes at the global level. This is mainly due to a risk inherent in the current system of global governance that has no global government. That is, the rights and interests of the people of a country could be encroached upon by the decisions made by a few global governing institutions (e.g., the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization), all of which are closely linked to the financial and commercial interests of global capitalism.



Q & A session





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