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Navigation and Immersion of the American Identity in a Foreign Culture to Emergence as a Culturally Relative Ambassador

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Navigation and Immersion of the American Identity in a Foreign Culture to
Emergence as a Culturally Relative Ambassador

by

Lee H. Rosen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my intrepid student travelers who arrived in cold and dreary northeastern China in early March 2011, admirably made the commitment to teaching excellence, and set the stage for students who have already followed, or will follow, in their footsteps. I am so pleased to have been able to continue a close relationship with ten of them, two years after their return home. I still closely monitor their academic career paths as they continue to extol their life-changing cultural experience to others.

I want to thank my USF thesis committee, Dr. Laurel Graham, Dr. Don Dellow, and especially Dr. Jennifer Friedman. I first met Dr. Friedman in the summer of 2008 when she graciously allowed me to intern in her class. She taught me some unique sociology teaching techniques that I now use almost daily. I came from a structured business environment so when she warned me on the first day that she taught and thought abstractly; I was initially uncomfortable with that teaching style. However, I have since adopted that teaching method almost exclusively while still incorporating my old habits so my students can master sociological concepts and theories. She was a huge help in keeping me fixated on the main topics of this thesis project, knowing that I actually had too much subject information and that I could not do justice to them all. Thanks, Jenny, for keeping me focused and on task!

I also want to thank my wife of 43 years, Ruth, who helped me to prioritize my work load between my full-time teaching position and this project over the past thirty months.

In addition, her advice and organization skills helped me consolidate my thoughts so I could make this paper readable and concise.

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Abstract

Globalization is forcing many American college students to re-evaluate their perspective on foreign travel. If they are offered an opportunity to improve their cultural relativity skill set by immersing themselves into a new culture, the more astute students might choose to embark on that journey especially if it would result in resume enhancement. This paper focuses upon a group of twelve community college students' cross-cultural experiences, navigation techniques, and adaptation methods as student interns teaching conversational English in Changchun, China for a period of nine to thirteen weeks in spring 2011. Several areas of interest emerged from their experiences and observations to allow for pedagogical inquiry: the global divide between Chinese and American cultural and educational initiatives; utilization of social, economic, and cultural capital by some but not all participants; successful teaching methods to deal with different learning styles; and negotiation of identities to become effective teachers and cultural ambassadors. The body of analysis, conclusions, and interpretations sections identifies the successes and failures of the twelve subjects and suggests that there is importance to this ethnographic study for sociology and education scholars. The bottom-line significance becomes apparent as more future college graduates will be seeking work both inside and outside the US in education and business fields. As employers peruse college graduates' resumes for something substantially unique, a candidate who has lived and worked in an emerging foreign country can be a huge advantage for their career aspirations.

Introduction

Students who attend college in rural communities where employment opportunities are waning need to experience diversity and recognize globalization issues as much and possibly more so than students attending more cosmopolitan area colleges and universities. The more they learn about globalization and diversity in schools and industry, the easier it will be for them to embrace the new global work world. “In recent years, there has been both an explosion of opportunities for community colleges to become engaged internationally and an unprecedented recognition that global education is an important component of a quality community college education...to reach out internationally in an effort to strengthen global education programs in order to graduate globally competent students” (Stoessel, 2005. p.1).

Democracy’s Colleges (Boggs, 2010) must make their students aware that their most aggressive competitor will not be their next-door neighbor. New workers will have to “spin on a dime;” that is, deviate from the normal approach concerning how they do their job, consider the possibility of changing careers and take advantage of the opportunities that globalization can open up for them. If they maintain a myopic viewpoint, they will become a drain on the US economy and start a vicious cycle of downward vertical mobility. This social regression can only be broken by reiterating the importance of life-long learning and training in order to keep America’s future workers in the forefront of the global skills game! Dellow and Romano (2006) in their presentation concerning the

community college's role in educating for the future job opportunities ask: "How do we assist our students in developing cultural sensitivity and an understanding of a global economy" (p. 32). Defining the global economy is hard enough; defining globalization, cultural relativity and the community college's role in finding ways to intertwine them make this a difficult endeavor. This introduction to the thesis project is an attempt to link those concepts by using history and a symbolic interactionist's perspective.

Globalization may be considered a national sovereignty and security issue by some politicians. Waters (2001) suggests it is "... a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social, and cultural arrangements" (p. 5) extend far beyond territorial borders. Water's definition of globalization as a "social process" is most endearing to a sociologist yet this ubiquitous term is a modern version of the phrase "economic opportunity" and may have originated in the Marco Polo days of trading for Oriental goods; possibly even earlier when humans traded with the globalized world, which, as far as they knew, went only to the sea or to the nearest mountain. The modern nation-state sovereign borders established in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe began the protectionist policies which enhanced the growth of the world-wide Industrial Revolution but kept production, profits, and tax revenues within those borders for political and social control purposes. Neo-globalization might be a better term to use to explain modernity as bigger middle-class markets for industry are now the priority for business expansionist policies. Sovereign borders are porous and not relative except possibly for security purposes. The opportunity for commerce to grow and succeed dictates political, economic, and education policy in the industrialized core. The growing semi-peripheral countries, striving to become core nations, understand they must create

effective government institutions; the most important objective of these agencies is to enhance prosperity for their citizens.

In its present-day context, globalization is creating a one-world society of complex arrangements involving trading goods and services at an unprecedented pace; a network of opportunities never before imagined by Marco Polo, Karl Marx, or even Henry Ford. Whether early trading was for human resources (slaves) or raw materials for the early Industrial Revolution, most of the goods and services created enormous wealth for core nations and extreme poverty for peripheral countries, many of which were either previously owned colonies or today's neo-colonies.

Countries such as China, India, most of the Middle-East, Africa, and much of South America continue to supply cheap manual labor and inexpensive raw materials to core nations. Many Eastern and Southern Asians, specifically Chinese and Indians, who came to America for employment were considered "unworthy of citizenship;" relegated to not being "white enough" (Jacobson, 1998). Many were sent back to their home country when their back-breaking work was completed, such as the Chinese railroad laborers or in the legal slavery days, Africans, who were kept here and considered property. Present-day Mexican workers could also fall into this category. As a result, citizens of core nations often hold ethnocentric values and have little desire to visit those peripheral countries when they have the opportunity to do so.

Most peripheral countries became independent nation-states in the 1950's and 60's and changed their economic, cultural, legal, and educational institutions with a few becoming political players on the world stage. In particular, China and India with 38% of

the world's population (US Economic Profile, 2010) revised their government institutions, albeit in opposite political directions, for the pursuit of global economic success, development of the middle class, and the attenuation of a large contingent of citizens in abject poverty. The compelling force behind this economic success is enhancement of public education, leading to an enormous increase in wealth and prosperity. China, in particular, has now entered into an advanced stage of development of the education imperative by not only educating the masses to enhance literacy but to also encourage the best and the brightest to learn English, especially conversational English, the language of business. This is the next step to economic prosperity; that is, creating a commercial class of people who can communicate and ultimately compete with core nation business executives (Sloate, 2009; Walker, Bukenya & Thomas, 2010; Pederson, 2002; Fowler, 2005; Yu, 2009).

Since the 1960s there has been an enormous influx of Chinese immigrants coming to live in the United States (US) and eventually applying for citizenship. In 2011, they were the second largest group of immigrants behind Mexicans and have been so for much of the past decade, based upon US visa permits granted (US Department of Homeland Security, 2011). No longer envisioned as “not white enough” by US immigration policies of the past, America and other Western nations began encouraging the importation of educated engineers, scientists, and doctors from China to fulfill unmet industry demand.

The Chinese have become the “model minority” (University of Texas at Austin, 2013) and more college-age Chinese students are coming to the US to study and work than from any other country (States News Service, 2010). This number has been slightly

reversed recently due to the lack of jobs triggered by the US recession and some aggressive promotion from Australian higher education authorities. Many recent US college graduates are now returning to China to fill open positions for many of those same reasons.

The stagnant US economy has also given some Americans college graduates pause to now consider China for gainful employment (Jia, 2012). Understanding Chinese culture therefore takes on increased significance. Job attainment for the student who can travel to, work, and live in China, prior to graduation gives them a distinct advantage in their career path; whether the initial job opening is for an American company wanting to do business in China or for a Chinese company looking for a candidate who can help them create new business opportunities in the US. The ability to foster greater understanding between Chinese and American culture is of paramount importance to career growth.

Unfortunately concerns about Sino-American politics are still prevalent today in the minds of many Westerners. College students who want to take advantage of an opportunity for personal growth must bridge the gap between American ethnocentrism and the relativity of a foreign culture. Teaching conversational English to K-12 students could connect this gap in the bridge. The original twelve student-teacher-interns (STIs) who went to China in 2011, the focus of this analysis, had an opportunity to immerse themselves into Chinese society as both teachers and American cultural ambassadors. This is in sharp contrast to a tourist, a study abroad student, or a co-op student who might be considered more analogous to a temporary visitor. This visitor has no need to learn anything more than what is minimally necessary to get a “quick-read” of their hosts (Franklin, 2003). They may have little interest in immersing themselves in the culture;

there is no need for long term contact or a reason to visit again (Franklin, 2003). The literature review discusses theories on tourism in more detail as it relates to the American casual traveler or temporary visitor's reluctance to negotiate their social and cultural capital in order to understand a foreign society.

The ability to learn about another culture and to navigate through it successfully is the focal point of this study. As Goffman suggests in the presentation of the self in everyday life (symbolic interactionism), one can analyze meanings and observations from a cultural exchange perspective (Schaefer, 2011). I will endeavor to illustrate that this student-teacher-internship is anything but a study abroad program, a traditional co-op program, a tourism trip, or a vagabond work environment. An exchange of social and cultural capital can occur. The STIs taught Chinese children conversational English, inadvertently exposing the students and school staff to American customs. In turn, the Americans learned about Chinese culture while navigating that opportunity to enhance their own personal growth.

For immersion into Chinese culture to have a chance of succeeding, the STIs had to prepare themselves before they left for China to accept and positively simulate the role of the "other." Zygmunt Bauman's theory of the tourist syndrome and the vagabond identity offers the perfect contrast to how a guest worker can present his/her identity negatively (Franklin, 2003). The immersion process allowed the STIs to develop a positive group and individual identity by interacting with the Chinese, utilizing Goffman's impression management techniques (Schaefer, 2011). This thesis describes how the STIs challenged themselves to be successful at navigating the bridge from ethnocentric college students to culturally relative American ambassadors.

Preparation for success: Navigation of our personal identity is a life-long pursuit. The STIs in this case study began their development individually with the desire to experience something new and different. They were open and positive learners. Their actions, inactions, reactions, observations and mediations led to the development of a new self-identity, one that allowed for the formation of a culturally relevant ambassador of the United States.

There is a positive impact upon students who travel and/or work in foreign countries as shown in studies by Chieffo, 2000; Frost, 2008; Marklein, 2008; Walker, Bukenya, and Thomas, 2010; Wang, 2003; and White, 2005. Other studies have shown the impact of positive and negative variables such as physical environment, social structure, personal abilities, personalities, communication, and disposition as influences upon culturally different peoples (Raaiji, 1978). Gudykunst, Hammer and Wiseman (1977) did an analysis of cross-cultural training and found that common ground is necessary to build relationships and successful interactions with culturally different people. A person may not be taught cultural awareness, but it can be learned (Pederson, 2002).

Globally relevant learners must adapt and be open to ideas in order to gain a global perspective on cultural nuances. Findings by Drexler and Campbell (2011) indicated Arthur Chickering's theory on student identity development, before and after studying abroad, surmised that students need to develop a positive travel/learning experience via seven factors: "developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity" (p. 610). The findings section of this thesis paper will discuss the development of some of these seven factors through

preparation, positive and negative results and the actions/ reactions of the STIs in numerous group and individual situations.

Why China? China is currently ranked among the top four international tourist destinations (United Nations World Trade Organization, 2012) and has become the number one exporter and number two importer in the world as of 2011 (World Trade Organization, 2012). China's middle class is estimated to now be larger than the total population of the US (Luhby, 2012). These economic factors amplified that the positive changes to China's "open the closed door" political policy were progressing nicely. China is now considered a semi-peripheral country; soon to be "core." It has eased travel restrictions; there is a new tourism agenda and English proficiency is considered necessary and proper (Weaver and Oppermann, 2000).

American companies have long recognized the requirement for developing cross-cultural training for their workers to integrate successfully into foreign markets. Bennett (1986), Pedersen (2002), Fowler (2005), and Yu (2009) confirmed a need for creating culturally competent students, workers, and managers. China's progressive education agenda includes the need to attract capable American teachers to allow their young students to become more culturally competent future workers.

Conversational English exchange programs have been in effect for decades with both positive and negative results for both teachers and students. Dunn (2011) noted distinct benefits and challenges to teachers of English and Harris and Kuma (2000) confirmed the need for relevant cross-cultural training for students teaching in foreign countries. Kyi (2010) recognized the need for alternative approaches in teaching styles, specifically for

China, and concluded it is necessary to understand techniques and styles of an unfamiliar environment in order to successfully teach English in a foreign country. This thesis reflects on the ostensible disparity between Chinese and American methods of teaching and learning; the former based upon a collectivist culture; the latter, individualistic. These factors alone indicate a necessity for the American teacher to present an individual and group identity to the foreign culture. The process of self and group identity, adaptation, interaction, mediation, and socialization is important in the cultural navigation process.

Literature Review: Zygmunt Bauman (1998) may have the most contemporary viewpoint on the self and the role of the other as it relates to globalization and the world traveler. With globalization comes the mobility of societies resulting in exposure, interactions, and conflict or resolutions in dealing with other cultures. How a group presents itself to another culture takes on greater importance as society becomes increasingly mobile. Bauman interprets this exposure during travels as the tourist syndrome, the presentation of the self as the American identity. The view and impact of the tourist as a consumer; a giver and taker of social and economic capital reflects on and creates a group self or identity. How the other society reacts or retreats from reaction to this identity is important to this study (Bauman, 1998; Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010).

Tourists, as defined by Bauman, "...have a pure relationship to the place they visit...meaning it has no other purpose than the...pleasurable sensation and that once the satisfaction wanes, it wilts and fades...so you move on to another relationship" (Franklin, 2003, p. 208). The tourist syndrome lauds distrustfulness and ignores relationship building with the foreign culture; promoting only temporary encounters with little

exchange of identities. The traveler is decidedly distanced from the culture (Franklin, 2003).

Franklin (2003) posits Bauman's theory that tourism is not "locked into the local life" (p. 207); there is no sharing of daily life. He or she is a spectator, one who rarely has a feeling of intimate cultural exchange. Bauman believes most tourists merely "flit" from one episode or experience to the next; loose, without attachments. Relationships serve no meaningful purpose. They may be pleasurable at the time but create a fleeting attachment for the tourist to the host. There is nothing to bind the tourist to the place of contact, no consequences to actions, and no long-term commitments. The most likely personal characteristic of the tourist is "living moment to moment" (p. 209). The individual can have value as a commodity but has different power than a person staying within a country for a specific time period.

Current sociological theory from Gullekson and Vancouver (2010) and Tan (2007), concentrate on globalization and its effect on individuals and groups. The outcomes of Americans traveling to newly discovered non-European destinations over longer periods of time are important to the navigation of social behavior. When Americans tour or visit other countries they impart a superiority position of authority, rightness, and dominance. Foreigners must adjust to American values and norms. Uncomfortable situations result in active, aggressive behavior, emotional results, compulsiveness, and intolerance. The host then perceives their guest's behavior as an example of superiority posturing (Hofstede, 1986).

Geert Hofstede (1986) stresses the point that the degree to which a culture is made “nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear or unpredictable” (p. 304) indicates how they react to outsiders. Asian cultures with “weak, uncertainty avoidance become contemplative, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, accepting personal risks and relatively tolerant” (p. 317).

Most American travelers are tourists, viewed as consumers purchasing goods and services from local residents, a classic Bauman tourist syndrome assertion. Money and profits from tourist activity may encourage local vendors to present an identity in order to make a sale and may not be presenting the community’s true identity (Franklin, 2003). The visitor and the host have no need for an authentic cultural exchange; merely a negotiation of a price for a commodity or service requested by the tourist and supplied by the host. “One upmanship...is a transfer of assets” (Franklin, 2003, p. 214).

A preponderance of student internship and study abroad programs has continued this type of “tourist” experience with students. The schools and companies administering these programs promote and permit the students to be active in conversations with foreigners; yet, they restrict their students to pre-planned public exposure and programmed interactions so they present themselves in a group identity which can prohibit cultural immersion into a local community (Doome, Ateljevic & Bai, 2003).

Cooley and Mead’s perspectives on self-identity are defined by how people interact with and react to other people. As individuals, we create a “self.” Cooley’s “looking glass” theory promotes understanding of ourselves so we may present an identity to the people we encounter. We present ourselves, follow that mirror image, then we reflect on

how others react to and perceive us, which gives us a sense of “self.” Mead augmented Cooley’s concept of who we are by defining how the “self” develops through interactions with others over a period of time; “...self, emerges as we interact with others...a distinct identity that sets us apart from others...and continues to develop and change throughout our lives” (Schaeffer, 2011, p. 84).

Mead theorizes that “self” is created by imitating people around you, responding to others with understanding, and developing relationships. How the individual identity develops and is created is a result of social interactions and reactions (Schaeffer, 2011). In an attempt to break the mold of the tourist syndrome, a new improved identity could evolve, at least one that would help traveling Americans culturally connect to their hosts and be more aware of their needs. This contemporary identity mirror theory is double-sided and the image is altered ever so slightly given that both sides want to learn about each other’s wants and needs. Navigation of interactions and actions require understanding and accepting cultural differences on both sides of the mirror. It is at this point Bauman’s tourist syndrome theory may no longer be applicable.

In reality, the American tourists’ visit for a short period of time, have limited interactions and have little need to worry about how they are perceived. They do not need to alter their American identity. A lengthy stay requires daily interactions, compels the foreigner to care about what Cooley (1902) states is your “looking glass self;” how they interact and, therefore, restore their presentation of “self” and group identities. Bauman (1998, 2001) hypothesized an expanded version of the tourist syndrome concept, labeled the vagabond identity. Unlike the tourist, the vagabond represents a person who travels to obtain employment or benefits from a particular place and people; they search for work,

money, shelter, food, and necessities. The vagabond is working and traveling in the foreign culture providing economic capital. They may want to stay in one place but may need to move on due to expulsion; they cannot continue to make a living at their present position. Relationships are terminated because their work is no longer wanted nor needed (Franklin, 2003).

Bauman's vagabond may first appear as a tourist; traveling with the attitude "I pay, I demand" (Franklin, 2003, p. 209). But when the foreigner finds a job or begins work, they become a vagabond who desires to remain in a country for economic reasons. The host culture determines the effects of the encounter. For the tourist, the relationship is broken because he/she acquired what was wanted in a temporary amount of time; for the vagabond, the relationship is broken because their presence or work is no longer in demand.

Bauman's vagabond theory could be best explained using Mexican migration to the United States as an illustration. Mexicans seek US jobs which are not available in their own country. Some stay as permanent residents while others work and return to their home country. Vagabonds are loosely tied to the community. Bauman explains this perspective in his 2001 book as the "two hour community" (Franklin, 2003, p. 214). While attending a movie, a person is with others for a designated period of time and experiences the same things. But once the movie is over, everyone leaves to go his/her own way, never coming together again. One spends some time within the community but it is a substitute; there is no effort to relate to "locals." Vagabonds are not always well-received but merely tolerated for the societal benefits obtained through their employment.

There is no sharing or enrichment of relationships, no social or cultural exchange, merely capital exchange (Franklin, 2003).

Chinese government policy makers requests and encourages Americans to travel and be employed as English teachers, possibly considered vagabonds, at least initially. The edict from education leaders is that there is a need for Chinese students to learn conversational English. Unlike Mexican vagabond workers in the United States, however, these teachers are given status, treated with dignity and respect and valued so highly that they are paid as much as three to five times more than native Chinese English teachers earn (China-Tesol, 2013). As an additional comparison, the average auto worker in China earns about one-third of what these imported American teachers receive (Jacob & Waldmeir, 2011). In contrast to Mexicans working in the US, American teachers working in China are not threatened with deportation but welcomed with additional incentives and free apartments.

The obligation to maintain this status in pay and treatment presents itself as an opportunity for American English teachers to be more than tourists and vagabonds. There is an apparent need, a curiosity, to share and enrich their relationships; to teach and learn from one another and to co-exist allowing a window to open for exploring the daily life of the Chinese. It can create a successful two-way capital and social exchange.

By importing teachers from America, China is also opening its door to American culture, treating teachers more like celebrities, or rock stars, than the English speaking teachers “imported” from England, Eastern Europe and Canada. The Chinese students not only learn English from Americans, but learn American customs and culture. As Pierre

Bourdieu theorized, the mixture of two cultures socially creates the need for an exchange of views, values, respect for each other, and a desire to see how one another live; an even exchange of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

James Coleman labeled the concept of social capital, “the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations” (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 10). Bourdieu (1970) outlined social capital as consisting of power and conflicts, relationships that help a person to advance his/her position and interests. Social capital is built on trust relationships. Bourdieu theorized that the means of communication, exchanging norms and values, a collective identity, and empathy, affect the outcome of handling conflicts and nuances of other cultures.

In the exchange of social capital, communication skills are developed and interpreted. The self begins to reflect the social relationships, the roles and characteristics of different identities; involving observation of communications, performance of those characteristics, and using them to respond appropriately. Mead proposed this as the “generalized other;” being able to observe, understand specific roles and social positions, and look at behavior as the “attitudes, viewpoints and expectations” of the society and fashion his/her behavior accordingly to adapt into that environment without problems (Mead, 1934; Schaefer, 2011).

People tend to imitate the people they encounter daily; their behavior, gestures, language and word inflections and all modes of human communication. These forms may vary by society or by the cultural habits of the residents. How these communications are interpreted also fluctuate; what can be appropriate in one culture

may be offensive in another. Status can be raised by imitations and reflected in mimicking of dress, mannerisms, and language (Mead, 1934; Schaefer, 2011).

Mead also suggested cultural differences can be acknowledged and mannerisms and actions can be adapted to become part of the self. Understanding is promoted through observations or impressions and focus on patterns and outcomes of behavior. A person can view the self from the perspective of the other's viewpoint, responding as the person with whom they interact. The ability to reflect sensations of a people enables the individual to understand as well as replicate the behavior of the whole society (Mead, 1934; Schaefer, 2011).

Presentation of the "self" socially through impression management is described in Goffman's 1959 theoretical focus. That is, "we knowingly create an image of the 'self' to present to others; we administer our 'self' and how we promote oneself to others socially creating facades for specific people or groups of people" (Schaeffer, 2011, p. 86, 87). Goffman describes "self" as how our personality evolves socially and how we are able to present that image to others. Some agents of socialization, such as family, religion, and peer groups effect navigating a society and influence the measure of accomplishment. Creating distinct appearances allows for the negotiation of the impressions learned about a foreign culture. The ability to respond with actions and behaviors conditioned to the environment, to maintain a proper image of the self, produces a new personality that evolves through the socialization process (Schaefer, 2011). The new identity has a new value to the host culture, a social asset (Bourdieu, 1985; Throsby, 1999). The idea of social capital, as it relates in terms of status, is not essentially given to tourists or vagabonds. Providing an asset valuable to the host country, one that can't be obtained

via their own people, raises the status and worth of the visitor/worker. China can find Chinese people to teach English but not conversational English with all the American identity nuances.

Macbeth, Carson, and Northcote (2004) relate to the tourist syndrome as lacking a positive link to social capital. Their findings indicate tourists are basically ignorant of the foreign environment and focused on local historical sites rather than considering “people.” Tourists are diverse in race, age, gender and nationalities; however the commonalities of a situation can intertwine them into a temporary “super-ethnicity” (Hitchcock, 1999, p. 29). The presentation of the American identity of superiority is projected. Stereotyping of the host culture as a homogenous group is expected behavior and the host culture in turn will react with similar stereotypical assumptions. Many Chinese people perceive Americans as untraditional, outspoken, always intervening, exuding American superiority (Hitchcock, 1999). Doome, Ateljevic, and Bai (2003) determined the American superior attitude of interns, if not given up, results in discomfort or confusion when the individual is forced to adapt to behavior that is different from his/her own. Re-evaluation of the self-identity permits the individual to become acclimated to the local culture and enables them to create relationships rather than uncomfortable encounters. Finding a common ground by negotiating differences can create cultural immersion through identification, empathy, and understanding for all participants (Doome et al., 2003).

Cultural relativism will most likely not be attained without acknowledgement of historical events which permeate present-day life and work value systems. In this case study, to understand the methods, actions, and reactions of the STIs in navigating their

work and social environments, it is necessary to briefly summarize Chinese culture pertaining to three areas: historical China as a closed society, the effect of Confucianism and Communism (collectivism) on the mores of Chinese society, and teaching methods implemented in the Chinese education system. The above topics were part of the general class structure as noted in appendix A (syllabus of ISS2930-01).

China's leaders, for thousands of years, maintained a closed society. Their cultural wariness of outsiders still influences public political, economic and education policy today. Exposure to outsiders was almost non-existent, with the exception of the "silk road" where trading of goods provided limited contact. Centuries of ruling class dynasties created the emergence of an ethnocentrically perceived pure and superior class, the Han, which permeates Chinese society even today. Hofstede (1980) found that inequality exists in every society; the collective society assumes status is determined at birth and is "tightly integrated" (p. 136). The non-Han typically have darker skin and are considered the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. Public treatment of non-Han in school, work, and local politics is reflected in prejudicial actions, similar to the injustices in US society against African-Americans particularly up until the late 1960's. Culturally, the Han race is considered supreme, a national identity that promotes pride and self-identification; one that excludes the non-Han (Leibold, 2010).

The early politicians were religious icons and the quest for learning identifies easily with China's religious philosophy of Confucianism. Confucianism is not considered a formal religion by many theologians; however it is believed to be an ethical system of living. It can possibly be compared to Weberian and Judeo-Christian teachings, especially the purported "Protestant work ethic" of early American settlers.

Since ancient times, these Mandarin scholars were the most powerful rulers and education was regarded as a moral duty (Sweeney, 2010). Other than defending themselves from foreign invasion, the Chinese remained a secretive and inclusive society. Chairman Mao, during the 1950's, 60's, and into the early 70's understood the value of educating the masses in order to compete in an increasingly globalized world. However, his strict Communist agenda created a communal/collectivist policy so that Chinese society, including the educated elite class, remained "closed." It was not until the late 1980's that political institutional leaders in China allowed personal advancement of the educated middle class to move their country into economic prosperity. Their best and brightest now compete with the industrialized West's elite. This development came with a social and cultural risk. That is, the more robust economic and education initiatives, including the quest to learn English, opened up their culture to foreign analysis and scrutiny.

Confucianism as an ethical system has survived for centuries with emphasis on the philosophy that "the future will be better" (Harrison, 2005, p. 2). The Chinese have been taught to appreciate harmony and order throughout so many politically violent and socially disruptive times. China has been in a habitual state of anomie for over 5000 years! One possible reason for their survival as a society is that approximately 200 years after his death in 479 BC, the Han dynasty decided that Confucius' teachings would become State orthodox, an edict that lasted until 1911. Many of the original teachings of Confucianism exist today in Chinese culture. Beliefs include harmony, loyalty, and respect for authority, meritocracy, literacy, and scholarship (Marshall, 1998).

According to Alexis de Tocqueville (1994) different religions can either promote economic development or hinder it. Without a religious and ethical system, poverty and lack of trust ensues (Harrison, 2005). It produces an attitude of reluctance to learn or to allow progress. In an editorial for *Planeta* in 1999, Mariano Grondona related his economic and ethical theory, specifically proposing that there is a “typology of cultural characteristics” (Harrison, 2005, p. 1); illustrating that contrasting cultures can be favorable to economic development even though their value systems differ.

Confucianism as it relates to the sociology of education guides many Chinese people who go about their daily lives to include the importance of scholarship and knowledge. As mentioned, this may complement more than compete with Weber’s American Protestant Ethic. Education in Chinese society is encouraged, required for everyone beginning at a young age (Ministry of Education, 2013). Learning is the means to the highest spiritual achievement possible to gain respect and status. In today’s China, to achieve a good life, a middle-class mantra of working hard and saving for the future is of economic value. Educational achievement will produce the good life and bestow upon a person a higher social status. The society that produces the most educated and best qualified workers will be the one that progresses the fastest and performs the best (Harrison, 2005).

Confucianism and Western values purportedly produce the drive for individual achievement resulting in personal as well as national economic progress; a common goal between Eastern and Western policies. David Brooks (2013) suggests in his column in the *Tampa Bay Times* “...cultures that do fuse the academic and the moral, like Confucianism or Jewish Torah study, produce...awesome motivation explosions” (p. 3P).

To economically dominate or to at least be an economic hegemon, the Chinese must be able to communicate with the core countries; subsequently resulting in the need to have conversational English lessons available to their students. This is where economic and cultural capital intersects. Hoon Park, 1993, concluded “as the value of a country’s cultural capital increases, so does the strength or power of the owners of that cultural capital” (p. 23). The American English teacher is a valued commodity traded from the US to China, the latter gladly accepting America’s cultural capital, exchanging it for Chinese economic capital. It might be a publically tacit goal of China’s educational prerogative yet the exchange somehow comes to fruition. The Chinese government’s willingness to allow exposure of their culture in exchange for cultural and economic capital from the US teachers is most likely perceived as a win two, lose one, advantage.

Learning English is mandatory in the current Chinese education curriculum yet there is a disparity in using the language clearly for international business communications. China needs US teachers to demonstrate fluency and to correct verbiage (Liu, 2010). The government permits the temporary immigration of American English teachers in order to train Chinese students to speak the “language of business.” Even though there are many Native Chinese English Teachers who can teach English, they are not Americans exuding US culture through their American English speaking proficiency. However, American teaching methods may create conflict with their Chinese counterparts’ teaching methods.

The methods of teaching English in China are contrary to US teaching methods. Chinese students begin to learn English at the onset of their formal education using “rote memorization, grammar rules, sentence construction” (Liu, 2010, p. 90) and then progress into the shades of meaning. They learn first to read, write, and speak English,

then advance on to comprehension. The native Chinese English teacher prefers to present detailed and precise information using vocabulary, grammar rules, and memorization rather than using the American method of placing value on listening, responding and speaking skills (Liu, 2010).

Another difference between American and Chinese pedagogical customs is found in teacher status. Findings by Nguyen, Terlouw, and Pilota (2006) determined the Chinese image of the teacher is an important contrast to how students and the public view US teacher status. This may offer some insight as to why American classroom decorum, and in turn, learning has deteriorated over the past two decades. The Chinese teacher is portrayed as a well-learned instructor. They give lectures and lessons and clarify problems; they are assumed to have more knowledge than students and parents and uphold power positions.

Another differentiation from American education involves the Chinese students' demeanor in the classroom. Overall they are passive, listen attentively, take notes rather than being actively responsive and give input directly to the teacher (Holliday, 1994). They do not question the teacher for fear of making the teacher "lose face" (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). The students are hesitant to respond. They prefer routine and independent study (Simpson, 2008). Findings by Tan (2007) showed Chinese students may be silent and not interested in getting involved in discussions or group work. Responses given will be as a group; in chorus rather than individually. This group "security" could be a direct result of their communal culture. In contrast to Chinese students, American students tend to react creatively and be more spontaneous in their reactions and actions (Liu, 2010).

The body of analysis of this thesis will explore these differences as a dynamic of the internship experience of the STIs.

Globalization has rendered the world a smaller place; travel is possible to virtually anywhere in the world. Economic exchanges with emerging nations have changed locations of production, manufacturing, and consumption of goods and services. The movement of jobs into the international schema has triggered the fraternization of different people and cultures. How people react and interact is important; initiating situations that develop negative and positive results. The means and methods used to prepare for those moments of interaction may determine the success or failure of individuals and businesses globally. The navigation of the twelve American student-teacher-interns as they lived and worked in Chinese society provides some insight and knowledge to the adaptation/non-adaptation process. The following sections of this paper will discuss the transitioning of most of the STIs from tourists to vagabonds to valued educators resulting in culturally relevant American ambassadors.

Data

Data was accumulated and gathered by the author of this paper, Lee H. Rosen, at the College of Central Florida (adjunct instructor at the time of the trip; currently associate professor). The experiences of the STIs during their stay in China in 2011 were evaluated and subsequently verified by the author's visit to China in spring 2012. Field research allowed for personal accounts to be considered more reliable than traditional classroom student-teacher responses (Burgess, 1982); the result of the development of personal, yet professional, associations between the author and the participants. Some STIs took up to five different courses with the author prior to taking the Chinese culture course (see syllabus, appendix A); all had taken at least one prior course. It is assumed this close-knit bond enabled the STIs to be open and honest as they related personal, group problems, concerns and joys. The ethnic and racial diversity schema of this group is noted in appendix B. Some bias may be assumed due to ethnicity, age, gender or personal identities; discernment was utilized as necessary.

Data resources and data collection: Data collected included: one-on-one pre- and post-trip interviews, pre-trip and post-trip written surveys, consent forms, course required research papers, lesson plans, journals of internship experiences and two DVD group sessions tapes. Lee H. Rosen acted as coordinator, advisor and proctor administering and recalling the above data. Data collected and analyzed considered individual responses and behaviors that may have influenced the results. Data from pre-trip preparation and

education consisted of enrollment in a three credit course designed and taught by Lee H. Rosen for the College of Central Florida (Chinese Culture, ISS 2930-01, see appendix A) and another three credit course designed and taught by this author, post-trip (Chinese Education, ISS 2930-95, see appendix C). All evaluations and grading were completed by Lee H. Rosen as requirement for the courses.

Pre-trip Survey: Lee H. Rosen administered the global knowledge survey (see appendix D). This survey centered on STI perceptions of China and purported Chinese perceptions of Americans. The surveys were approved by CF administration and the University of South Florida (USF) IRB department. Interpretations and results were accumulated by the author and divided into subject categories. Quantitative information and interpretations were extrapolated to a larger population of student responses from both CF and USF but not considered relative to the thesis findings.

Post-trip Survey: This survey was a series of six open-ended questions (see appendix E). Much of the subject matter was discussed in more detail in personal conversations and the DVD tapes to allow the author to clarify their teaching and living experience for more in depth analysis.

DVD interviews: Sessions recorded the experiences of nine of the twelve STIs on two DVDs recorded by a CF technician (IT) in a room provided by the College (CF). Questions were designed by Lee H. Rosen, with input from Dr. Jennifer Friedman (USF) on the subjects' thoughts, experiences, perceptions, interactions and actions in China. Copies of these DVDs are available from the author by written request (rosenl@cf.edu).

Individual student research: Papers focused on individual interest in China based on a list of topics devised by the author. These written and oral presentations were used as part of grade evaluations for the introductory Chinese culture course (ISS2930-01) taught by Lee H. Rosen as well as for this study (see the list of topics in appendix F). Journals were maintained over the time period in China by some participants and shared with Lee H. Rosen for evaluation. Lesson plans produced for the Chinese education system were also perused and utilized. Most of the detailed lesson plans were done by one student, Yvonne, for the training school curriculum and not for the government schools. Some schools required the STIs to prepare a short lesson outline, such as what letters, numbers or songs to teach that day, depending upon the age level of the Chinese student, what the Chinese English teacher was teaching that day, and the school curriculum.

School placement: Each STI was required to teach conversational English at an assigned Chinese school. The number of classes taught per day varied. Requirements were to speak only English and to follow each Chinese school's basic lesson plans. As is the case in American schools, many decisions on how to run the daily functions of the school were up to the individual school administrators. Differences in school facilities and student population provided unique and contrasting experiences for the STIs as noted in the two, post-trip, taped DVD group interviews. STIs were paid by the host supervisor for their services; housing was provided but meals/provisions and transportation was the STIs responsibility. Evaluations and perceptions of these experiences were gathered via the DVDs, journals, lesson plans and phone communications. STIs were housed together, sharing a large co-ed apartment provided by the Chinese education supervisor in Changchun. Structure and supervision of the social and living experiences were left up to

each individual student. Phone and Skype communications with Lee H. Rosen, were used to evaluate student progress, questions, problems, and concerns.

Research context: Information gathered throughout this study focused on the participants' successful and unsuccessful navigation of Chinese culture. Observations, reactions and experiences of the STIs were enabled by:

- (1) Living within the same community where they worked
- (2) Teaching the Chinese students up to twenty-five hours per week
- (3) Visiting historical and/or cultural sites as a group
- (4) Socializing with residents at local venues (clubs, restaurants)
- (5) Using public transportation
- (6) Developing lesson plans or pre-planning daily lessons
- (7) Providing English teaching experiences
- (8) Planning with Chinese teachers and aides
- (9) Adapting to a foreign culture
- (10) Reproducing experiences verbally and written during their sojourn and upon return to the United States.

Methods

Program origin: Lee H. Rosen first traveled to China during the summer in 2005 with his youngest son as a college graduation trip. At that time, the business of training American teachers to teach conversational English in China was merely a cottage industry. Lee H. Rosen's future teaching duties and prior Asian business experience amplified his interest in developing an innovative undergraduate student internship program. Since most English teachers in China are college graduates with education degrees in high demand, he began the recruitment process with second year students at the College of Central Florida (formally CFCC) in Ocala, to help fill that need. Information on the college (CF) is available at www.CF.edu.

Program setup: Allestra Recruiting, an education entity that had a few years' experience sending college graduates overseas to teach, was the facilitator of the trip. This author had prior contact with Xandria Hendricks, the owner of the agency, in 2009, while considering teaching under a one year contract at Tianshi College in Tianjin. He encouraged the agency owner to develop a twelve-to-sixteen week undergraduate student-teacher internship program in Changchun, China to begin March, 2011. Sophomore students at CF were invited to interview, through the author's position as advisor to the patriot politics club, a CF student club started in 2007 by the author. Final selection of candidates was presented to Xandria Hendricks, from Allestra Recruiting, who conducted her own interviews on campus. The final twelve participants were

presented to the Chinese education recruiter located in Changchun via email correspondence.

Location of study: Changchun is in Jilin Province, northeastern China, about half the distance between Russia's Siberian eastern border and North Korea's northern border (refer to map-appendix G). The city has over two million people. However, there are over four million additional residents in the metropolitan area surrounding the city limits. By Chinese standards, it is considered to be a second or third-tiered rural city-community; in contrast to a large, urban cosmopolitan metropolis such as Beijing or Shanghai. Foreign visitors are rare and very few residents speak English, including the educated business class. Most English speakers are the Native Chinese English teachers in the schools, many of whom prefer speaking Mandarin except when teaching, or local university students who enjoy conversing with Americans to increase their proficiency in English as they rarely have the opportunity to do so with their own family and community.

Many people of Changchun are employed within the city limits in small businesses with their apartments located above or adjacent to these establishments. Local transportation is provided by city buses, cabs and bicycles but walking is the customary mode of transportation. Driving is becoming more common but only upper-middle class business owners and professionals have access to automobiles due to the costs involved and the availability of gas stations within the core city area. Having to walk a mile or so to a destination is a common occurrence. There are many family-run restaurants, street vendors and convenience stores as well as US franchises including McDonalds, KFC, and Pizza Hut restaurants, and large Wal-Marts, all catering to local needs.

Final Participants: The final participants consisted of eleven undergraduate students of the College of Central Florida and one 31 year-old college graduate. Participants varied by age, gender, race and ethnicity (see appendix B). There were seven males and five females: two US born males with Puerto Rican ancestry, one female born in Spain, three African-Americans (one US born male, one US born female, and one female born in Jamaica) and six US born Caucasians.

Ten participants remained for nine weeks which included a week of travel around China visiting tourist spots (The Great Wall, Beijing and Xian). One student extended her stay for thirteen weeks, one returned to the US after four weeks due to a family emergency. All eleven CF students were enrolled in at least one of the author's courses; many also took multiple classes over the previous semesters. Two students chose to return to China to teach full-time on a full year contract in 2011-12. Three new students joined them in May 2012.

Pre-trip preparation: Pre-trip preparation and education consisted of enrollment in a three credit course designed and taught by this author for the College of Central Florida (see syllabus re: Chinese Culture, ISS2930-01, appendix A). All eleven of the registered CF students took this three-credit course on an eight week accelerated schedule. Dr. Min Lu, a Chinese-born CF professor (college educated in the US), provided direct knowledge of Chinese culture and education nuances and gave basic Mandarin language lessons for an hour each week.

There were nine other students in this class who also took the Chinese culture course, in addition to the eleven STIs, since it was offered as an elective for all enrolled students.

The focal point of this course was to prepare students for social and professional engagement in China by lecturing and discussing Chinese history, language barriers, social structure and political environment. Historical course content was split into a chronicle of the Chinese dynasties and conquests. Written reports were distributed and then shared with all students for their perusal and discussion after oral presentations were made.

Modern Chinese social and political culture lectures covered controversial current affairs including forced abortions, school safety, civil rights, Communist doctrine and a host of other social and cultural issues. True scholarly research was emphasized; in contrast to what the students might have previously been exposed to pertaining to China, including unsubstantiated rumors obtained from blogs and other non-empirical sources, such as media/peers/family. A pre-trip global survey approved by CF and USF/IRB (appendix D) was given at the beginning of the course to provide information concerning the students' perceptions of globalization and their knowledge of China and the Chinese people. The final grade was based upon individual subject presentations and knowledge of other students' presentations in a final essay exam.

Data provided from post-trip requirements: Another course designed and taught by this author, specifically open only to the STIs, upon their return, was Chinese Education #ISS2930-95 (appendix C). Course requirements included (1) keeping a personal journal for use during their stay in China (2) fulfillment of their teaching obligations at their Chinese school(s) (3) lesson plans or outlines (4) an essay on personal and group experience in cultural activities (5) participation in a post-travel global survey (appendix E) (6) one-on-one interviews and (7) two group DVD sessions.

Note: In actuality, only two of the STIs formally signed up for course credit upon their return from China. The course was planned for the summer and most of the STIs decided they did not need the credit. However, seven others chose to participate without course credit in the DVD tapings and some provided lesson plans, journals and agreed to individual interviews. All of these nine STIs wanted to inform others about how this internship made a difference in their new global cultural perspective, as noted in the body of analysis section. One of the STIs, Adam, lived outside the local area and could not attend the sessions but communicated with the author through phone and email correspondence. Two STIs chose not to participate at all in post-trip discussions.

Supervision: Xandria Hendricks of Allestra Recruiting acted as a pre-trip liaison by arranging airline flights, Chinese visas, living quarters and communications with the Chinese education agency. The Chinese education agency was licensed to bring English teachers to Jilin Province (Changchun). When the STIs arrived in Changchun, the head of the agency personally interviewed and selected them for job assignments at individual schools and was responsible for living arrangements. Ms. Hendricks preceded the STIs arrival in China by two days to insure proper procedures were in place. Each individual school was in charge of supervising and advising the STIs as to school rules, expectations, and functions. An Allestra teacher who was already teaching in China was available but had little or no effective involvement or influence.

The author was the student supervisor and liaison in the United States. Communications were done via email, telephone and Skype calls on a regular schedule. He was available 24/7 to take impromptu calls when questions or problems arose.

School placements: Students ranged from two-years old to college age. Most teaching assignments were in government schools. Skill level of the student-teacher-interns was reviewed by individual school principals so they could choose the candidate best suited to meet their students' needs and abilities. The STIs had formal and informal playtime with the Chinese students while they were being evaluated. Job assignments, re-assignments and pay were coordinated by the Chinese education agency.

Some STIs were placed in low socio-economic government schools with large classrooms of 35-40 children. Many of these classrooms required multiple aides due to the number of students and intensity of unruly behavior. Some schools required parents to pay extra for the conversational English classes for their children or they were removed from that class until the lesson was finished. Some STIs were placed in high socio-economic government schools, sometimes labeled and promoted as "Number One School." These schools had smaller classes of 18-20 students and were generally located in communities where the population consisted of a large contingency of business leaders and government bureaucrats whose sons and daughters attended those schools. Each school was locally managed with a considerable amount of leeway, depending upon education administration policy directives.

One STI, Yvonne, was eventually moved and assigned to a private school, called a training school, which held classes mostly from Friday through Sunday. This school was for students of upper-income families who wanted their sons and daughters to have a more focused education and a better command of English. Yvonne taught basic English grammar as well as conversational English. Her classrooms had modern and extensive educational equipment and supplies.

Tutoring: Tutoring sessions were tacitly permitted outside the work environment; arranged on an individual basis by the STIs. Any payment for those services was negotiated by the STIs and done on their own free time.

Routine: Scheduling required the STIs to be at the school for up to twenty-five hours per week, not including break or travel time, although the average teaching time was probably closer to twenty hours based on cancelled classes and school holidays. Some schools required written lesson plans, others did not. All schools provided a daily curriculum usually distributed by the education agency to the STIs before they left their apartment in the morning. However, the STIs were allowed to create and improvise using their own style of teaching and interacting skills. Rote learning was encouraged by the Chinese teachers and school supervisors as the preferred method of teaching so continuous repetition of songs and phrases were the norm.

Aides: Some STIs were always provided with an aide, others had a supervising Chinese teacher in the classroom or nearby, and many were left alone in the classroom to fend for themselves. Aides and teachers had very limited English speaking proficiency; they were in the classroom when the STIs were teaching typically only to control student behavior. Most of the school staff spoke no English at all.

Living environment: The Americans were housed in the local community sharing a communal-type living area; sleeping arrangements were separated by gender, two or three to a room. They were responsible for their own transportation to and from the schools; those who traveled longer distances were reimbursed at the end of the month by the agent. However, for about 15 cents (US), public buses were available to travel from

one side of the city to another; taxis were also relatively inexpensive. Most STIs used local buses or walked to get to their destinations. They were responsible for buying and preparing their own food purchased from area grocers or they went out to local restaurants. Maintenance of the apartment was also required. These experiences provided extended exposure to each other and daily interactions with the local community.

Social activities: All evening and weekend social events and cultural activities were chosen by the individual STIs. Some chose to rarely go out at all; most chose to go out on a daily basis. They usually traveled in groups of three to five when leaving for shopping trips or for dinner. All tourist sites were visited as a group at the end of their work period just prior to coming back to the US; all pre-arranged by Lee Rosen. The STIs used the Chinese train system for that trip to Beijing and Xian.

Data analysis: This paper employed qualitative, participatory and interpretive analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Denzin, 1970, 2003). Information obtained through course requirements prior to the trip was reviewed, graded and analyzed by the course professor and author. DVD sessions, interviews, research papers, emails, notes, surveys, and lesson plans were reviewed, transcribed, separated, and split into specified categories that emerged from deduction and interpretation. Common themes and conclusions which resulted in cross-cultural immersion were emphasized.

Interpretive analysis allows the author to be actively involved in the research as both an observer and participant (Denzin, 1970, 2003); ergo, the author was not un-biased. Burgess' (1982) description of field research is applicable: "researchers have to understand their own actions and activities as well as those of the people they are

studying” (p. 1). The author had various sources of direct and indirect contact with the participants, schools, and Chinese supervisors; an awareness of activities and situations that influenced the actions/reactions of the STIs.

Body of analysis I: Sociological immersion and navigation of Chinese culture

There are numerous opportunities for American students to travel overseas and study throughout parts of South America, Europe, Australia, and Japan. Many of these travel/study abroad programs include trips that relegate students to tourist status, seeking out the most popular sites, staying at Western hotels and dormitories; safe within the confines of a democratic host government in core countries with stable political and social institutions (Fischer, 2011). China's new open door policy may encourage those American students to consider China as a viable location for study, work and travel versus the more popular traditional destinations. Participation in this any new venue will require the US student to learn additional cultural skills and attitudes; stepping out of their "comfort zone" may be considered essential in order to participate in these emerging opportunities.

Cultural diversity is vital to a travel/study program (Rhodes, 2008). Studies by Chieffo (2000), Walker, Bukenya and Thomas (2010) concur; students participate in overseas programs for financial, social, academic, personal, and institutional reasons. Exposure to other countries, its people and culture will make an impact and as a result "perceptions are changed, thoughts challenged and students obtain a worldly perspective" (Walker, et al., p. 6). How to achieve cultural immersion centers on presentation of the American identity and navigation into another culture. Mayda and Rodrik (2005) pointed out

interactions and reactions can involve identity, values, and attachment exchanges. The navigation of the STI identity to their working and living arrangements in China enabled cultural relevance to emerge throughout the learning process.

China represented a unique opportunity for the STIs. Beyond providing resume enhancement and course credit, these US college students experienced much more than visitors (tourists), migrant workers (vagabonds), or even traditional co-op or internship students would have been exposed to. They were temporary residents with a unique status. The Chinese government invited them for a specific purpose; to live and work in China as student teachers and to enhance young Chinese students' knowledge of conversational English. They were more than co-op students seeking a brief exposure to another culture; more than short-term internship workers. In addition, they needed to move beyond tourists and vagabonds, to become valued workers and part of the local community. It was this requirement, adjusting their personalities and talent, which made it imperative to immerse themselves into Chinese culture for their success.

For a productive and organized review of cultural analysis in this ethnographic study, I have separated the discussion into sections: (1) Pre-trip preparation and perceptions of China; academic rigor versus media/peer influence (2) navigating "self" into Chinese society (3) presentation of the American identity and (4) cultural and social capital exchange methodology.

Pre-trip preparation and perceptions of China: Prior to the trip, the STIs knowledge of China was obtained predominantly through popular media, film, news, social networks including blogs, family and peer groups. Popular media and peer groups have emerged as

possibly the most influential agents of socialization of young college students over the past few years. This personal observation, although certainly not empirically tested, is based upon classroom observations and discussions over the past seven years. These formats of information can be contaminated and there is little or no pragmatic evidence offered from these sources. In the words of one STI, Michael, after they returned from China:

I had some ideas about Chinese education from my uncle and aunt who were missionaries there. But it is one thing for someone to tell you about it, but another all together to experience something like teaching English in China.

In preparation for the trip, the STIs participated in a Chinese culture class (ISS2930-01) at CF (see syllabus-appendix A). Topics covered included the history of China, current issues in the news, and cultural differences. Four of the comments below are reflective of the group perceptions of the Chinese summarized in an initial survey (appendix D) as they began the course:

Dustin: smart, cheap, imperialistic, communist, judgmental, aggressive, technological, advanced, high IQ, pushy, respectful

Jessica: smart, passive, studious, achievers

Yvonne: discriminate, hegemonic, pushy, achievers, prejudice, national pride, ethnocentric

Alexis: exclusionary, cunning.

Although each intern had his/her own reason for going to China, most previewed the trip as a learning experience and/or job opportunity exploration.

John: I wanted to experience the culture and people and wanted to try teaching.

Michael: ...I had never traveled before and wanted to have the cultural opportunity; I have always been interested in China.

Benny: I think it is important. I am a political science major and always had an interest in China.

Yvonne: I wanted to live in the culture for a month or two...it makes you appreciate what you have here.

Dustin: I just wanted to see something new.

Ferris: I wanted something different...I have traveled all over the US but not out of the country.

Alexis: ...always wanted to teach and had traveled in Europe.

Pre-trip class discussions outlined the benefits and the challenges of working abroad. The STIs would be getting a contracted salary but might need to negotiate their work environment if it was deemed inconsistent with their teaching styles. They were also advised that the reality of their living conditions may not be “as advertised,” and that they would most likely have to manage that issue as well. They were told about purported norms and values of the Chinese people. However, it was not until they arrived in China did they realize the scope of having to navigate their life skills to deal with the cultural differences of their living and teaching hosts, individually and collectively.

How the STIs navigated their “self”: The STIs may have been comfortable with whom they were as Americans, yet most realized immediately upon arrival that there would be a need to acquire new skill sets in dealing with their Chinese sponsors. The initial navigational process included negotiations with the host sponsor concerning food and living facilities. Not all the STIs were willing to negotiate. Pre- conceived notions had to be adjusted and new perspectives were deemed necessary for adaptation in order to resolve daily living issues through mediation, in conjunction with their American persona.

It is normal for tourists, students and other travelers to feel uncomfortable in a foreign environment. The STIs in this study were no different. Upon arrival, late on the first evening, the males were taken to an apartment of moldy walls that they refused to sleep in, even for one night. The Chinese host supervisor subsequently moved the males in with the female STIs to their spacious but communal-type apartment. There was a common living area, which also doubled as a meeting room for the teachers who lived elsewhere, and four separate bedrooms. Furniture was poorly constructed and beds were mattresses on the floor; nothing like the type of living conditions or accommodations the students were accustomed to in the United States.

The STIs initial reactions took on a guise of American superiority. They reacted as typical tourists demanding the living quarters be changed or updated according to their wishes. However, utilizing positive negotiating skills in combination with the power of their newly achieved status enabled them to obtain positive changes in their living accommodations. Further empowering their negotiation strategy was their value as US English teachers. The STIs negotiated improved living conditions that aligned more with their American expectations and at the same time, endeavored to not offend the host sponsor. They asserted their sense of what it means to be an American in order to get what they wanted, yet they also adjusted to the new living environment after a two week period of modifying their unrealistic expectations of what amenities was the “norm” in China.

Dustin: My initial reaction, the house (the living quarters they were originally assigned on the first night) was disgusting entirely moldy walls that were black mold but once we moved to the house with the girls it was nice...the toilets were bad, not working, guess they (Chinese) are ok with that, but I'm not; they had to accommodate us differently.

Yvonne: The lady, Julia (Chinese host supervisor), she wasn't aware that mold is an issue. Well it was; in America we don't sleep in mold or live in it, I found it very strange that they thought it was ok, that it wasn't an issue.

Taitiana: There was a twin bed; I had to sleep with Stephanie; it wasn't even a bed, it was a hard bed, like plaster wood. I had to sleep on my side but it made my side start to hurt so I used pillow from the plane, beds were not comfortable at all. We shared two bathrooms, but one was real nasty; we didn't even use it.

John: It was weird; in the kitchen we didn't have appliances so we set our drinks outside to keep them cold.

Ferris: The furniture is made for Chinese people not for my size or weight; I accidently broke stuff because I was big.

Dustin: After two weeks everything was fine. The accommodations were very good, better than most people get in China. I was happy with them.

The STIs had to adjust to conditions other than their living conditions. They had to prepare meals or buy prepared food and work out transportation routes to and from their schools, immersing themselves even further into the local culture. Alexis mentioned:

I had to memorize the looks of the stops (bus); I wanted out and I signed to a lady on the bus and she told the driver and he stopped and opened the door for me. Thankfully, I knew how to say thank-you in Chinese, and that definitely caught their eye as I was leaving the bus.

During these adjustments to their new environment, the STIs positive identity as Americans presented themselves as individuals more often than as a group. Americans tend to be more comfortable in expressing emotions in social situations yet show more control over expressing negative emotions (Matsumoto, Consolacion, Yamada, Suzki, & Paul, 2002). In contrast, Chinese generally use a collectivist group reaction and will try to give a good united response to emotions (Matsumoto et al., 2002). Having positive expectations of their own behavior and a desire to understand the host culture was important for them.

Alexis: I was very proud of myself when...I realized I was all alone and I was okay with that...we never would have gotten the kind of experience we got if everything went perfectly.

By most accounts, as per confidential conversations, all but two of the STIs adjusted nicely.

As the STIs adjusted into a living and teaching routine, they were able to assume their achieved status role as educators, projecting themselves as valuable assets to Chinese society. They also had to accept that there were commonalities as well as differences in living and teaching styles. Being the interloper (s) compelled some of them to project an American identity but they were also able to become insiders due to their temporary profession and status. They began to negotiate their identity yet also maintain their internal feelings of rightness and worth within the host culture.

Dustin: it was fine to just say hello to anyone: ...it'd brighten their day. They did not initiate a confrontation, but when we confronted them they opened up right away.

Benny: In the supermarket, I said "Ni How" to a little girl and her mother told her to say hello in English until she said it right. At first, you think they (Chinese) are rude, angry, they frown; but if you speak to them, first they smile and then they loosen up.

Yvonne: Based on their political situations and no exposure to Americans for them to see us alone or in groups (in either case) it was good to see us as Americans. They want to see what we are like. There is no exposure to Western culture, the government doesn't allow it. I think that is what made them open up to what we do; how we do this in America. I pointed out what we do.

Not all the STIs were willing to negotiate a sense of a new identity. In some ways it was acceptable to assert a sense of US superiority as long it was done in a manner sensitive to Chinese culture; for example, how they negotiated their living conditions as previously discussed. Two STIs were not willing to negotiate or mediate their American identity nor did they attempt to comprehend Chinese culture or find any common ground to compromise.

It is not uncommon for Americans to present themselves, perhaps unconsciously, as a Bauman-like tourist (Franklin, 2003). Many people feel uncomfortable or confused when they see behavior they don't understand. "Misunderstanding and conflicts can happen" (Eden-Jones, 2004, p. 26). Unfortunately, two STIs in the group considered themselves above the fray. They portrayed an ethnocentric and condescending attitude insisting the Chinese adapt to their idea of proper behavior and culture. Being able to comprehend both positive and negative reactions from the people they encountered might have made it easier for them to adjust to a foreign culture.

Benny : When we all arrived in Changchun, on the first full day there, Andy argued that he was in China to help them (the Chinese) out and they had to live by his rules and would not adjust to the Chinese way of doing things...Andy yelled and got in Julia's face about any problems.

Stephanie and Andy believed they were providing an economic and cultural benefit to the Chinese and consistently projected the role of the tourist in their demeanor.

Uncomfortable encounters can cause stress and passivity. Stephanie, who because of her weight, faced purported prejudicial comments from the Chinese. She did not venture out often; when she did, she reacted negatively to stares and comments. Encounters can also cause aggressive brash behavior, as in Andy's case. Andy did not try to adjust his behavior; the tourist syndrome characterized his attitude. He maintained his American superiority identity and did not make an effort to present himself in a favorable manner.

Dustin: He (Andy) was brash, in your face; my way is the only way attitude. He was subsequently fired from three different teaching jobs and schools. He chose to voice opinions of Chinese and US political views in public, even though it was inappropriate and dangerous to do so. The others (interns) were disgusted and anxious with his behavior.

Dustin also mentioned: I went to the first school interviews with Andy and he refused to sing songs to the children as part of his interview. Andy recently worked as a teacher's aide in a local school in Ocala! Andy's persona in China was negative and aggressive. He got released from teaching in three schools before he went home. He didn't get along with anyone, including his American peers or the Chinese education supervisors. He was confrontational and aggressive in all the wrong ways. It backfired on him.

Alexis: He (Andy) wouldn't listen to anybody.

Pre-trip one-on-one conversations with Stephanie included possible Chinese prejudicial reactions to her larger body shape and size. In addition, the class lectures stressed that Chinese people do not have the same sensitivities to others who are not typical Chinese Han skin color and body type. There was the possibility the Chinese would not understand the implications of their comments. From the time of her arrival in China and throughout the whole experience, Stephanie constantly complained to this author via phone/Skype about all of the negative conditions. She also complained to her fellow STIs about the lack of American amenities and conveniences. Problems at home in Ocala, business and personal, distracted her from wanting to teach and intermingle with the others. The others would tell the author shortly after Stephanie's calls to recant Stephanie's complaints, overheard from her almost daily ranting to me.

Michael: Stephanie got into heated argument with a Chinese stranger in front of Tiananmen Square, who just happened to make a remark about her size,

Taitiana: She (Stephanie) didn't like others staring at her, and she was tall and big, so they did stare. Although she did receive her job assignment immediately, her weight was constantly a conversation for the Chinese, even when she is right in sight. The Chinese perfect body is tall and slender, but Stephanie is not. Since (she) is bigger, the women tend to think less of her and the men stare at her... although it is considered rude in our country, in China (staring and lewd comments) is widely accepted and repeatedly used.

At some point during their trip, it became necessary for the rest of the group to direct their own behavior and present a unified demeanor. The other ten STIs recognized that

Andy and Stephanie's attitude was not proper protocol. They were reprimanded by the others and asked not to continue acting inappropriately in public settings. Andy chose to isolate himself from the others and unless absolutely necessary he, and thereafter Stephanie, chose to stay in the apartment rather than go out with the others except to go to work. Dustin and Benny both discussed a day they rode with Andy on the city bus and commented on his loud discussions concerning American Capitalism versus Chinese Communism. Apparently, the people riding the bus either did not understand him or if they did, they ignored him. Politics is not normally debated in public places in China.

Before a person can navigate into another culture, they must be able to navigate their own identity, act appropriately within the foreign culture, modify personal perceptions, and be willing to adapt to and create new, positive experiences and suppositions. Most of the STI's understood their surroundings and reacted positively to make their cultural encounters enjoyable and memorable.

Symbolic interactionists would point out that "even the self is a symbol" (Henslin, 2006, p. 15). We all interact and change our behavior based on how "we interpret the reaction of others" (Henslin, 2006, p. 15). The presentation of the self is not something that is constant. It is a moving target and if one does not know who their intended audience is, they do not belong in the play. In retrospect, Andy and Stephanie did not want to be in China; it showed in their inability to adjust their "self" so immersion into the Chinese culture was never going to come to fruition for them.

Navigation towards immersion began for all of the STIs with pre-conceived ideas. Upon arrival in China, adjustments to the new culture, personality differences, and

compromise were necessary to achieve common goals. Stephanie and Andy never aspired to reach even the preparation stage of Mead's "stages of the self" (Schaefer, 2011, pp. 84). Confrontation served their purpose; that is, do nothing to present their "self" to the Chinese in a positive manner. Andy became so uncomfortable with group socialization, he decided not to join the others in traveling to Beijing. As Bauman's tourist syndrome suggests, Andy and Stephanie retained their American superiority image. They would not allow any interactions with the Chinese to alter their behavior.

Identity presentation and navigation: The STIs responses to the questions posed in the pre-trip surveys (appendix D) concerning what they deemed is the Chinese perception of Americans can be summarized as: friendly, respectful, passive, generous, shy, and pampered, imperialistic, advanced, individualistic, rational, religious, aggressive, technological, self-interested, materialistic, contemptuous, ethnocentric, indulgent, and reliable. As discussed earlier, cultural biases exist based on what Americans think about the Chinese, as well. Agents of socialization are relatively the same in all cultures and with a substantial percentage of international social media being an accumulation of misinformation, an ethnocentric posture based on these unreliable sources may increase stereotyping. Questionable sources and limited subject knowledge are of little concern to many young readers. Luckily, the forced submersion of the STIs into this new culture resulted in more contemporary perceptions of Chinese society especially after their initial encounters with locals as they made their way around Changchun.

Alexis: Many Chinese people were surprised we (Americans) were polite...they learned we were from meeting us.

Yvonne: Being together in a group was the best thing for us; people at first were somber, non-responsive but then they would smile, say hi; I said American, and they'd smile and lighten up.

Taitiana: China doesn't have that many Americans, and they are shocked at how diverse we are. I experienced the joy of a Chinese person meeting an American for the first time. Since we traveled together in China they noticed how we all can differ in shape, size, and colors. We all can be different shapes and sizes...It was the first time they could say they saw their very own little America in their backyard.

Michael: They asked me a lot of questions like do you like Chinese girls; are you single; do you think American girls are prettier? I answered very neutrally saying both countries have beautiful girls.

Benny: They would encourage their kids to speak first to us, then, the parents would respond.

Michael: Americans are not completely what they (Chinese) expected... I told them about the US and I helped when I could if they (local people) wanted to learn English.

Being able to speak English with Americans also increases the purported status of the Chinese people. Any Chinese person who was studying English wanted the opportunity to be able to practice with the Americans.

Yvonne: The Chinese believe the acquisition of English language is the only means to achieve a good paying job or any status in the economic structure of China so we are of value to them.

Benny: Learning English is the main concern for the Chinese. If you speak English you are held in the highest regard.

The STIs also experienced some awkwardness and discomfort by not being able to speak Mandarin Chinese. They modified their communication mode by using sign/hand gesture language (understandably a crude form of symbolic interactionism) and accepting visual mannerisms such as smiling, laughing. They also experienced frustration not knowing what the Chinese were saying, such as, if you had done something rude without knowing it.

Alexis: Outside the classroom I used my Mandarin book. It was very helpful when it came to grocery shopping and trying to find my way around.

Dustin: They thought we were very gullible; due to language barriers they thought; oh, I can tell them this, or tell them that; it's our culture.

Benny:...the locals (in Changchun) laughed at how we eat and ordered food individually instead of eating group foods. They watched us, would laugh and gesture at our eating habits.

Alexis: I smiled a lot; a smile actually goes a long way.

The STIs had to quickly present their new identity to the Chinese. Because they were working in China as well as visiting, they may have been considered vagabonds. They were not tourists but temporary workers and, thus, the Chinese may have responded to them as immigrants rather than tourists. Immigrants tend to feel removed from their familiar environment. The STIs were thrust into a new home, community, school, and work environment; so any unfamiliar feelings, doubts, and insecurities were normal reactions.

The STIs were eventually able to adjust their daily life to broaden opportunities for personal and professional interactions. This gave them confidence to collaborate with the Chinese people. Living within the community enabled them to obtain an authentic viewpoint. Interacting with their students, teachers, hosts and the locals in shops and restaurants, expanded their cultural immersion into understanding the culture; much more so than a tourist or vagabond would normally be exposed to. This transformation into the local community over that period of time (2-4 months) allowed the STIs to present their American and personal identity to the Chinese people in a positive manner. For example, Michael had no problem meeting people in the community:

I did something every day and night. Everywhere I went I found new things to do; I went to a tea ceremony in a local little tea shop where I spent the whole day with the owner.

I tried to talk to people and asked about the language and culture, which many people enjoy the chance to help you learn Chinese. I spoke directly to them and the majority was very open and responded in kind.

The other STIs noted: he (Michael) constantly made new Chinese friends, talking with them with an easy and open attitude; he even had a Chinese girlfriend.

Reactions to Americans varied from city to city. Many Chinese were very anxious to interact with the STIs using the little English they knew, visibly pushing their children to “talk to the Americans.” In Changchun, the Americans were welcomed workers and had celebrity status since many of the Chinese, especially those not involved with the schools, rarely, if ever, had seen an American in person.

Jessica: Ferris normally is a quiet and shy person and often wore a sports jacket as he went about in the community and visited tourist sites. His attire caused the Chinese to assume he was an ‘Americans sports figure’ and in public was treated as a celebrity; the Chinese would flock around him taking pictures and asking for his autograph, to the humor of his fellow students (STIs).

Alexis: In Changchun, the people tried to make us happy

Jessica: ...we were special like in Changchun where they were flocking to talk to you. I think people in Changchun were the nicest.

Alexis: The Chinese people don’t get to encounter foreigners very often so when they do they treat the foreigners as celebrities because it’s something new to them. They feel honored to meet us.

In Beijing where the STIs traveled as tourists after their stint at teaching, they related varied observations.

Dustin noted: In Beijing, people were more accustomed to foreigners so we were not bombarded, they went about their business.

Yvonne, in Beijing, had some reactions of anger: a taxi driver tried to overcharge me and tried to scam me; negotiated with her to try to get more money...everyone stared at me.

Jessica: The people in Beijing were nice; being used to seeing foreigners; they took pictures a lot.

Alexis: In Beijing they were used to foreigners and tried to help us as much as they could. People were definitely nicer.

At times, the STIs felt awkward and had to struggle with the responsibility of being cultural representatives of the US; complicating relationship building in regions where politically or religious differences determined the acceptance of any American. They consistently had to reassess their identities as Americans depending on where they were geographically. Traveling in Xian was difficult and uncomfortable for them. It is a predominantly Muslim area with considerable anti-American attitudes. They were tourists at this point in their travels and reactions to the people of Xian were disappointing and negative. The STIs had to struggle with local perceptions, understand the circumstances and change their persona. The aversion of Americans was extremely overt. In addition, the Chinese who lived in this area of the country were mostly non-Han which gave them a minority/outsider status within their own country.

One incident in Xian stood out for all of the STIs. They stopped to eat at a restaurant and as they ordered from the menu, the employees refused service professing that they were out of chicken. One student reacted verbally insisting to the servers that the chicken was sitting right there in front of them. After moderate negotiation, they were served. Other than stating the obvious, their resolution was to remain as non-confrontational as possible by presenting a unified demeanor.

Alexis: In Xian the people were very rude to our group. We were going to order food and they weren't going to give it to us even though it was right behind them. Taitiana

said its right behind you and the woman said no we don't have any. They did not want to give it to us. We insisted. People were very un-friendly. In Xian they laughed at the way we dressed and made fun of our body sizes. They just wanted to give us a hard time. They were very racist.

Jessica: In Xian, we were on the bus and the Chinese are dark-skinned there... Taitiana (an African-American) said "they don't look like Chinese, they look more like Mexicans" and a guy on the bus said "no I'm Chinese; I'm just a little black."

Race was a factor also in the context of how the STIs (especially the three black members of the group, Taitiana, Yvonne and Ferris) navigated and lived with the racial prejudice from their hosts, parents and students. They calmly charted their reactions to Chinese prejudice against darker-skinned people.

African-Americans are a rarity in China, especially in Changchun. The average person of color in China migrates from Africa and comes to China for the opportunity to work. African foreign workers in China are perceived as having lower intellect, only capable of doing simple, manual work; conceived as a vagabond, in Bauman's (1998) terms. Due to the Chinese lack of exposure to educated, dark-skinned teachers, Taitiana, Yvonne and Ferris were initially greeted with gasps, finger-pointing and staring. Some of the younger Chinese school students hid or cried when these three presented themselves to students as their American teacher.

Taitiana: To the Chinese, if you are blond and blue-eyed, you are American... for the African-Americans, if you are brown-eyed and black hair you will receive more of a questionable response... they were shocked at how diverse we really were, especially when we all traveled together. They didn't realize Americans can be different shapes, colors and sizes.

Yvonne: If I was alone people stared, gawked, gasped at my skin color. I believe color is an issue with the Chinese; they couldn't believe that we were actually American. It was easier being together in a group, it was the best thing for us (Blacks).

Ferris: I had to interview a few times; they didn't want to hire me at first because I'm black.

Yvonne: One mother didn't want to leave her child with me.

Race and ethnic identities shape experiences and outcomes. Race can be a complication, according to a Trilokekar (2011) study. He concluded that the meaning of the world around us is obtained through our experiences so the assumptions and expectations of an individual are critical to being open to new ideas, new people, and to adapting to new situations. The three black STIs, Taitiana, Yvonne and Ferris, faced some prejudice issues in the US so their prior personal identity formation allowed them to adapt to the circumstances they were presented with in China.

Mayda and Rodrik (2005) concluded that positive reactions and attitudes can be correlated to the level of human capital provided, the economic status, and the social status of the person. Once Taitiana, Yvonne and Ferris were introduced as American teachers, the parents and students acknowledged their status and the color of their skin became a secondary issue. The calming and non-confrontational demeanor of all three of these STIs, were instrumental in their acceptance based on their achieved versus their ascribed status.

Staring and gawking by the Chinese people when encountering a person of color was not uncommon. When they were not on school grounds, the STIs were treated as tourists. Hitchcock (1999) pointed out that ethnicity permeates most aspects of tourism, but it "...remains poorly understood" (p. 29). Tourism contributes to the identity formation in foreign countries and it may cause the majority of the people of the hosting country to re-evaluate their perceptions of minorities. Hitchcock adds that "... ethnicity can be changeable and negotiable through social interaction between tourists and people who

live and work in tourist destinations” (p. 29). In reality, the Chinese people infer racial superiority not only against the people of color but against many of their own non-Han citizens as in the case of the people of Xian as mentioned. Much of this ethnocentric environment may be due to limited exposure to anyone outside their local community. Many adult middle- and -upper class local Chinese who I personally came in contact with had never traveled outside Jilin Province (Changchun).

Tatiana, at least privately, found it difficult to keep her individual ethnic identity while confronted with racism within the new culture. She indicated she felt isolated and lonely for other black-skinned people.

We were walking in a park and I saw some other black people and I ran up to them so excited to see someone else like me. After being in a foreign culture like that, you don't know how exciting it can be to see somebody that looks like you.

Even the Caucasians in the group found the Chinese perceptions of Americans as outdated and media-induced. Dustin led discussions in his classroom and asked how they would describe Americans:

They said they (Americans) are “all white, tall, skinny, rich and very intelligent.” I told them we are totally different skin colors, social classes.

Dustin also witnessed racial discrimination firsthand:

Ferris and I auditioned for a school but we didn't get the job...he was African-American so we didn't get it...they wanted a petite, white girl.

Navigating other cultures takes on a new meaning and an additional hurdle to overcome if a society has only limited accessibility to the Western travelers. The color issue became less relevant in relation to the value of teaching English. Yvonne describes both scenarios, in teaching and in social situations, projecting a calm acceptance and rationalization of the purported pre-judgment of skin color:

...at the training school, students would gasp as I entered the classroom, like they had never seen a black person before. Some parents didn't want their children taught by a black person, they gave off a fear. I went into a restaurant with a white person who was a teacher at the school, the waitress gasped at seeing me; you literally heard the sound come up out of her throat...but she continued gasping as she took our order. My dinner companion mentioned I should not get upset, that he too receives gasps at times because the Chinese just aren't often in the company of an American.

Cultural and social capital exchange: Living, working and socializing in the Chinese community on a daily basis for an extended time allowed for the exchange of social capital between the two cultures. The Chinese initially reacted nonchalantly to these strangers but did appear to be welcoming.

Dustin: The Chinese people were shy, but if you smiled first, and gestured, they would smile and say hi even though they were shocked to see an American on the bus.

Benny: They pushed their kids to say hello to me. In the beginning you think they are rude, angry, they seem to frown; but if you speak first and say "Ni how", they loosen up. I did not feel any prejudice from them, (I am Hispanic).

Jessica: They liked to practice their English with you whether you were on the bus or grocery. They loved to try to talk to us; I met a lot of people that way.

Ferris: they were very positive and liked to take pictures of us all the time.

Michael: Everywhere I went I made friends; they were welcoming and invited me to lunch. I learned a lot about the culture involving tea ceremonies... I hung out at the university; met other college teachers; ate dinner with them; took Tae Kwando lessons; played basketball with students at the university and even ate in the cafeteria with them.

John: Teenagers were not afraid to express their ideas and opinions; they speak English and are very interested in learning about America and our education system.

Social capital involves exchanging assets such as good will and sympathy through interactions with local culture. As Bauman suggests per Franklin, 2003, when "people meet in the same shops... on the same street" (p.216), the same work and social places they then have the opportunity to be in constant contact, interact, and get to know one

another. The exchange of viewpoints and social activity allow cultural exchanges to take place and differences do not matter any longer (Franklin, 2003).

Alexis: People were very nice; they even gave us free things just because we were foreigners...the older people wanted to show us how well they could speak English.

Benny: the attitudes of the students were very welcoming. I couldn't walk up the steps of the school without being hugged, tugged, or greeted. They always wanted to express that they knew English and practice it. I learned that we have a lot of things in common, once you get to know them...like basketball. We look, talk, eat differently; but these people were willing to study my culture and language even though they may never be able to put it to use; therefore, I am willing to do the same.

Adam: we would go to clubs and the Chinese (usually college students) would buy rounds of drinks for us.

Rhodes (2008) found cultural diversity training is vital to a travel/study program. The STIs pre-trip preparations enabled them to realize some limitations and expectations of Chinese cultural responses and actions. They had to learn first-hand how to adapt and mediate their own responses to interactions they would experience daily. Mediation between two cultures can be positive if listening skills are employed.

Benny: Traveling to school we had to walk to the bus; catch another bus...I just followed the local people and did what they did.

Yvonne: Because I am Black, traveling in a group was best for me; then people would smile and say hello. Alone, people would stare, gawk, and even gasp. I realized it was more of a lack of exposure to Westerners (American Blacks) than just prejudice. I talked to a white male American teacher and he said he gets gawked at and students at first withdraw from him.

Benny: When we went out to eat we had to get used to the way the Chinese eat. They slurp their food and burp thunderously in the restaurant (I learned this to be a custom everywhere). We also learned they do not accept tips; they feel they do a good enough job serving you. They also eat in groups, rarely alone and they all share all of the food on the table with everyone. I could tell they were amused when our group ordered and ate our own meals without sharing.

Yvonne: I found that tolerance of diversity is the key to teaching. I also understand that my role is to impart information and facilitate understanding of the difficult

concepts associated with the English language...I tried to be practical, understanding that they are from a completely different educational system and social system.

Feelings of anxiety normally emerge in any new experience. Therefore, when the STIs had to present their American group and individual identity to the Chinese people; they were challenged to go outside their comfort zones. This involved risk-taking; being able to try a different approach while in the midst of a totally different culture takes extraordinary effort and requires constant negotiation and mediation. Observations from their orientation prior to teaching revealed their personal fears concerning what their new role would be. As Mead (1934) suggests, a time for role-playing in presenting the individual “self” facilitates the game stage; such as when the STIs had to demonstrate proficiency in teaching to the level expected by the Chinese school administrators’ in order to gain approval for a job position.

Yvonne: I didn’t know what to expect; how the Chinese think or how they see us.

Michael: I watched a few different foreign teachers beforehand to learn the structure of a class and how one might run it effectively. All the teachers went through demos where (educational host) companies and headmasters observed your performance and how well the kids liked you. We had a brief training. I didn’t know what to do...my stomach hit rock bottom...I felt like I failed. The supervisor asked if I could improve I said yes and she had me stay with the class and watch three other teachers. They were very welcoming. The school did have another foreign teacher and he helped me out... I watched his class and learned some different teaching methods from him.

Benny: I had to perform a demo class and do an interview with the headmaster who asked simple questions. I wasn’t given curriculum or materials.

Dustin: I spent three days in preparations for teaching kindergarten; made flash cards. I was teaching a demo in 5th grade and half- way through the lesson a kid says “you can stop now we know all this”I ended up liking teaching once I got the hang of it.

Perseverance and a steadfast attitude of those who truly wanted to blend into the local environment and into the new experience of teaching enabled the STIs to immerse themselves into new social and cultural arenas. In return, the Chinese people were so

enthusiastic about meeting Americans and learning English that both sides were willing to overcome the language barriers. STIs and locals mediated and managed communication shortfalls. The Chinese teacher aides, Native Chinese English teachers and the education administrators' co-operation led to a willingness on the part of students to please the STIs.

Benny: The attitudes of the students were very welcoming. They always wanted to express that they knew English and wanted to practice even before class started.

Michael: I had two aides; Mai was kind hearted; soft spoken and helpful; Betsy was one to take charge in the classroom; she also had a habit of throwing chalk at the kids who were unruly. I chose to utilize Mai's manner of teaching.

Benny also indicated he didn't have materials to work with but had a teacher aide: "...without her I would have been lost." She give me my first lesson plan...gave me a blueprint for all of my lesson plans...I kept mine in my head, not written. I met other teachers in China who had been there for quite some time and they helped me with the type of material to teach each age group.

The STIs learned how demanding it was to go to another country and to attempt to communicate successfully, analogous to foreign students who come to America without any English training. This was an unintended benefit and learning experience for the STIs. They began to question if they were getting through to the children; how would they be able to judge their effectiveness with so little communication other than the repetition of the phrases and songs they were repeating, over and over again to their students.

By the time the STIs were assigned their first jobs, their identity as Americans had been established within the local community socially and culturally. Navigation and mediation allowed for their immersion into the local environment. They had developed the confidence to now begin the navigation process for their immersion into the Chinese educational environment.

Body of analysis II: Navigation, mediation, immersion into the Chinese educational environment

There are substantial differences when comparing an individualist versus a communitarian or collectivist society. Chinese Communist Party bureaucrats perceive their country as a collectivist civilization and this attitude permeates the public education agenda. To adapt to the communitarian value system and its parameters as it relates to classroom interactions of student/teacher power relationships, the STIs were required to mediate and to alter their personal school experiences. As concluded by Trilokekar, 2011, there are numerous effects that are influential in any educational endeavor; such as the role of the state, religion, student abilities, and the expected processes and outcomes of learning. The STIs in this study observed those parameters as well. Integrating China's collectivist society with America's individualistic culture was a challenge for them. Studies by Liu, 2010; Holliday, 1994; and Nguyen, et al., 2006; noticed similar problems. The STIs were challenged by the differences in collectivist and individualistic societies, specifically in four areas of pedagogy: teacher status and power within the classroom, classroom structure, teaching methods, and discipline.

Teacher status/power: The Chinese government employs their educational leaders to encourage the importation of American teachers with an open-door visa policy. The power of this government edict implies a higher status for effective English-speaking foreign teachers; placing them above a vagabond status. Chinese parental pressure for

learning requires high standards and studying diligently is expected, through practice and individual effort (Chua, 2011). Parental pressure to provide conversational English lessons increases the demand for English-speaking teachers, raising the status of not only Americans, but also for school bureaucrats who seek out the best candidates.

In some schools, before dismissal, the STIs were asked by school principals to dance/sing with the children for the parents and grandparents who were waiting outside the gates of the school yard to pick up their children at the end of the day; a “public display” of the American teachers for everyone’s benefit.

Education in China is considered a means to obtain prestige as well as to provide entry into a higher status group. The ability to speak English well and fluently is an important part of that professed status. Therefore, schools were competitive in the pursuit to obtain/retain the best American teachers. Jessica was the preferred candidate. Not only was she the “petite American girl” as Dustin described in a prior comment but she was vivacious and very accommodating.

Jessica: I was assigned to one school and welcomed enthusiastically. After teaching three weeks at one school, the Chinese supervisor asked me to pretend to be sick with laryngitis, lie to the school. She told the school I couldn’t work, but then she placed me at a better school that wanted me. I was uncomfortable lying, but I didn’t know what to do. I went along with her and moved to the other school. The supervisor got more status for herself and money; I enjoyed teaching there but I had to compromise my values on lying.

American education is informal, direct in relationships in both social and academic situations. US students tend to question authority and value freedom of thought and actions by learning individually (AIEF, 2011); possibly the reason for the recent backlash

on lack of respect and status for the American teacher in comparison to the “rote learning days” of old US education policy. The Chinese collectivist teaching/learning prerogative emphasizes student acceptance of teacher authority and power such as being respectfully quiet, responding as a group, and listening intently (Dillon, 2010).

The Chinese teacher is an authority figure. She/he is considered well-learned and is expected to give lectures and clarify problems. It is assumed they know more than anyone about the subject. This creates a distance between teacher and student and is in contrast to the American teacher model. This difference, as suggested by Dillon (2010), was perceived quickly by many of the STIs and had an effect on how they attempted to incorporate their education experience with Chinese educational customs.

Yvonne: One difficulty was I kept asking questions and did not get a response. I discovered they are used to methods of memory (rote), group responses and recollection not independent thinking.

Benny: It is up to the students to learn, not the teacher’s job to get them to learn (in China). We don’t expect that in the US; the teacher is supposed to make sure the kids learn; if they don’t it reflects on them, not the students.

American teaching practice often encourages students to ask questions. Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, revealed the Chinese perception of the teacher is one of being all-knowing and all-powerful, so when a teacher asks a question, it suggests to the students that the teacher does not know the answer. This insinuates a lack of knowledge on the teacher’s part. For the teacher to “save face,” the students are trained not to respond to questions; it is more important for the Chinese teacher to maintain a good image. Students are hesitant to participate in class other than answering as a group; a sense of safety in numbers. The STIs initially showed frustration with the lack of response so the

challenge became adjusting their teaching methods that precluded a necessary individual response.

Yvonne: It was hard to get the students to interact and answer questions because the Chinese believe the teacher should know the material and for the teacher to ask the class a question and expect a response that meant the teacher did not know the information. Therefore the students did not answer if they knew the answer because it would embarrass the teacher because she did not know the answer. At first I thought that children did not respond due to my accent, but I discovered that they are drilled in the government schools in a method of memory, repetition and recollections...what I am asking them to do are to think independently which they do not know how to do.

Dustin: I found teaching like the Chinese worked best. I asked questions, groups answered. I was OK with it.

John: Because I taught college kids, they were more open to questioning me.

Some of the STIs insisted on using American teaching methods by employing small group instructions and responses. Verbal encouragement and reward techniques, common in American pedagogy, were also utilized. They offered treats or stickers to reward individual responses, linking American and Chinese teaching methods.

Alexis: What worked for me was to give out little stickers on papers or to the kids as rewards for the behavior I wanted. I liked to see them smile and be surprised.

Yvonne: I had them do things with one other person, a project or game, and then we started to work in small groups. The students adjusted to the new idea.

Jessica: I asked a lot of questions about stories they read; had them read aloud and incorporated games and activities.

Alexis: We chose to mingle both the Chinese method of rote and chorus learning with US methods of discussions and small group work encouraged with treat rewards. It worked.

The Chinese and the American identity can be divergent and conflicting. The STIs immersed themselves through a combination of Cooley's and Mead's theories, such as imitating the people around them, role playing, reflection of needs and utilizing the game stage to mediate the language and cultural barriers. Many displayed an understanding of

Chinese culture and built relationships in social and work environments, going way beyond Bauman's tourist and vagabond identities; progressing to a new, open and evolved self with the Chinese teachers, aides and students. Alexis offered this general analysis of her experience:

China has a lot to offer, but you have to be willing to open your mind and let it all sink in before you start judging it from the outside. If you go expect nothing but a simple life style, live each day and don't spend your time comparing your country to China; no country on earth is alike, but guess what, neither are any of us. Enjoy your time and make the best out of your trip.

Structure: Education in a collectivist society employs social control. Schools are highly organized and rely on common identity, respect, and deference to authority to maintain control and order. Teachers adhere to the rules and reinforce the concept of a "hidden curriculum" as labeled by Philip Jackson (1968). Specific social standards of behavior considered proper or normal by the dominant culture are taught subtly. This education policy applies even as Chinese society has moved from the closed socialist-inclusive policies of the Communist Party to a more market-driven economy. This time-tested education perspective has worked to make Chinese education strategy relatively successful.

Competition between schools is heightened and encouraged by government and education officials to produce more elite students. There are basically two types of schools in China, government public and training schools. Training/private schools meet after school and on weekends with small classes paid for by those who can afford it. There is also a marked difference in government school status; children of government officials and high executive professionals are given preferential treatment. In some

schools, parents have to pay an additional fee for their children to be able to attend the conversational English lessons.

Chinese children are taught in large groups with few one-on-one sessions as corroborated in the study by Xhao (2002). This impacts the ability of the student to freely express his/her own opinion (Sweeney, 2010). In direct contrast, US education policy establishes mandated standards of class size, small group, one-on-one teaching and tutoring, if necessary. Class size and diverse student behavior and aptitude challenged the STIs. Although twenty-five students is Chinese education policy norm, principals have authority to alter the numbers. Some government schools with larger classes exhibited more disruptive behavior problems. Textbooks were not always available for students. STIs' experiences varied greatly depending upon the school and individual class structure.

Benny: At the compulsory schools, one class could have 45 kids in it.

Yvonne (after moving to a training school, after a couple of weeks): I did not have a teacher's aide nor did I need one. The students were extremely well-behaved.

Benny: I met other foreign teachers who helped with suggestions on how to handle the kids: take extra time to work with one on one, write important things on the board, repeat new words or phrases, ask questions in a slow, non-confrontational manner.

Yvonne: the Chinese teachers offered little or no help to me; did not care if the children were learning and were allowed to hit the children.

Michael: All my schools were welcoming and provided materials.

Benny: different schools in the same city aren't run the same; the students act differently.

The STIs were willing to listen to each other and exchange teaching strategies.

Teachers were forced to "be creative and flexible in teaching" (Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009, p. 310). Large groups and had to "collaborate and share teaching ideas and

materials” (Zhao, et al., 2009, p. 310) with their Chinese co-workers as well. Using small groups, games and treats in their teaching methods, the STIs let Chinese teachers observe and see the effectiveness of their American ideas. These teaching interactions allowed some of the STIs to develop relationships inside and outside the classroom with their aides and teachers. The extra time and effort the STIs spent cultivating a relationship with their Chinese aides enabled them to be more effective in the classroom.

Michael: There was one aide I got along with well. We went out places after school or at night. She showed me around and took me to the college campus to meet her friends.

Yvonne: Some classes had aides; others were left on their own. I didn’t know if I would have one. I thanked God for her, because without her I would have been extra lost.

Benny: I didn’t have materials to work with so without the teacher’s aide I would have been lost. She gave me my first lesson plan which gave me a blueprint for all my lesson plans. I also met other teachers from other countries who helped me with the type of material to teach each group.

Classroom decorum varied based on class size, age of students, and socio-economic factors.

Benny: In the public primary school the students were crazy! They misbehaved most of the time. They were disruptive, argumentative to each other, wild. If it were not for my aide punishing them with a stick or making them stand for a long period of time, the worst of the worst would have brought down the school.

Ferris: I felt like I was babysitting sometimes. There were too many kids to try to keep under control.

Benny: In the private school I didn’t need an aide nor did I have one. ..their parents shell out money to their benefit so they were well behaved.

Teaching methods: Chinese students tend to “save face” and therefore are reluctant to respond. They hesitate to participate individually in large classes (Simpson, 2008; Liu, 2010). In Liu’s (2010) study, American teachers’ implemented US teaching methods in their Chinese classrooms, centering on individual responses and small group participation

and the results were disappointing. The STIs in this study had frustrating results at first yet learned to react to and respect Chinese teaching methods. These pedagogical challenges forced the STIs to accept the Chinese teacher/student relationship. In addition, verbal encouragement and reward techniques, common in American teaching, were utilized by many of the STIs. Some offered treats or stickers to reward individual participation.

Alexis: I had to create my own methods with a little twist on their methods. I encouraged individual responses by offering treats and then repetition to teach.

Yvonne: I asked a lot of questions; had them read from textbooks aloud; incorporated games and activities into my teaching.

American teachers concentrate on listening and speaking. Chinese methods focus on repetitive vocabulary and grammar sessions; rote memorization of vocabulary words (flash cards, repetition) is initially implemented, moving on to grammar rules and sentence construction, followed by implied meanings. Chinese students learn to memorize, read, write, speak and then employ comprehension skills. This progression is considered tantamount to learning quickly and efficiently by Chinese education standards (Lui, 2010).

In some schools the STIs were given specific guidelines to follow; in others, the interns were able to incorporate American methods. The Chinese school principal or headmaster has leeway directing and controlling teaching methods.

Benny: the headmaster specifically told me not to teach spelling, grammar, punctuation. She wanted me to teach a class with western culture topics and to bring in stuff from the US. She also wanted me to write and not speak so much-she said the students have trouble listening but know how to read well.

Yvonne: I took extra time with one on one time with students outside the class. I encouraged rather than criticized; wrote important things on the board; repeated

words or phrases and tried not to get frustrated if the students did not respond. I asked students directly for answers and tried to integrate western culture methods in a slow non-confrontational manner.

Alexis: we were asked to teach songs over and over again. The kids learned best that way. They like to mimic our actions and facial expressions.

Benny: I noticed after the first day, the kids would mime my movements and clothes. They learned by watching me.

Some schools had the STIs follow a curriculum; others allowed them to manage independently. Most schools had mandatory planning meetings based on education guidelines. The methods and suggestions on how the school principals/headmasters wanted them to teach varied greatly; there was no standard routine. Many of the STIs taught at two or three different schools a week, one in the morning and then another in the afternoon and then on alternate days and the rules were different in every school.

Yvonne: The idea was to bring the Chinese teachers and foreign teachers together in one room where we can discuss our ideas; although this is a great idea, I cannot say I am in agreement because it was mandatory and their teachers were not paid for the extra time creating some resentment towards me.

Jessica: As with Yvonne's school, mine provided the R.I.P.A. curriculum approach (review, introduction, practice and activate). I got a teacher's handbook and student book for each grade level and a Games and Activities book.

Benny: I met some other teachers...they helped with the type of material to teach each age group. I needed this because I didn't want to teach something easy to students who could be challenged more. Eventually, I was able to assess the level of difficulty of the lessons on my own.

Yvonne: I try to be practical, understanding that they are from completely different educational system and teaching styles.

Benny: I was supposed to arrive in the morning, chat with some of the teachers in English for 30 minutes and teach two 45 minute classes per day, three times a week.

Alexis: We used flash cards a lot. The Chinese had cards and we had to act out what that word was; say the word over and over again and again until the kids verbalized it right. They cared about the repetition of the word more than understanding.

Discipline: A major conflict with the STIs desire to advance culture relativity was the need to accept the Chinese custom of corporal punishment. They had to observe but could not interfere without offending the Chinese teacher's authority. In addition, STIs witnessed the prejudicial treatment of non-Han students who received harsh rhetoric and physical abuse. The STIs chose not to engage the teachers; instead they observed with silent astonishment. When they were in charge of the class, the decision was to use alternative methods to correct bad behavior such as, time-out, verbal reprimands, and positive reinforcements (material rewards). If students continued to be disobedient, the Chinese teachers or aides differed to the use of physical reprimands.

Alexis: I noticed at one school a difference in social economic levels...I quickly found out how the teachers treated the students. Lighter-skinned students never got beat up. The darker- skinned students, even if they did not do anything got spanked. The teachers hit with a stick. It was hard for me.

Jessica: At my school, there was little or no physical punishment. The parents had a higher social status and the students were well behaved. Their parents were paying for a better education than the government schools so they worked harder and were more serious.

Alexis: Teachers hit kids with sticks...it was hard for me to accept that...but I was powerless when it came to rules at the schools, so I had to just sit tight and try not to let it bother me. One might think it inhumane, but we can't do anything about it, it's the way they always have taught.

Ferris: If you are not Han you don't count.

Benny: The kids were beaten physically at times and you couldn't say anything as this is the way they do it...I witnessed a couple of beat downs from my aide to the really bad students.

Alexis: American teachers aren't as tough as Chinese teachers. Americans do not hit their students with rulers or make them sit in a particular way and face a...wall when saying "hello" to the teacher. They felt so confident around us that they got out of hand much more often.

The STIs also had to adapt to school rules and regulations which differed greatly from America's division of labor and organizational policy, including the absence of labor

unions. Except for the higher status schools, Chinese students were required to clean the schools before, during and after school hours, including the toilets. Some schools had their students cater to the teachers, delivering lunch from the cafeteria. Tasks that probably never would be asked of students in an American school were commonplace in Chinese schools.

Alexis: They have the kids go on their knees and use sponges to scrub the floors. Bathrooms are a hole in the floor and boys and girls use the same room.

Yvonne: They (students) are used to picking up garbage, leaves, paper inside and outside...just anywhere the headmistress/master tells them. I saw young students carry five- gallon water bottles up many flights of stairs...they also deliver teacher lunches...even though there might be an elevator in the school-usage is only reserved for the teachers and headmaster/mistress.

Alexis: Food is served three times a day; rice, fruit and water; maybe some vegetables and the grandparents pick up the kids since both parents work.

Benny: The students in the public primary school cleaned the whole entire school by hand, rags, buckets, mops. I literally saw them on their knees scrubbing the cracks in the tile on the floor, but at the private junior middle school, they had janitors to clean up....Can you imagine what would happen if they asked US kids to do that? What would the reaction of the parents be?

Gender bias in the China also conflicted with American social norms. Traditional Chinese culture values male superiority over females; for example, the on-again, off-again, One-Child policy. Hofstede (1986) inferred that women in China are generally overlooked, disregarded, and earn less than men. Overall, men are viewed as self-confident, ambitious, and successful. Hofstede also concluded that in a male-dominated society, students are focused more on competition, choose rigorous academic subjects and corporal punishment is accepted.

Yvonne stated: Our school leader was male, well-organized... In my classes the boys in particular were very competitive and eager to compete against the class; the girls were less aggressive and not as focused on learning. The boys are very competitive

but if they lose a game, they are very disappointed; the girls don't seem to care one way or the other.

The STIs reported the Chinese conventional attitude suggests boys are more significant than girls. Chinese teachers anticipated better responses and had higher scholastic expectations for the boys. The STIs observed that girls were inclined to be less attentive and interactive in the classroom, ignored by the teachers, given less acknowledgment and rarely asked for responses.

Yvonne: In one of my classes dominated by females, the girls only wanted to play board games and not do any lessons. Girls in particular in team competitions did not want to participate. They lacked motivation and enthusiasm to focus and help their team to victory. I often had to offer incentives to create interest from them.

Jessica: an ongoing problem was to get female students to have enough confidence in themselves to fully participate in class. They often relied on one or two of the not shy girls to speak up and answer my questions; so every time I ask a question, it is the boys that try to respond first.

Yvonne: I have one girl I constantly had to call her name out to keep her focused on the lessons. She would hum to herself during lessons...but was always ready to play a game.

Jessica: I found the children did not work well in pairs or groups especially if they had to work with the opposite sex-I can hardly get anything out of them.

The STIs attempted to adhere to the American standard of gender equality as often as possible which encouraged Chinese female students to respond, react and participate in class.

The American STIs were able to participate in their work environment by observing and learning what methods worked and did not work in the classroom. The STIs observed and adapted to the hierarchy within the Chinese classroom yet they took every opportunity to challenge their students and teachers to be more open to new ideas. Their success could be measured by the positive responses from parents, school supervisors,

and students reported by the STIs and the author's follow-up personal interviews with Chinese education supervisors and other conversations.

Immersion into the Chinese educational environment: China's history, religion and political tradition permeate present-day Chinese culture. The modern communal work, education and social belief system still identifies with Chinese political philosophy. China's brand of socialism mirrors the organization of the school system. Education is a social institution in every modern state but it takes on a personality of its' own depending on the politicians and the political parties who head the bureaucracies. The larger class sizes, teaching styles, prejudice and discipline were challenges for the STIs, compelling them to be creative and adaptable to new methods of instruction. To function as an effective conversational English teacher, they collaborated and shared ideas with Chinese teachers and supervisors, often creating improved teaching materials and lesson plans. The STIs negotiated and navigated the requirements necessary to be compatible with their aides, Chinese teachers, and staff. They were able to develop a comprehensive and flexible teaching method that promoted learning. They gained personal confidence, empathy for second language teachers and cultural relativity.

Though teaching was not their chosen profession, this experience changed their lives. As Alexis stated:

I was shocked at the different things I could do when I was placed into (teaching) situations. I have a tough path ahead of me (course study), but if I was able to survive China, I should be able to survive engineering.

Conclusion Summary

Globalization has changed world trade patterns repositioning the significance of the traditional powers in the new world order. Emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China may take many more years to reach their potential. It is important to note that power may not be measured in military power as might have been the case in defining a traditional 20th century hegemony. Successful 21st Century world-class economic power will be enhanced by integrating traditional education initiatives with a global perspective including teaching conversational language skills, promoting tolerance and encouraging cultural relevance through practical mediation training.

Outsourcing of jobs has forced many Americans to seek employment in developing countries, creating a new type of migrant and immigrant. Far from a tourist, beyond the vagabond, American workers will need to assimilate into another culture in order to succeed and progress as they begin new careers. Experiences and interactions chronicled in this study support the creation of a cultural awakening in the subjects' teaching/working/living environments not previously thought possible in study abroad and co-op programs or traditional internships. This analysis has revealed how young American college students found and adjusted their identities then immersed themselves into Chinese social and work environs to become culturally relevant ambassadors.

The methods and techniques STIs utilized in their teaching and living environments helped strengthen the relationship between themselves and with the Chinese people. With

the exception of the two who chose not to gainfully participate, the STIs learned to share their American identity with the Chinese, relinquishing some of their individual authority and power position, allowing for meaningful and positive interactions to occur. Being open and accommodating to Chinese culture, norms, values and behaviors, the STIs received, in return, a positive, more congenial attitude from the Chinese teachers, students and local residents.

Overall, the STIs experiences built confidence as a group and as individuals provided empowerment. The more experiences and opportunities obtained and shared, the broader and more thorough the immersion. Communication skills, sharing ideas, living management, self and group motivations, social networking in the community, being creative and teaching effectively, were all components of a positive experience.

Author's note: concerning the term "positive experience" is from my summation of conversations and personal contact with ten of the twelve participants over the past twenty month period since they returned to the US from the original trip. Of the original twelve STIs, two returned to China within five months to continue teaching and one is still there. Three are planning to go back in the summer of 2014. Four others continue recruiting and are encouraging other undergraduate students to make this student-teacher-internship program a "life-changing" experience (their words). I sent four new STIs over and back in the summer of 2012.

Conclusions and Interpretations

1. The STIs pre-conceived ideas of the Chinese culture had some influence upon their initial interactions and reactions to the Chinese people. Basic, pre-trip preparation emphasized a need to be cognizant of and sensitive to the local culture. This may have contributed to individual and group acceptance, tolerance and success. The pre- and post-trip interviews and surveys revealed most STIs expected changes in their initial opinions of the new culture and were willing to adapt to and accept those differences.

Many of the STIs were concerned more about living conditions, food availability and other inconveniences rather than philosophical perspectives and cultural differences. The conflicts that arose had two parts. One concern was their interactions and reactions to one another as individuals and to the group. The other concern was how to present their American identity to the community. They were in a foreign environment, diverse in age, gender, background, and personality. Adjustments involved quick problem solving abilities, negotiations and compromise and adaptation to personality characteristics. An exception focused on two of the STIs ambivalent and brash behavior. The other ten STIs chose the more open, culturally relative attitude, embracing the new interactions and reactions with empathy for the Chinese culture. They agreed to present a unified identity and non-confrontational demeanor.

2. Negotiation and mediation of identities should be a goal of both the host and guest representatives for maximizing immersion success. Understanding first the “self” and then the “other” involves compromise, negotiation and adjustment to the differences of cultural norms, values and behaviors.

Differences in teaching/learning philosophies, school facilities, curriculum, teaching styles and ethnic inequality resulted in understanding and respect for the Chinese culture. Conflict resolution and problem solving techniques allowed the process of cultural relativism to begin. The Chinese collectivist philosophy conflicted with the American individualist ideology. Willingness to accept these differences required the thorough reflections of patience and understanding.

3. Exchange of social and cultural capital depends upon status and respect. Mutual acceptance of core norms and values is paramount to success.

The motivation of the Chinese to accept the STIs was their need to learn conversational English. The value of the STIs as a source of cultural capital might be an advantage for Americans over other foreign workers who come to China for work. Speaking colloquial English versus Native Chinese English gives Americans an additional advantage and is encouraged and endorsed by Chinese education officials. The STIs were treated with respect and dignity by the staff, students, parents and the local community. They observed Chinese methods of learning and adjusted their teaching methods to include small group discussions, games, verbal encouragement and reward techniques.

4. Prejudice was evident within Chinese society. Acceptance of this prejudice, without negative reflected behavior, enabled the STIs to identify, process, rationalize and react with a positive attitude and demeanor.

The Chinese have a socially accepted prejudice of the non-Han including people of color. Initial rejection of the African-American STIs was accepted because it was assumed that they were of African descent because “all Americans are blonde and blue-eyed.” It took a longer time period for the Chinese to adjust to these “new” Americans. Once acceptance took place, the African-Americans were embraced and acknowledged for their value as English teachers.

5. For immersion to occur in a globalized world, having the desire to learn, adapt and mediate behavior is necessary. Also important is the willingness to be open and accessible to change. Maintaining one’s own culture can be accomplished without ceding totally to the “other.”

The STIs felt the opportunity to participate in the program allowed them to rethink their individual philosophies and identities. Through observation, mediation, and adaptation, the STIs were able to react with a positive attitude to the Chinese; therefore obtaining social and professional acceptance. In essence, their goal was to become culturally relevant ambassadors from the US. They changed and adjusted to another culture’s norms and values in order to attain that goal.

Implications of this study

This study observed American community college students before, during and after a ten week student internship program in Changchun, China. It revealed how cultural immersion and relevance affect experiences and create a more culturally responsive and relevant ambassador.

The STIs indicated this experience was beneficial to their futures as well as to their self-identification. They gained knowledge, new skills and awareness. Problems and challenges confronted were considered positive learning experiences. The subjects were able to mediate and adjust personal attitudes and actions that resulted in empathy and positive reactions were essential to cultural awareness and immersion. This response is an antithesis to the short-term tourist reactions found in other studies. Cultural experience does not guarantee immersion, as exhibited by two of the interns; it does encourage an enhanced empathy for other cultures, as indicated in prior studies such as Zhao, 2010.

Additional skills, adjustments, adaptation, and communication techniques due to the length of stay and depth of involvement with the local community proved to be essential to this unique study. It can be implied that for future workers to adapt to global opportunities; they will need to be prepared with ample knowledge of foreign cultures (norms, value, behaviors). They must have a positive, active, approachable attitude in order to adapt and be accepted into the work and social environments they will encounter.

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Appendices

Appendix A
ISS2930-01 Syllabus

College of Central Florida-Ocala Campus-Spring 2011
ISS-2930-01 Jan/Feb mini-mester Chinese Culture
Three Credit Hours Instructor: Lee H. Rosen, M.A.

Class meets: M/W/F 10:00-11:50; Bldg #8-109

Instructor's Office Hours: Bldg. #7, Room 204D

Monday/Wednesday:

7:00am-8:00am; Noon-1:00 pm; 4:00pm-5:30pm

Friday:

7:00am-8:00am; Noon-5:00 pm (by appt only)

Please note that all of my classes are in Bldg #8; so check for me there (room 106) after first checking my office

Instructor's Contact Info:

352-237-2111; Ext.1499 (m/w/f only) Email: rosenl@cf.edu

H/SS office: Kristina Chandler (Bldg #8-106; ext. 1292)

Regular Mail: Leave in my mail slot in #8-106

Extended Emergency Closure. "For emergency campus closings (natural disasters, etc.) call 352-291-4499 or 800-831-9244 or check our website www.cf.edu."

Required Text: Although there is no textbook assigned for this course, you may be asked to download and print documents for use in class from time to time.

Course Description/Objectives:

This course is an introduction to Chinese Culture and is designed for those students who will be traveling to China in the foreseeable future.

Lectures and discussions will focus on Chinese history and culture plus:

*Education of primary and secondary school children for those who plan to teach conversational English in China

*Chinese history

*Chinese cultural differences in comparison with Western culture, rural and urban background, social class and other socioeconomic factors

*Respect for laws and customs while traveling overseas

*Business opportunities for local industry

*Employment opportunities for students in emerging markets

*Foreign relations

*Basic introduction of Chinese language (conversational)

Appendix A (continued)

Attendance/Assignments:

Since this class is being taught for the first time this semester at CF, this is going to be a group learning experience with interactive participation and thorough research on topics such as those listed above. I reserve the right to change assignments and groups or add exams based on how much effort each student puts into the course.

You will all learn from each other about China. Even though there is no substitute for working and studying in China, this course will prepare you for understanding Chinese history, customs and people. Since we will have a relatively small class, I will split up the week and make Monday and Wednesday a regular session and reserve Fridays for guest lecturers including people who have traveled to/or are from China, for local business people, for working in presentation teams or for planning for the first excursion to China in March-June 2011.

I would like to add that I will give you my full undivided attention in the time we have together and I would expect you to do the same. **Please turn off all cell phones and absolutely no text messaging.** It is distracting to me and to others in the classroom. Please review other college policies included in the Student Handbook, as I do endorse and will adhere to those policies in my classroom. I ask, out of common courtesy to me and the students who are focusing on the discussions and lectures during class time, to not be disturbed by leaving your seat to use the rest room or to go get a snack or to use the phone. **If you cannot stay for the entire session without disrupting the class by leaving your seat, then please do not attend that class session.**

Grading: Each presentation and paper is worth 100 points (4x100=400 max) A =360-400; B+=345-359; B =320-344; C+=305-319; C =280-304; D =240-279; F =0-239

Right to Change Syllabus If necessary, some components of this syllabus may change. However, any such changes will be announced to the students in class. The student is responsible for any such announced changes. However, I will try to update any changes to the schedule via the portal for this course on **MyCF** on a regular basis.

Date	Topic
1/5	Class Intro-Syllabus/History and Culture Assignments
1/7	China Trip (March-June) Co-ordination meeting/Group work
1/10	Library visit-meet on 2 nd floor @ 10am-research work
1/12/14	China <u>History</u> -Ancient
1/17	No class- MLK holiday
1/19/21	China <u>History</u> -20 th century
1/24	Modern Day China <u>History</u> Discussion-Geopolitics
1/26/28	<u>History</u> Presentations (written reports due)
1/31	Business <u>Culture</u> /Government
2/2/4	Business <u>Culture</u>
2/7/9/11	<u>Culture</u> of Family/Religion
2/14/16/18	<u>Culture</u> of Education
2/21/23/25	<u>Culture</u> Presentations (written reports due)

Appendix B
Student-Teacher-Interns

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>
Yvonne	F	46	African-American (Jamaica)
Stephanie	F	35	White
Adam	M	31	White
Benny	M	27	Latino (Puerto Rico)
Andy	M	22	White
Jessica	F	20	White
John	M	20	Latino (Puerto Rico)
Michael	M	20	White
Taitiana	F	20	African-American
Alexis	F	18	Latino (Spain)
Dustin	M	18	White
Ferris	M	18	African-American

Appendix C **ISS2930-95 Syllabus**

College of Central Florida-Ocala Campus-Summer A, 2011
ISS-2930-95; Special Topics in Social Science; Chinese Educ.
Three Credit Hours; Ind. Study; Instructor: Lee H. Rosen, M.A.

Class meets: 1:00-2:00pm...May 11th and May 25th...Bldg #8-109

Instructor's Office Hours:

- 1) Bldg. #7, Room 204D; 9am-1pm and 3pm-5pm
on May 11th and May 25th
- 2) On-line on Skype and/or Angel every Wed from 9am-5pm throughout Summer A session

Instructor's Contact Info:

352-237-2111 (Ext.1499) cell: 727-804-2543 fax: 352-797-3570
Skype: rosenlcf; Email: rosenl@cf.edu or leemail47@aol.com

Extended Emergency Closure. "For emergency campus closings (natural disasters, etc.) call 352-291-4499 or 800-831-9244 or check our website www.cf.edu."

Required Text: There is no textbook assigned for this course.

Course Description/Objectives:

A study of the education of primary and secondary school children for those who plan to teach conversational English in China and/or who have already participated in a six week trial program in China and two weeks of travel.

Grading:

Each assignment is worth 200 points (2x200=400 max)

A =360-400; B+=345-359; B =320-344; C+=305-319; C =280-304;
D =240-279; F =0-239

Right to Change Syllabus

If necessary, some components of this syllabus may change. However, I will update any changes to the schedule via the portal for this course on MyCF or Angel or Skype message or via regular email.

Appendix C (continued)

Assignments:

You will write a comprehensive term paper and then tape a session about China education and culture based upon your real time experience. Each paper/tape session will be your own intelligent and thoughtful analysis and will not be shared with others in the course unless you decide to do so.

Specific Assignments and Due Dates:

Term Paper: Due June 1

This term paper could be in any format but it needs to be chronological and thorough.

Section A: This will be a weekly recap of your teaching experience including but not limited to the following:

- Chinese School location and address
- Grade(s) taught
- Student socio-economic levels
- Student participation
- Good practices and practices that did not work
- Lesson plan and other prep
- Unique methods used
- Examples of activities
- School supervisor involvement

Section B: This will be a weekly recap of your cultural experience including but not limited to the following:

- Culture of the children in the schools
- Unusual customs of others not involved with the schools
- Analysis of the culture in Changchun and a comparison with Xian and Beijing
- What you learned about the history of China from the cultural trips

Appendix D

QUESTIONNAIRE FALL 2010

CLASS:

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE STATEMENTS USING THE SCALE OF 1-5. ONLY USE #6 IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND A PARTICULAR STATEMENT.

- | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. United States companies should curtail globalization efforts to keep the United States economy strong. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. I would take a job in another country. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. I would take a job in a foreign country if I cannot find a job in the United States. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. I would not take a job in a foreign country for any reason. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. I would work in the United States for a foreign company doing business in the United States. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. United States corporations need to keep jobs in the United States and not expand into other countries. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. United States companies need to expand global economic opportunities even if it adversely affects jobs in the United States. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. I think living and working in another country would change my current attitudes about the people who live there. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. Foreign workers in the United States are not as competent as United States workers. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. I do not like to contact a United States company help-line and speak to a foreigner to obtain information. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. The United States will remain the world's technological leader. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. China will become the world's technological leader. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. China's economy will never be a free market driven system. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. China's government uses it's economic power to control countries world-wide. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. The United States will only temporarily lose economic world leadership. | strongly disagree | disagree | undecided | agree | strongly agree | not sure/don't know |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Appendix D (continued)

16. China will permanently replace the United States as the global economic power.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. The Chinese government is using the United States economy to advance it's own economy.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Chinese people view the United States as imperialistic.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Foreigners consider the United States as helpful in a crisis.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Developed countries try to imitate the United States free market system.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Chinese people have more national pride than United States citizens.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Chinese people see themselves as more advanced than Americans in education.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Chinese people get information about the United States from their government.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Chinese people get information about the United States from the media and/or the internet.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. China's economy is surpassing all other countries.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I have had a positive experience with a foreign student in the United States	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I have not had any experience with a foreign student in the United States.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I get information about Chinese people via the internet and/or the media.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I have little or no knowledge of the daily life of an average Chinese person.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Chinese students are politically active in China.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Chinese students admire the United States college community atmosphere.	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree	not sure/don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix D (continued)

32. **I am comfortable interacting with foreign students.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. **I am/would be comfortable working at a job in the United States with foreign co-workers .**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. **I am/would be comfortable working at a job in a foreign country .**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. **I would like to work in China for a limited number of years.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
36. **I would like to work in China permanently.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
37. **I feel my family background influences my perception of China and the Chinese people.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
38. **I feel my education influences my perception of China and the Chinese people.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6
39. **I feel the media influences my perception of China and the Chinese people.**
 strongly disagree disagree undecided agree strongly agree not sure/don't know
 1 2 3 4 5 6

40. Your perception of people of Chinese decent: Circle the adjectives that best describe the Chinese people:
Discriminate, shy, smart, cheap, imperialistic, hegemonic, communist, judgmental, ordered, superior, pushy, religious, respectful, passive, aggressive, technological, globally helpful in a crisis, independent subservient, advanced, studious, achievers, non-achievers, reliable, exclusionary, prejudiced, high IQ, national pride, authoritative, cunning, cooperative, ethnocentric.

Additional comments: _____

41. Perception of Chinese attitudes toward Americans: Circle the adjectives that best describe how you believe people of Chinese decent perceive Americans:
Imperialistic, hegemonic, self-interested, advanced, materialistic, friendly, exclusionary, respect individualism, rational, contemptuous, religious, commercial, ethnocentric, independent, passive, aggressive, pushy, technological, pampered, indulgent, scholars, generous, helpful in a crisis, reliable, shy, prejudiced, high IQ.

Additional comments: _____

Appendix D (continued)

42. Please rank by numbers 1-10 the following countries with #1 as most admired and #10 as least admired.

- _____ Brazil
- _____ Canada
- _____ China
- _____ Cuba
- _____ England
- _____ France
- _____ Germany
- _____ India
- _____ Japan
- _____ Venezuela

Explain reasons for your #1 and #10 choices.

General Comments on the Survey:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MALE _____ FEMALE _____ AGE: _____

I attended a RURAL or URBAN elementary school. (Circle One)

I attended a RURAL or URBAN high school. (Circle One)

Size of your H.S. graduating class _____ (public school)

Size of your H.S. graduating class _____ (private school)

City, State where you spent the majority of your K-12 education: _____

Year graduated High School: _____

Appendix D (continued)

I have/ I have not traveled outside the U.S. (Circle One)

Country/Countries I have visited: _____

Length of visit in each (# weeks/days): _____

I have/ I have not studied outside of the U.S. (Circle One)

I would/I would not study outside of the U.S. (Circle One)

Why or Why not: _____

Parent's highest education level achieved: Circle One

Father:

GED, High School, 2 Yr. College Degree, 4 Yr. College Graduate, Master's, PHD

Mother:

GED, High School, 2 Yr. College Degree, 4 Yr. College Graduate, Master's, PHD

Student Ethnicity: Check one (or more if you are multi-racial).

White

Black, African-American

Hispanic, Latino

American Indian ; Alaskan Native

Asian, Pacific Islander

What influences my opinions in general the most is: (Choose one)

_____ Family

_____ Peers

_____ H.S. education

_____ College experiences

_____ Media (please answer #12 if this is your choice-otherwise skip #12)

Only if you answered "Media" for question #11 choose which one influences you the most.

_____ Internet information

_____ Print news

_____ Radio news

_____ TV news

Approximate family income: Check one

\$20,000 or less _____

\$21,000-\$49,000 _____

\$50,000-\$75,000 _____

\$76,000-\$100g _____

Over \$100,000 _____

Appendix E
Post-trip survey questions

1. Please list five adjectives which you believe best describe the Chinese people.
2. Please list five adjectives which best describe how you believe people of Chinese decent perceive Americans.
3. What did you specifically do to communicate in the classroom and with the public?
4. What do you believe the Chinese people learned from you?
 - a. Your students
 - b. Other Chinese
5. As per your comments on the taped sessions, many of the people at the schools and within the community treated you as celebrities with awe, respect and extreme interest. Do we, as Americans in the US react to foreign students and tourists in the same manner and purpose? Why /why not.
6. What specific factors do you think led to the discontent of two of these students in your group?

Appendix F

Final term paper projects

Individual paper topics

Chinese culture

Chinese economic culture

Chinese language

Communist Party

Comparison: Government of China/Mexico

Comparison of France/China/Jamaica: social welfare, transportation, police

Confucius/Jesus/Mohammed

Family-rural/urban

First Empire of Ancient China

Japanese/Chinese history

Racial & ethnic attitudes in the US and China (comparison)

Racism in the US and China

Taiwan/Hong Kong/Macau

Current religions of China

Group presentation topics

China: ancient history

China: modern history

China: middle history

Colonial history of China

Appendix G Map of China



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About the author

Lee H. Rosen is currently an associate professor of sociology at the College of Central Florida in Ocala. He graduated with his first master's degree in 2006 from the University of South Florida. His graduate degree work includes over twenty master's level courses in international relations/comparative politics (political science), sociology and college teaching (education). He has a thirty-two year background in business. His global business experiences and his trip to China in 2005 prompted awareness of global opportunities. He continues to encourage students to experience and evaluate the benefits of international travel and work experience for future career opportunities.