

CULTURAL CHALLENGES TO CONTENT AREA INSTRUCTION IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the two American instructors relate their experiences teaching a business curriculum at a higher education institution in China. Recent political and economic developments are chronicled in setting the stage for a discussion of cultural stereotypes which, in some cases, became barriers to teaching and learning. Focus is on the preconceived notions they arrived in China with and how those preconceived notions affected the design of their instruction. The validity of these notions was tested through a student survey and observations. The challenges faced when reality clashed with expectations is discussed. The research team included a Chinese lecturer who provides insights on the Chinese perspective related to the stereotypes identified.

Keywords: *China, Higher Education, Cultural Barriers, Stereotypes, One Child Policy, Andragogy, Geography, Face.*

INTRODUCTION

Historical Context

China, as a culture, dates back 6,000 years and is widely credited with the development of the first banking system, the first civil service exam (and bureaucracy), the first manufacturing of paper, the first wine recipe, and the first compass. Despite these advances, the Chinese Empire was left behind during the rapid expansion of the industrial age and the global colonization period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Plagued by fractional warfare, foreign invasions, and the rise of communism in the 20th century, China has been slow to arrive at the juncture of the globalized world (Frieden, 2006).

The late 20th century saw rapid economic development in Asia. The rise of the *Asian Tigers* ñ Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia ñ signaled the beginning of what some have called the *Asian Century* (Frieden, 2006). But it was not until after the death of Chairman Mao Zedong that China began to share in this prosperity. From a policy of strict communism, China moved to a market mentality encouraging entrepreneurship. The term commonly used by both faculty and students to describe China's current status is *developing nation*. China's acceptance into the World Trade Organization in 2001 evidences this fundamental shift in the official attitude towards globalization (Deans, 2011).

This new phase of economic development resulted in a meteoric rise of the Chinese economy, currently the second largest in the world and predicted to surpass the United States within the next 20 years. China is often depicted by the Western media as *The Factory of the*

World, which, based on an analysis of its financial statistics, would seem appropriate. China has the largest reserves of foreign currency of any nation on the planet, is the largest single holder of U.S. debt instruments, and has balance of trade that is the envy of the world (Silk, 2013).

These policies also brought millions out of a subsistence lifestyle and into a position in the global market, China began the migration from rural to urban populations and a middle class emerged. As the urban populations exploded, this middle class launched China into the role of massive consumer. In 2010, Chinese consumers purchased more autos and light trucks than the United States (Aggarwal & Goodell, 2011). In 2013, the popular *Singles Day* (a marketing holiday which began as a humorous college prank in opposition to Valentine's Day) generated 35 billion Yuan (approximately 5.7 billion U.S. dollars) in internet sales on the popular Alibaba online shopping websites alone (Mishkin, 2013).

A contributing factor to this increase in disposable income is the decrease in size of the Chinese family. Chairman Mao Zedong encouraged large families as a way to empower the country (Potts, 2006). This led to widespread poverty and famine. Following his death, the new regime, led by Deng Xiaoping, sought to reverse this trend and alleviate the community, economic, and environmental issues resulting from unrestrained population growth, by instituting a *One Child Policy* in 1979. While there are many exceptions to the policy, it has accomplished its goal as evidenced by China's population growth rate, currently at .46 annually, with a birthrate of 12.25 births per 1,000 population (China, 2013). In fact, the policy has been so effective that in November 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee opened the path to two child families (Pinghui & Yu, 2013).

Education (R)evolution

With this new perspective on the integration of China into a global economy, the need for a shift in education became apparent and China has recognized the need for content-area education in English. In fact, according to research conducted under the auspicious of the Fulbright program (sponsored by the U.S. State Department), a trend is seen worldwide as developing countries seek education in business and economic specializations taught in English (Dautermann, 2005).

As a result, China has become more welcoming to foreign teachers (Zhao, 2013). The Chinese government has a robust program to recruit visiting professors for many of their universities. It is, in fact, unusual to find a Chinese University that does not have a visiting professor program. Increasingly, these programs are content-area as well as language acquisition. A study by Dautermann (2005) provides supporting evidence of this trend, observing that Chinese university administrators and well as students were deeply interested in improving both their English technical and business writing skills, to the point of establishing a teach the teacher program.

Geography (Just the who and where)

Jinhua Polytechnic (JHC) is located in southeast China, in the city of Jinhua, Zhejiang Province. The university serves approximately 23,000 students. In the public structure of Chinese higher education, JHC is a *tertiary college*, not a *tiered school*, as are the Normal Universities, and

therefore does not attract the highest performing students. To draw a parallel, that fails to consider the cultural or social aspects of geography, it is similar to an American career college or vocational technology program, but with student housing.

JHC's mission statement translates as: Unity of Theory and Practice, Pragmatic and Innovative. The major fields of study at JHC are nursing, information technology, business, finance, tourism/hospitality, and several applied engineering/mechanical programs. While students who pass the promotion exam are offered the opportunity to study two additional years at a higher level University and earn a baccalaureate degree, the majority of the students complete three year programs. These culminate in one or more national level exams in their specialization area(s) as well as the Practice English test for Colleges (PRETCO). Students who pass all of their courses receive certificates in their field; those who pass all of their exams and the PRETCO receive a tertiary (below baccalaureate) degree.

The Sino-American Accounting Project (SAAP)

In an effort to enhance their status and accreditation, JHC began actively seeking relationships with Western Universities. It should not be overlooked that these programs, by heightening JHC's reputation, would also increase their revenue. On the other side of the world, Kaplan University (KU) shared JHC's goals. Establishing themselves as an international school, and, more importantly, tapping into the largest student population in the world would accomplish both.

In 2011, after several years of negotiations, JHC's School of Economics and Management entered into a partnership with KU, establishing the Sino-American Accounting Program (SAAP). The mission of the School of Economics and Management translates to: Social Commitment and Diligence. The SAAP's stated purpose is to make use of the capabilities of both parties and to introduce the most update curriculum and teaching resources, in delivering the concepts of an American accounting educational program, and to promote cooperation in accounting and vocational training between China and the U.S.

The agreement stipulated that Kaplan would provide highly qualified foreign experts to JHC to teach both English language and business courses during the students' three year accounting certificate program. At the end of their JHC program, the highest performing students, rather than completing their bachelor's degrees in China, will transition to KU's Hagerstown, Maryland campus. Here they will complete a two-year business curriculum culminating in the award of a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. While the school does draw students from all over China, the SAAP is restricted to students from within the province. The program currently serves 285 students. The first cohort of students are expected to transition to Hagerstown in 2014.

In the first year, the teacher exchange was limited to a single English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher; the remaining courses were taught by Chinese instructors. In the second year, a second ESL teacher and two business professors were added. Now, in its third year, the American staff is comprised of three ESL teachers and two business professors: The authors Cosgrove and James.

Cosgrove and James are responsible for the entire English-language business curriculum consisting of classes in accounting, corporate finance, taxation, Excel, economics, management, and public relations. Chinese lecturers teach parallel and complimentary courses in the students' native Mandarin, and also assist the U.S. instructors in the content areas. Zhao, one of these lecturers, completes the research team. Throughout this paper, references to "the researchers" or "the team" include all three members, while references to the "instructors" or "teachers" refer to the U.S. instructors only. All classroom observations are derived from the English-language business classes taught by the U.S. instructors.

Geography (Beyond the who and where)

While it may be quipped that "no matter where you go, there you are," geography is an important consideration in any endeavor. Geography deals with details that comprise where something is such as longitude, latitude, elevation, climate, political boundaries, and population, among many others. Geography also examines the way in which people think, behave, and interact; how they are motivated, and how they respond to stimuli or incentives. This where involves sociology and culture (anthropology), and is especially important to consider when examining the perceptions of leadership and follower roles, designing course content, and planning the delivery of instruction.

A consideration of geography also requires one to consider their own preconceived notions about the *where*. While it is given that you cannot know everything there is to know about a new place, the American business teachers knew very little about this one, and most of what they did know turned out to be wrong. As a result (embarrassingly, but not surprisingly), the team encountered various challenges during their first semester. Several of these challenges lend themselves to academic research with the goal of improving the quality of education offered in such cross-cultural programs. To that end, the questions considered by the researchers were:

1. What preconceived notions do Americans have about the Chinese?
2. Are these stereotypes valid?
3. How do preconceived notions impact both students and instructors in the cross-cultural classroom?
4. What are the challenges in teaching business curriculum in English at a Chinese higher-education institution?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies as early as 1999 addressed the importance of understanding the cultural and educational context of teaching in China. Littlewood (1999) of Hong Kong Baptist University notes three areas of culture that impact on learning: Collectivist orientation, relationships, and achievement through effort. Littlewood (1999) concludes that failure to understand these aspects of culture will result in a decrease in teacher effectiveness.

Coggin and Coggin (2001), studied the impact of Chinese cultural norms and their effect on foreign teachers. The researchers considered the concepts of face, family, courtesy, and

etiquette. Based on their personal experiences teaching in China, the researchers concluded that consideration of these issues are far more important in China than they are in the US.

In 2004, Brand conducted a cross-cultural study of students from China, Australia and the United States. Brand (2004) concluded that Chinese students differ from Western students in their conception of self as it relates to self-esteem. Specifically, Chinese students exhibit a lower level of self-esteem when compared to their Western counterparts. A similar study by Chinese researchers Pan and Zhang (2004) indicates that Chinese students spend more effort on building relationships with others in their cohort than American students do.

Regarding grading procedures, Dautermann (2005) concluded that Chinese students consider fair treatment in regards to resolving a grading issue of more importance than an actual grade change. Further research by Tata (2005) supports this conclusion by noting that Chinese students value *interpersonal justice*, defined as being treated with dignity and provided with explanations of the grading procedures, while American students seek an opportunity to discuss the grade and appeal the grading decision. Closely related is the conclusion reached by Hurd and Xiao (2006) that Chinese young adults are predisposed to accept the professor as the sole authority on any given subject.

Chen and Hird (2006) conducted a study of the effectiveness of group work at the university level in China. Their quantitative and qualitative analysis focused on the value of small group work (two person teams) in reinforcing English language skills. The findings of this study were inconclusive, revealing the difficulty of evaluation. The conclusion reached was that the value truly depends on the skill level and personalities of the students involved. The research did, however, reveal the characteristics of shyness and modesty among the Chinese students, a hesitance to speak out, which the researchers did not anticipate. This highlights the importance of foreign instructors understanding the culture of the country they are teaching in.

A 2010 study involving students from Japan, Taiwan, China, and the U.S. found that Asian students typically take longer to establish their independence and suffer a higher level of distress than their Western counterparts (Berman, You, Schwartz, Teo & Mochizuki, 2011). This cultural aspect can lead to unreasonable expectations on the part of the foreign professor applying andragogical methods in the university classroom.

Getty (2011), journals her personal experience teaching English literature at a Chinese university. Cultural differences noted included students applauding at the end of each lecture, and the propensity of students to discount any world view that was in conflict with their own. Like other researchers have described, Getty (2011) also noted that personal embarrassment was an issue with both students and Chinese colleagues (Confucian value of *face*).

Another common theme in the literature is the collectivist mentality of Asian students in juxtaposition with the individualist attitude of Western students. A study by Holtbruegge and Mohr (2010), involving 939 students across ten countries, finds that Western (individualist) students tend to seek active application as a learning vehicle, while the Asian (collectivist) learners prefer reflective observation, requiring the opportunity to devise an adequate response to the issue.

While the picture painted by the previous research is both multifaceted and incomplete, the message is clear: An understanding of the culture, the geography, is critical to the success of any cross-cultural initiative in education. Failure to consider the history, the background, the values,

the attitudes of both the students and one's foreign counterparts, will impede both the teaching and the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research and analysis was deemed most appropriate for this study. Data collections took two forms: 1) A survey; and 2) Observation and interaction of the three researchers, as instructors, with the students.

The survey enabled the researchers to gather information on student perceptions and attitudes. No indication of the students name or any personally identifiable information was included on the survey instrument. Background questions asked students their gender and whether or not they had siblings. It was anticipated that this information would be used for correlational analysis. Participation was entirely voluntary, though students who chose to participate were given a 10 point quiz grade (1,000 point basis ñ 1 percent of final grade) for presenting the submission confirmation page. SurveyMonkey was chosen to prepare the survey which was distributed through email to a total of 285 SAAP students: 103 first year, 89 second year, and 93 third year. All students were accounting majors. All students were between the ages of 18 and 21.

The ten survey items were derived from previous research in Hong Kong by Littlewood (1999). Students were asked to indicate their response using a 5-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' for each of ten statements. The researchers had intended to have students complete the survey in English, as they are participating in an English-language business program; however, the students' English language proficiency was not as high as anticipated and the researchers felt this would have a negative impact on the survey results. The survey was therefore translated into Mandarin.

Of the 285 students surveyed, 230 responded, equating to an 81 percent response rate. Table 1 provides a detail of the sample by background characteristics. Data was broken down by gender and also by family composition (only child/siblings) as the researchers sought to explore whether any trends could be discerned based on these factors.

POPULATION					
		Total population:		285	
		Responses:		230	
		Response rate:		81%	
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS					
Male	52	23%	Have Siblings	138	60%
Female	178	77%	Only Children	92	40%
Total	<u>230</u>			<u>230</u>	

The second method of data collection involved observations by the three researchers in their day-to-day interactions with the second- and third-year students. The first year students were included in the survey, but they were not observed for a number of reasons: 1) first-year students begin their term a month after the second- and third-year students; 2) in their first term, first-year students do not receive any English-language content area instruction, only ESL instruction; therefore, 3) The first-year students were not instructed by any of the researchers during this first term. The team fully intends to continue their observations and further develop this research in the future.

These interactions of classroom behavior included, but were not limited to: Individual and group work; individual and group presentations; asking questions; and, responding to questions posed by the instructors. The researchers were also able to draw inferences based on work completed outside of the classroom.

FINDINGS

Table 2 details the percentage of students responding at each point on the Likert scale. The far right column indicates the average extent of agreement/disagreement with each statement. A score of five indicates perfect agreement of all students; a score of one indicates maximum disagreement of all students; a score of three is the midpoint, indicating neutrality toward the statement.

Table 2
TESTING THE PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS

Statement	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Mean agreement (5=max)
1. I like activities where I am part of a group which is working towards common goals.	65.2	28.3	5.7	0.4	0.4	4.57
2. I like to take part in activities which involve discussion within a group.	57.8	33.0	9.1	-	-	4.49
3. When I am working in a group, I like to help maintain a sense of hamony in the group.	64.8	33.9	1.3	-	-	4.63
4. In the open classroom, I often feel hesitant to 'stand out' by voicing my opinions or questions.	6.1	28.7	40.4	21.7	3.0	3.13
5. In the classroom I see the teacher as an authority figure.	14.8	53.0	22.2	7.8	2.2	3.70
6. I tend to see knowledge as something to be 'transmitted' by the teacher rather an 'discovered' by me as a learner.	4.8	14.3	40.0	35.2	5.7	2.77
7. I expect the teacher (rather than myself) to be responsible for evaluating how much I have learned.	7.0	24.8	40.0	25.7	2.6	3.08
8. I feel strong motivation to follow through learning tasks of which I perceive the practical value.	33.0	57.0	10.0	-	-	4.23
9. I feel more motivated to work when my own success contributes to the goals or prestige of significant groups (i.e., family, other students).	43.9	50.0	5.7	0.4	-	4.37
10. In the classroom I feel very concerned to perform well and correctly in what I do.	21.7	50.4	27.4	0.4	-	3.93

DISCUSSION

Heaven is where the police are British, the cooks are French, the mechanics German, the lovers Italian and it's all organized by the Swiss. Hell is where the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, the police German and it's all organized by the Italians. (Author unknown)

Preconceived Notions

Culture is system of shared values and beliefs defined as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others” (The Hofstede Center, n.d.a., para. 1). These shared values and beliefs result in stereotypes or preconceived notions that impact both the instructor and the student. The effects influence both the teacher’s effectiveness and the student’s motivation. In order to overcome these challenges each must have at least a basic understanding of the cultural underpinnings of the other.

On the first day of the term, before this research study was conceived, the team conducted an icebreaker activity with the second- and third-year students. The topic of the icebreaker was,

portentously, preconceived notions. The 182 students were grouped into classes of approximately 45 students each. Students were asked to count off by seven and group according to number, resulting in randomly assembled groups of six or seven. In their groups, they were given the following prompt to discuss: List 5 things you believe are true about Americans. One representative was chosen by each group to present the group's results. The instructor compiled a list of responses on the board. Table 3 presents the most frequent responses (somewhat to the surprise and amusement of the instructors).

Table 3	
PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS (PCNs) THE CHINESE STUDENTS HAD ABOUT AMERICANS	
1	Americans eat a lot of fast food and are all fat.
2	All Americans own guns.
3	American farmers are rich and own their land.
4	Americans have freedom to say and do whatever they want.
5	American women are promiscuous.

When the instructors debriefed the activity, they revealed the preconceived notions they had previously discussed and believed to be true about Chinese students. These are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4	
PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS (PCNs) THE AMERICAN RESEARCHERS HAD ABOUT THE CHINESE	
1	Chinese students value the collective over the individual.
2	Chinese students value harmony and avoid conflict.
3	Chinese students view teachers as powerful authority figures.
4	Chinese students are highly motivated and hard-working.
5	Chinese students are all only children; no siblings.

PCN1 - Collectivism: Chinese Students Value the Collective over the Individual.

In defining the elements of national culture, The Hofstede Center (n.d.a) identifies individualism versus collectivism as one of the five primary dimensions. At one end of this continuum, individualist cultures are characterized by loosely knit social frameworks that focus on self and immediate family. At the opposite end of the continuum are collectivist cultures in which members of a group care for each other's needs. In these cultures, self-image is viewed in terms of "we" rather than "I." According to The Hofstede Center (n.d.b), China scores a 20 on this scale indicating that "China is a highly collectivist culture where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily of themselves" (para. 5).

This research formed the basis of the instructors' preconceived notion that Chinese students value the collective over the individual. Based on this notion, in developing the courses for this assignment, the instructors focused more attention toward group projects and group activities than they would have in a U.S. classroom. The survey results indicate strong agreement with items 1 and 2 which reflect the importance of relationships within the group (average score = 4.53), supporting the instructors' assumptions.

Direct observations, however, do not lead to the same conclusion. During the course of the semester, the instructors assigned a number of tasks/projects involving group work. In some cases the groups were determined by the instructor; in others, the students were permitted to choose their own group members. In both arrangements, the instructors observed the same 'free rider' issues we would expect in a U.S. classroom, but did not expect in a Chinese classroom. During exercises in which group members were selected randomly by the instructor, personality conflicts and infighting were revealed; again, unexpected in what we believed to be a highly collectivist culture.

Observing discussion within groups, we found that conversation was lively when the students were permitted to speak in Mandarin, but when required to hold conversations in English, both the volume and the enthusiasm dropped dramatically. The researchers do not believe this to be a cultural issue, but related to the language barrier.

The Chinese perspective: Chinese students have always been told to value the collective over the individual from their childhood. They have been taught by their society that he who sacrifices oneself to make a group better is a hero. Their survey responses reveal what they have been taught to believe. In practice however, human nature prevails, and students of this age tend to be more focused on self. Another reason for this discrepancy between responses and observations relates to the characteristics of the student population involved. Tertiary school students are not as academically well-equipped as normal university students. They are more enthusiastic about out of class activities than study and behave much better in groups during events such as basketball games. In short, they are more focused on the social aspects of college life than their academic endeavors.

PCN2 - Harmony: Chinese Students Value Harmony and Avoid Conflict.

According to Xiaoping and Enrong (2004), "an emphasis on peace and harmony is an essential feature of traditional Chinese culture" (p. 35). Harmony is also a central tenet of

Confucianism. Closely related, with its roots in the Confucian model of social harmony, is the concept of face. Brown and Levinson (1987) define face

as something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. (p. 61)

This definition supports the perception by most Western cultures that *face* is something almost mystical, the loss of which results in ostracism. In much simpler terms, *face* refers to an individual's dignity, pride, image, and status within the social structure.

Based on the instructors understanding of the concepts of harmony and face, they expected that students would seek to maintain harmony in groups (item 3), and, as individuals recognizing the vulnerability of *face*, be hesitant to stand out (item 4), and concerned about how they are perceived (item 10).

This notion that Chinese students value harmony was indeed borne out by the strong agreement to item 3 (score = 4.63); however, the team's observations, once again, tell a different story.

In order to better assess the final project for the term, the instructors required the students to complete a peer evaluation and turn it in along with the project. The instructors' preconceived notions regarding harmony and conflict avoidance led them to anticipate the evaluations would have no value. In the interest of harmony, the instructors were certain the students would all report that each member contributed equally. This is not what transpired. Roughly half of the groups reported an equal distribution of work, while the other half were not at all hesitant in identifying the slackers. Several students even came to see the instructors during office hours to discuss the inequity of the work distribution.

Regarding *face*, the researchers had anticipated strong agreement with items 4 and 10, confirming the preconceived notions that Chinese students are reluctant to stand out and extremely concerned with correctness; however, the result was near neutral (average score = 3.53). Instructor observations confirm this result. While some students responded extremely shyly when called on for a response, the majority were willing to attempt to answer when prompted. Contrary to instructor expectations, there did not appear to be any overwhelming social stigma to answering a question incorrectly. Researchers observed much seemingly good natured laughter and chiding, with only a few isolated instances of embarrassment.

The researchers did corroborate another unexpected behavior related to the concept of *face*. Scarlatelli (2012) observes, *keeping face* often leads to outright lying.

If a Chinese person doesn't know the answer to something, a lot of times they will simply make something up on the spot. Similarly, if they have not performed a task they were given when asked about it they will simply stare and not say anything. This, according to my Chinese friends, is a way to 'save face' by not admitting you've done something wrong. (para. 6)

The instructors experience in the classroom corresponds with this commentary. This was an important revelation regarding culture. Compounding the issue is that Chinese students stand

when called on for a response. This can create an uncomfortable situation for both student and teacher. Keeping in mind that the content-area courses are still expected to support the ESL program, it is important for students to speak on a regular basis, not just read and write.

Over the course of the semester, the instructors discovered two successful methods of diffusing this situation, allowing both student and instructor to *save face*. One method involved the game show technique of calling a “lifeline.” If a student appeared to be struggling, they could call on another student to help them. This was often times very entertaining. Another method was to design participation exercises using round robin techniques. Participation increased when students were called on in a particular order, rather than randomly. Knowing when it would be their turn seemed to increase the student’s comfort level, as did the option to “pass” if they did not know the answer when their turn came. In addition, if designed to be fast-paced, round robin exercises also kept students in their seats.

The Chinese perspective: In addition to the Confucian influence, the government and the media (controlled by the government) promote harmony in order to build a secure society. Unlike in Western cultures, Chinese news is dominated by positive stories of national achievement. Negative reporting is minimal.

Chinese students do value harmony as an important factor in interacting with others. However, as a result of the long-standing One Child Policy, some do not know how to work with others within a team. Conflict will happen when the interactions do not meet their expectations.

Most Chinese students do not want to “stand out” not only because “face” issue, but also influenced by another central tenet of Confucianism called moderation. In most cases, students, especially girls, while knowing the correct answer, will still hesitate to speak out until prompted by the instructor.

PCN 3 - Power & Authority: Chinese Students View Teachers as Powerful Authority Figures.

German sociologist Max Weber defined the social phenomenon of power as “the capacity of an individual or group to realize desired ends in spite of resistance offered by others” (Johnson & Kruse, 2009, p. 77). According to Weber, this power is derived from three sources: The *traditional authority* rooted in established institutions, customs, and beliefs of the collective; the *legal authority* of enacted rules and laws; and, the *charismatic authority*, which Weber (1946) refers to as the “*gift of grace*, the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership” (p. 79).

The dominant leadership style observed by the team is the Confucian Asia team- and humane-oriented leadership. This profile is described by Northouse (2013) as “a leader who works and cares about others but who uses status and position to make independent decisions without the input of others” (p. 398). This style is reminiscent of the traditional view of leadership described by Machiavelli (1532) in his masterpiece, *The Prince*, who acknowledges that ideally, the leader should be both feared and loved. The power element dominates; however, concern for people is also high.

Hofstede describes this dynamic as the *power-distance* dimension of national culture. China, with a rank of 80, is described as “a society that believes that inequalities amongst people

are acceptable” and where “the subordinate-superior relationship tends to be polarized” (The Hofstede Center, n.d.b, para. 3).

Based on the researchers’ understanding of power, leadership, and the power-distance dimension of Chinese culture, the instructors did not anticipate any classroom management problems. Item 5 relates to student perceptions of teacher authority. The research team expected strong agreement with this statement and were surprised by the result (score = 3.70), indicating near neutrality.

While there were not significant issues in classroom management, and no blatant disrespect, the level of deference anticipated based solely on the position of authority was absent. Researcher observations suggest that respect for authority among this generation may be influenced by age and gender more than simply position.

The Chinese perspective: The word “teacher” in Chinese means someone who was born earlier and therefore is expected to have more knowledge. In the past, students did see the teacher as more of an authority figure because they respected this knowledge. Knowledge and hard work was the key to a better life.

The current generation of students have grown up in a very different China. Their parents were not well educated, but because of the industrial revolution in China, they have been able to succeed economically and amass unprecedented wealth. This generation of students therefore do not believe they have to work hard academically in order to succeed. They believe that they have more knowledge and can do better than their parents. What they fail to recognize is that even though their parents had less education, they worked much harder. Many Chinese believe the Chinese work ethic is gone forever.

PCN4 - Motivation and Dedication: Chinese Students Are Highly Motivated And Hard-Working.

Pedagogy, from the Greek words for “child-lead,” is defined as the art and science of teaching, and also refers to the function or work of the teacher. It is often (wrongly) used synonymously with teaching. Pedagogy describes the traditional classroom of our youth. Because young children have not yet collected enough experiences to effectively transform new information into learning, instruction is developed in such a way that children are taught not only what to learn, but *how* to learn. Leadership in the pedagogical environment is generally of the transactional variety: Carrot and stick, task-oriented, and often autocratic.

Andragogy, on the other hand, is the art and science of teaching adults. While Knowles did not coin the term, it has become synonymous with his name as he advanced the first theory of teaching adults. According to Knowles (as cited in Smith, 2002), andragogy is premised on the following five differences that exist between child and adult learners.

1. Self-concept: As a person matures his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Experience: As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

3. Readiness to learn. As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. Orientation to learning. As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to learn: As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal. (para. 32)

Leadership in the andragogical environment is often democratic/participative and can be charismatic and (ideally) transformational.

The students in the study group are all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, qualifying them, by virtue of age, as adult learners. As such, they should share the understanding assumed by andragogy that learning is a mutual relationship between teacher and student, and the instructors should have achieved success utilizing andragogical approaches in the classroom.

Survey items 6 and 7 were directed at understanding the students' view regarding the respective roles of learner and teacher. The research team expected the results to reveal at least moderate disagreement with items 6 and 7, indicating the students felt responsible for their own learning, not reliant on the teacher to deliver both knowledge and evaluation. The results failed to meet expectations (average score = 2.93) indicating a nearly neutral response.

Items 8 and 9 were created to evaluate the students' perceptions related to motivation. Support of instructors' preconceived notions would be indicated by strong agreement with these two items signifying a high degree of self-motivation. The results (average score = 4.30) does indeed support this notion of motivated learners.

Classroom observations do not support these results. In the first few weeks of instruction it became immediately apparent that many of the students in the program were not yet prepared to take responsibility for their own learning. Hurd and Xiao (2006), in discussing the challenges faced in the distance learning environment, comment that in China, "pupils are used to being 'spoon-fed' at school" (p. 207). The instructors' observations confirm this. Students had to be told to take notes, though often they had arrived with neither paper nor writing implement; textbooks were left in desks, not taken home to study; every task had to have a grade or evaluation attached, or it would not be completed; classroom rules had to be established and posted. This required significant adaptation of the instructors' materials and instructional and leadership approaches.

The Chinese perspective: The culture in China is extremely family-oriented. Families tend to be much closer both geographically and emotionally. Parents feel a responsibility to take care of their children throughout their lives; adult students are generally still being treated as children by their parents during their college years. Parents are willing to sacrifice their own needs in order to provide for their children, even into adulthood. The One Child Policy has exacerbated this situation as, in some cases, a single child is the sole focus of two parents and four grandparents. In addition, as previously discussed, the parents of this generation of student are more financially secure, if not wealthy. As a result, children know they have a safety net if they fail. There is therefore little motivation for them to work hard.

PC5 - “Little Emperors”: Chinese Students Are All Only Children.

The term *Little Emperor* has been used in China to describe the role played by the single child in the Chinese family as a result of China’s One Child Policy. The preconceived notion associated with *Little Emperors* is one of a spoiled child. This child can be the center of attention for not only the parents, but also for four grandparents. This places a great deal of pressure on the child to succeed while also leading to over indulgence of every whim.

The instructors expected the students to all be only children, and, as a group, to be self-absorbed and self-centered, with a sense of entitlement. Experience on the ground partially supports this preconception as a number of students displayed these tendencies; however, our base assumption regarding the One Child Policy was incorrect.

While it is indeed true that China does have this policy, exceptions abound and it is estimated that only 36 percent of Chinese citizens are subject to this law (Xiaofeng, 2007). Rural families may have a second child if the first born is female; members of cultural/ethnic minorities are exempt from the policy; and, beginning in November 2011, spouses that are both single children may have two themselves. In addition to the legal exceptions is the wealth exception: Families that can afford the hefty tax on multiple children can have multiple children.

In the classroom, the students displaying the least motivation, the least willingness to complete assignments, and the least effective in group work were almost exclusively male, and nearly every male student fit this description. The sample, however, was extremely small as the overwhelming majority of students in the SAAP are female. As shown in Table 1, 77 percent of the survey respondents were female, 23 percent male. This approximates the proportion in the SAAP population.

The researchers suspect the majority of the male students are indeed *Little Emperors* while the majority of the female students have siblings. It is significant to note that 60 percent of the survey respondents do have siblings. This high percentage is surely related to the gender bias of the SAAP population. A first born girl is more likely to have siblings, where a first born boy will often be an only child. The researchers’ notions were therefore partially supported. The Little Emperor syndrome does appear to exist; however, not all Chinese students are only children.

The Chinese perspective: In China, rural families usually have more than one child; urban families run the risk of losing their jobs or paying a penalty, often do not have more than one child. As the rural and urban populations are roughly identical, anecdotal evidence suggests that one child families are only about 40 percent. This ratio is impossible to find from official sources. Beginning in 2013, as a result of the Third Plenary Session’s decision, the percentage of one-child families will decrease even further. It has been observed among the Chinese population that students with no siblings tend to be self-centered and less willing to work productively in groups.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is limited primarily by the absence of comparisons with samples from other cultures, both Asian and Western. Even other groups within China might present differently as all of the students in this study were from the same, largely rural, province. The fact that the sample students were from a tertiary college, rather than a tiered university may also have impacted the

researchers' observations as the entrance standards are lower. This was also a contributing factor to the language proficiency issue which may also have impacted the results. Lastly, the previously discussed skewedness of the sample related to gender and family composition (only child/siblings) prevented the researchers from conducting any correlational analysis based on these characteristics.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the survey results that the traditional values the researchers expected to find in China do indeed persist. Students have learned the lessons of their cultural heritage and believe about themselves many of the same things Western culture holds to be true about Chinese culture. However, their behavior, in many cases, does not reflect these values. They appear to know the words, but have not internalized the meaning. This inconsistency is likely the result of many factors, the age and maturity level of the sample chief among them.

Research by Law (2012), explored the cultural difficulties in collaboration between Chinese and American educational leaders. The study showed that increased exposure to Western educational models is changing the culture of Chinese higher education; however, the cultural dichotomies are still causing confusion and an abundance of preconceived notions that must be worked through.

If exposure to Western educational models is changing the culture of Chinese higher education, what effect must the influence of Western media be having on the students? The students observed in this study love American TV series and movies. American TV is not broadcast in China, but pirated versions proliferate on the Internet and are widely viewed by this generation. American movies are featured in Chinese theaters and are also available both for purchase and on many pirated sites. One cannot imagine that this does not have an impact on values and behaviors.

Regardless of the limitations, if a broad generalization or stereotype is true for any population, one would also expect it to hold true in even a small sample such as this study. The obvious message is that an individual, especially one in a leadership position such as a teacher, should carefully examine one's own preconceived notions about a culture, and the notions that others are likely to have regarding their home culture. Remember, geography is about much more than terrain and a set of GPS coordinates.

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