

Exploring Academic Anxiety Across Cultures: A Mixed-Method Investigation Among Chinese and UK's University Students

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1. Academic anxiety

xxxxx
xxx

1.1 Anxiety

1.2 Academic anxiety

1.3 Theory of academic anxiety

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2. Academic anxiety in university context

xxxxxx
xx

2.1 Impact of academic anxiety

2.2 Factors contributing to

academic anxiety

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3. Comparative perspectives on academic anxiety

xxxx
xxxx

3.1 Academic anxiety in China

3.2 Academic anxiety in UK

3.3 Cross-cultural studies on academic anxiety

3.4 Limitations and research gap

Study aim and positionality

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Study aim:

- To **compare the academic anxiety experiences** between Chinese and Welsh university students
- To understand the **cultural and educational factors** influencing students' experiences of academic anxiety

Positionality:

Growing up in a highly-competitive educational system in China

- Recognition of the critical role of academic achievement
- Personal encounters with academic anxiety
- Professional observations as an educator

Context and rationale

(Campbell et al., 2022;
Ning et al., 2022)

UK China

- **High mental illness prevalence** rate among university students globally
20% to 30%

(Lei et al., 2016; Jenkins et al., 2021)

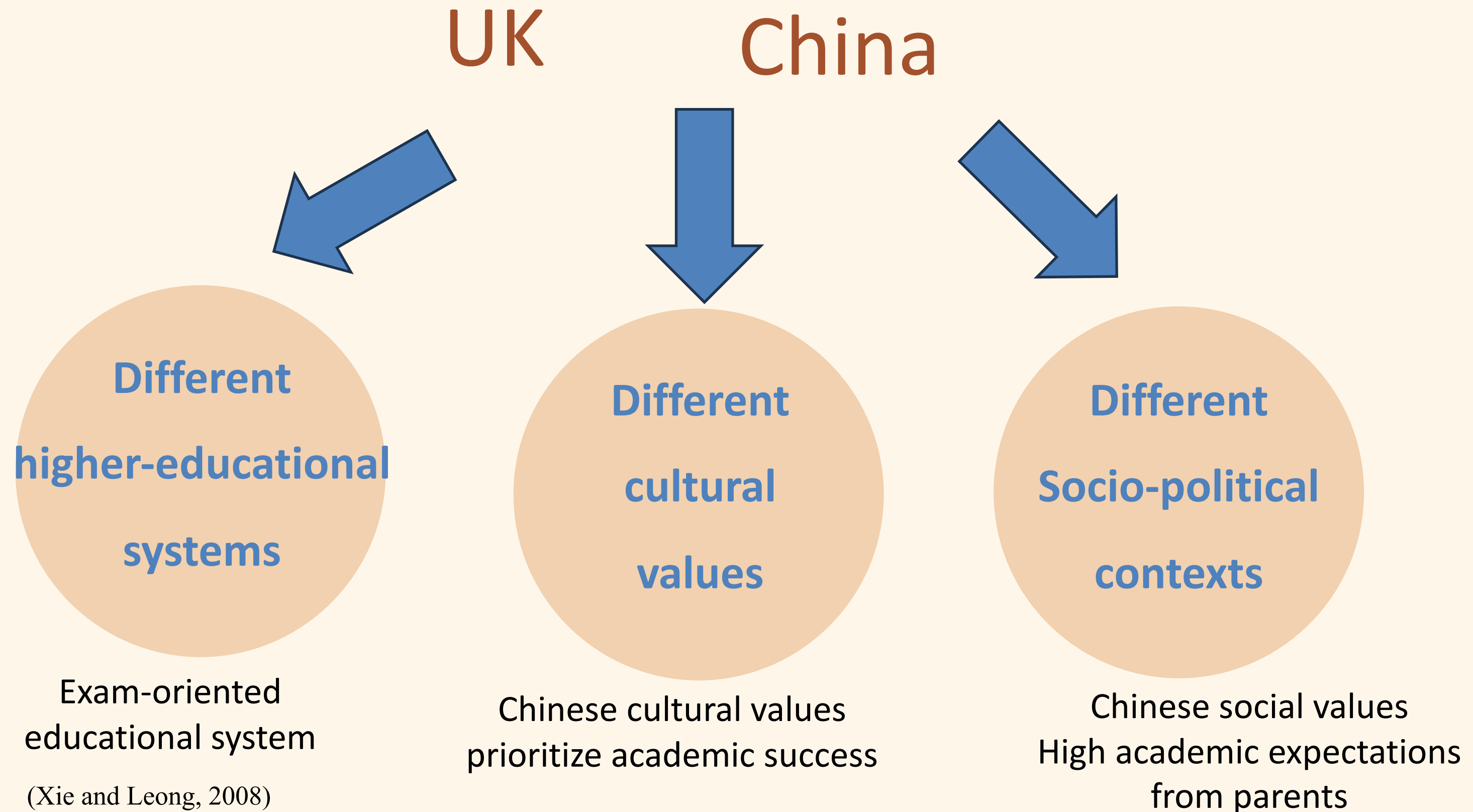
- **A policy focus** on enhancing mental health services in tertiary educational facilities
(MOE, 2018; Worsley, Pennington and Corcoran, 2022)

- Challenges:
 - Healthcare systems and access to services
 - Competitive educational system
 - Less awareness of mental health

(Petruk, 2018; Ning et al., 2022)

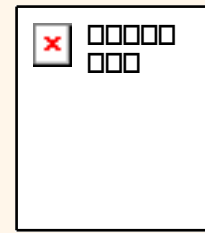


Context and rationale



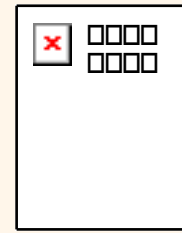
Review Process

How do I Search terms?



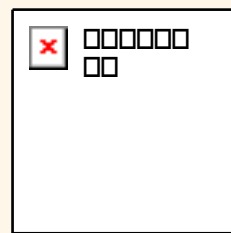
- **Term:** anxiety/ academic anxiety/ study anxiety
- **Target group:** university/ college/ higher education students
- **Methods:** Cross-cultural/ comparative/ mixed-method study

Databases



Google Scholar and UWTSD Library Resources

Review process



- (1) Define objectives-understand theorization of anxiety and relevant studies
- (2) Literature search
- (3) Make notes and organize
- (4) Critical evaluation
- (5) Synthesize knowledge

(Winchester and Salji, 2016)

Critical literature review

My understanding

(Winchester and Salji, 2016)

- (1) Foundation for understanding the **background and development** of knowledge (what is agreeable and disagreeable)
- (2) Identify **gaps** which could be explored further
- (3) Identify relevant and seminal research in this field
- (4) Empirical findings- support or challenge

How I critique?

(Randolph, 2019)

Critical synopsis

- (1) Publication source
- (2) Publication time
- (3) Research method and tools
- (4) Context
- (5) Findings
- (6) Theoretical framework
- (7) Target groups

In-depth analysis

- (1) Agree
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Strengths
- (4) Limitations
- (5) Relevance to my own study
- (6) Relevance to other studies

“What is academic anxiety?”

Historically, the concept of academic anxiety has been theorized in numerous ways and gone through **varying interpretations**. As theorized by Liebert and Morris (1967), academic anxiety incorporates the **emotion of worry, fear, and nervousness** regarding academic tasks and accomplishments within the educational context.

Another perspective associates academic anxiety with **potential threats** influenced by stressors in academic settings (Schniering and Rapee, 2004). In this sense, as noted by Bhunia *et al.* (2014), a broad perception of threats includes specific subjects such as mathematics, language learning, tests, and teacher attitudes. Consequently, as discussed by Zeidner and Mathews (2005), academic anxiety encompasses the **cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions** associated with worries about potential negative outcomes.

“State and trait anxiety”

Therefore, academic anxiety encompasses a variety of related but fundamentally distinct concepts, which can be divided into two major classifications, trait anxiety and state anxiety (Spielberger and Vagg, 1995). State anxiety refers to the variable anxiety levels encountered in the academic setting, whereas trait anxiety denotes the innate differences in individuals' susceptibility to anxiety during assessments (Zeidner, 2007). In this sense, state anxiety varies and fluctuates over time, whereas trait anxiety describes the relatively stable individual difference.

Furthermore, as reviewed by Zeidner (2014), despite the remaining debate about whether academic anxiety is described as a relatively stable personality characteristic or a temporary emotional condition, it is broadly accepted that academic anxiety is conceptualized as a situation-specific trait.

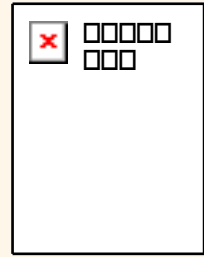
My working definitions

Based on the above discussion, following Zeidner's (2014) theorization, **academic anxiety** in this study is conceptualized as a situation-specific trait that connects to a state of tension experienced with worry within the academic setting. Besides, as a multidimensional construct, academic anxiety is profoundly influenced by the interplay of personal, familial, educational, cultural and social factors.

In this study, **social anxiety** relates to the apprehension experienced in social engagements (Hofmann, Anu Asnaani and Hinton, 2010). Given the research scope, social anxiety is specifically tied to the apprehension experiences in the academic realm and related scenarios, such as public presentations, course discussion, etc. Additionally, differentiated from clinical anxiety, academic anxiety in this study does not refer to the clinical diagnosis of anxiety disorder.

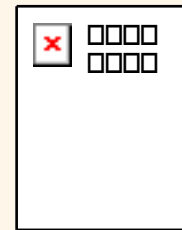
Key themes and ideas

Overall Trend



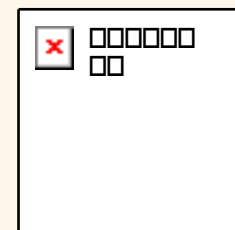
- **Methodology:** most quantitative survey-scale and correlational factors
- **Complexity:** the inclination to include more influences of anxiety
Multiple components: cognitive; affective; behavioral and social component (Zeidner, 2014; Von der Embse *et al.*, 2018)

Academic Influence



- **Inverse relationship:** negatively influence academic achievement and experiences (Shakir, 2014)
- **Alternative view:** moderate academic anxiety may positively motivate students' learning practice (Al Majali, 2020)

Underlying factors



- **Personal:** self-concept; motivation; coping skills; achievement goals
- **Demographic:** gender; culture; academic system; society
(Von der Embse *et al.*, 2018; Bülbül and ODACI, 2023)

Research pieces: a focus on cross-cultural research

Article 1: A Cross-Cultural Study of Anxiety Among
Chinese and Caucasian American University Students
(Xie and Leong, 2008)

Article 2: Cross-National Comparison between
UK and US Higher Education Students in Test Anxiety
(Lowe, 2019)

Article detail

- Cross-cultural investigation of anxiety
- Both use quantitative approach through questionnaire-descriptive statistics
- Both aims at contributing to current educational practice: targeted audience (educational practitioners; parents; and policy makers)

	Article 1	Article 2
Title	A cross-cultural study of anxiety among Chinese and Caucasian American University Students	Cross-National Comparison between UK and US Higher Education Students in Test Anxiety
Research method	Quantitative	Quantitative
Research tools	Questionnaire • State-trait anxiety inventory (Spielberger, 1983) • Social avoidance and Distress (Watson and Friend, 1969)	Questionnaire • Test Anxiety Measure for College Students (TAM-C)
Place	China and US	US and UK
Research object	State, trait, and social anxiety between Chinese and Caucasian American university students	Test anxiety across countries (US and UK) and gender
Respondents	325 mainland Chinese in Beijing 333 Caucasian American sample in Midwest region	1776 undergraduates from the UK 1245 undergraduates from the US
Conclusion	• Chinese students report higher level of social anxiety than did Caucasian American university students • Two groups did not differ on levels of state anxiety. • Social anxiety had a greater effect size.	• Test anxiety varies across country and gender • UK higher education students are more test anxious than US higher education students • Females are more test anxious than males

Critical Analysis

Future implications	Lack of cross-cultural exploration of anxiety Effects on social anxiety Deeper investigation of the underlying cultural influences	Lack of cross-cultural exploration of anxiety Lack of cross-cultural exploration of anxiety among university students
Theory	• Social anxiety is characterized by fear associated with social situations in which one might be viewed or scrutinized by others. • State anxiety • Trait anxiety	• Introduction - high levels of distress; high prevalence -test anxiety contributing to levels of distress -correlate with poorer academic performance Lack of a more comprehensive academic theorization
Publishing time	2008	2019

Critical Evaluation

	Article 1	Article 2
Agree	• A growing number of higher education students are reported to experience increasingly high levels of distress worldwide • A growing concern of academic anxiety in university students • A lack of research on cross-cultural exploration • Test anxiety relates to negative outcomes.	
Strengths	Clear clarifications of state, trait, and social anxiety	large-scale research-representative
Limitations	Lack of in-depth exploration Self-report questionnaire may cause biases or misunderstandings	Lack of in-depth exploration Self-report questionnaire may cause biases or misunderstandings
Relevance to my own study	• The Chinese context and cultural effect - A cultural norm of <u>nonassertiveness</u> may result in negative self-evaluations - Previous research: Chinese tends to more anxious than Americans, but variations exist in different types of anxiety - <u>Collectivistic</u> culture- value more on contextual factors	• How to construct the comparative description of two national contexts - educational system - gender issue in the cross-cultural context

Individual differences

The validity of
underlying reasons

Publishing year-2008

Critical Evaluation

Mixed-method design

(Abbott-Jones, 2019) – mixed method design on academic anxiety and coping among adult dyslexic higher education students

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A deeper analysis of underlying contributing factors to academic anxiety

e.g. How the students perceive their academic competence and academic experiences
How the students perceive their social identity, identity in school, etc.

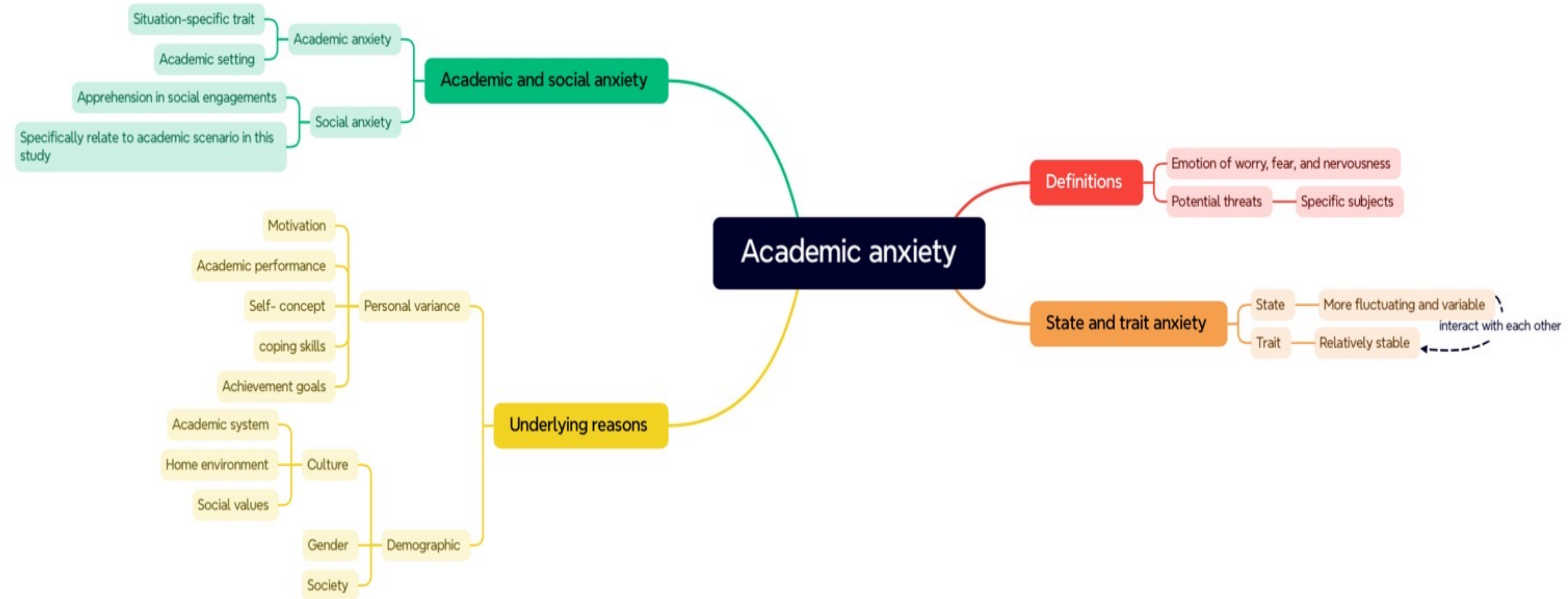
Drawing on other empirical cross-cultural studies

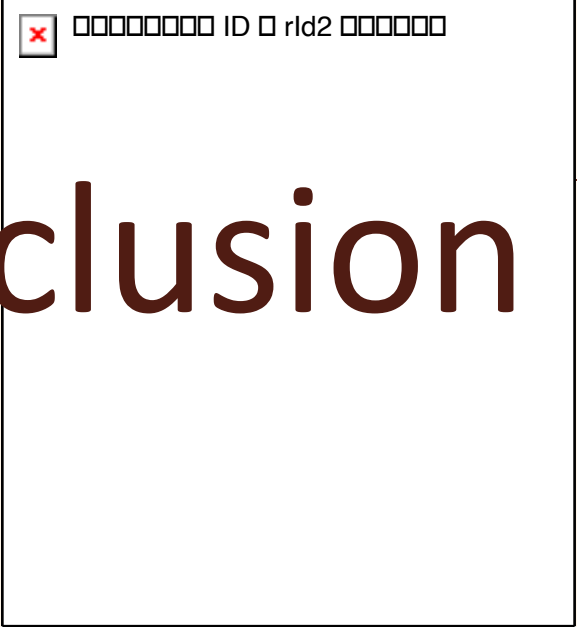
(King and Aono, 2017) cross-cultural mixed-method analysis of anxiety during one-to-one tutorials in Japan and UK

- The study’s quantitative findings revealed there was no significant difference in the length of silence students from both groups could tolerate during tutorials.
- Students from both groups experience situational anxiety-a self report of feeling of discomfort

·Not only differences in cultural context, but also similarities across different cultures
·Specific type of anxiety may generate different findings across cultures

Conclusion





Conclusion

Research gap

- Lack of cross-cultural research
- Lack of mixed-method research
- Less focus on the critical evaluation of anxiety

Research questions

- RQ1: To what extent do university students in Wales and China experience trait academic anxiety?
- RQ2: To what extent do the levels of anxiety differ among university students in Wales and China?
- RQ3: What do university students in Wales and China perceive contributes towards test anxiety?

Research significance

- Contribute to the current research gap
- Contribute to the critical issue
- Implications for educational practitioners, parents, and policy-makers

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Thank you for listening

