GLOBALIZATION THROUGH THE EYES OF THE STUDENT: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT
EXPERIENCE IN AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which international

graduate students from China understood their experience at a Mid-West university.

During the course of this investigation six respondents discussed a range of topics

relating to their lives and experiences in a new educational environment. These

discussions were used as a basis to examine issues of educational globalization, student

stress, academic satisfaction, and opinions of a foreign cultural environment.

This study found that international students face many issues that may not be

understood by faculty and staff within the university. Additionally, the interviews with

respondents revealed complex issues facing international graduate student populations in

American universities that can be alleviated by changes in university policies. Through

this analysis recommendations for better serving this group and other international groups

are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

This study investigates the educational and social experiences of 6 Chinese graduate students enrolled at Kent State University, focusing particularly, but not exclusively, on their experience with English language learning in China and English language use in the United States. There is increased concern in the U.S. about how interactions between China and the United States are going to affect the 21st century (e.g. Beattie, 2011). While no one can predict the course of these interactions it is clear that there will be more and more chances for the two countries to be connected as they pursue their objectives in a globalized world.

In the midst of the current climate there has not been as much attention paid to the experiences of individuals from these two countries as they come into contact with new cultures through programs of exchange. While scholarship exists which looks at macro level effects of governmental decisions there is not much focus put on the way that these decisions influence the lives of individual citizens from either society. One area where it is possible to see some scholarly attention towards this matter is the literature on the globalization of higher education.

For example, some scholars are interested in the trends of international student enrollment as they influence a number of factors in the American university system (Altbach & Knight ,2007; Wan et al., 1992). According to these authors, the ways that

university structure changes as a result of this newer university population, the accommodations they make to classroom climate and teaching methods, and the shifting focus of colleges and majors are all areas that may be influenced by the change in university student populations. The American university has changed as a result of this new student population and many scholars have addressed this in their respective disciplines. The educational system of China, similarly, has experienced changes as it and its students have come to interact more and more on the world stage. This too has been detailed across a number of publications and academic debates.

The Chinese in American Colleges and Universities

According to recent news reports, the presence of Chinese students in the American university system seems to have become an increasingly important part of the structure and financing of higher education. For example Spak (2011) notes that in the 2009-2010 school year nearly 18% of the 691,000 international students enrolled in American universities were Chinese. This represents a 30% increase in Chinese student enrollment from the previous academic year and places China as the number one exporter of students to the United States university system. Similarly, Johnson (2011) reports a 43% increase in the number of Chinese students admitted to American universities. Additionally, the Institute of International Education (2011) suggests a 23.3% increase in the enrollment of Chinese students and ranks China as the number one place of origin for international students from 2009-2010. According to this report Chinese students made up 21.8% of the total international students in the United States in 2011. Since these students typically pay not only the full tuition but also any necessary additional fees, they

make a sizable contribution to schools looking to balance their budgets. This is further enhanced by the fact that a majority of these students do not take financial aid and therefore contribute more money directly into the university system.

According to these reports, Chinese student enrollment is increasing and students are eager to study in the United States for several reasons. First, though China has done much to increase university resources, the country is still not able to match the growing demand for higher education for successive generations of students. Second, there is a belief among Chinese students that obtaining a degree in China followed by a supplementary degree in the United States will lead to better economic prospects. Finally, a desire to experience new things that may help them later on in their employment, such as a chance to practice English in a native environment and further develop their skills with the language is another factor informing Chinese student decisions.

Chinese Student Enrollment at Kent State University

This trend of Chinese student enrollment can be exemplified when examining data for Kent State University (KSU). For example, in the fall semester of 2011 of the 24,909 students enrolled on the main campus, 337 were Chinese (RPIE, 2011). According to 2009 estimates, KSU can expect to obtain $20,000 per year per Chinese student from fees, tuition, room and board (EInside, 2009). This means that the university can expect to make $6,740,000 from these newly enrolled students during the fall 2009 year, a figure which does not take into account the added bonus for the community of Kent as these students purchase food, clothes, and entertainment. This

increased enrollment is widely thought to be the result of a direct effort by the university and has been made possible by the fact that since 2009 Kent State University was operating 11 different exchange programs in conjunction with universities and other institutions in China.

Impact of Enrollment on the Experiences of Six Chinese Students:
The Research Questions

If these estimates of the fiscal impact of Chinese students at one American university can be thought of as an example of such impact on the American university system as a whole, then Chinese students do make up an important part of the student population for American universities both for increasing enrollment and for the monetary gain received from admitting such students. What is not so clear is the impact of living and studying in American universities on the daily lives of these students. This study aims to address this void in the literature by focusing on how individual students characterize their experience and to use these accounts to better understand the micro environment of the student experience. This study seeks to answer the following initial questions as they relate to the experiences of six Chinese students in one American university.

1. How do students studying in a foreign educational environment perceive their experience and what can this tell us about the structure of education in a global age?

2. What, if any, implications are there from this research that will enable higher education planners to assist Chinese and other international students as they seek education in American colleges and universities?

Conceptual Approach: The Integration of Micro and Macro Perspectives

The idea of using a smaller student population to examine larger issues of educational change is not without precedent. For example, Ritzer and Malone (2000) point out that while there is a role for broad macro perspectives concerning global issues in education there also need to be studies which focus on specific micro perspectives in order to better understand some of the results of the changes in student populations. There is a need to look at specific forms of the effects of globalization in order to understand the complex reality that is being created by increased linkages between nations and states. For example, while large scale statistics may be produced about educational attainment for different groups there should also be a legitimate concern for how the students in question perceive the process of their own education. It is not sufficient merely to look at large scale data sets or reports; there must be a corresponding investigation into the experiences of individuals and groups, seeking a more thorough picture as we attempt to make decisions about how to assist this new population.

This line of thinking is very closely tied to Ritzer's ideas about an integrated theory of sociology (Ritzer, 1981a, 1985). His integrated approach takes into account both the macro and micro levels of social phenomena as well as their objective and subjective nature, which will be described in detail in a review of literature in Chapter 2. Research should encompass all levels of social reality and seek to illuminate the

processes by which one level of reality influences other levels of reality. As Knorr-Cetina (1981) asserts, the goal of micro-sociological research should be to help better explain the macro level environment. Specifically, if one were to apply this integrated model of social reality to this research we can see a study which is focused on the micro-subjective world of participants (Ritzer, 1981b) in reflection to at least some of the macro level realities above which there is so much literature.

This study will focus on the micro-subjective level of social reality, which is concerned with a dialectical relationship between the way in which actors create larger social structures while also constrained by the very structures they create. This dialectic seeks to rule out the extreme positions that actors are totally autonomous beings with unlimited freewill or that social structures have complete power over the lives of individuals. Within the micro-subjective realm there is a balance between what is created and what influence it holds for individual lives.

The main focal issue at the center of the micro-subjective realm is how elements of the larger social structure are internalized in the lives of individuals. In what ways do individuals make sense of their social position and the influence it has upon their lives? Traditional notions like socialization are usually drawn upon to illuminate the process through which individuals learn to be members of the social groups they have helped to shape through their continued presence. While there might be objective levels to behavior, such as established patterns of interactions or the way that group structure influences interaction, it is also important to know how individuals interpret these interactions and the meanings that they hold within individual minds.

This line of thinking can be extended to the study of issues surrounding concepts such as the results of educational globalization. For instance, individuals through their actions of attending school in a foreign country do in fact help to create the very university system of which they become a part. Without enrollment of these students there would be no reason for universities to implement programs designed to accommodate these student groups. However, their choices and decisions once they become part of a university system are somewhat restrained by the larger characteristics of the university structure. The very programs and ideas that were created by the enrollment of this student group also constrain the activities of the group and the resources that they can draw upon. For example, while orientation courses may be created as a result of this new student population, the students themselves maybe restricted to what has been determined to be the "proper" orientation subjects. As a result, the individual is neither a totally autonomous being capable of directing all of their actions nor is the university structure totally determinate for the lives of individuals within the system. There exists a relationship between the two levels which impacts both the larger structure and the micro environment of individual lives. The ways in which individuals make sense of such a relationship is at the heart of this research in the micro-subjective approach. The interplay of autonomous actions and structural variables creates a sense of meaning in the lives of participants, which can be used to better understand both micro and macro level environments, or what Bronfenbrenner would refer to as "ecological orientations" (1979).

This study looks at exactly such issues by utilizing a conceptual approach found in sociology focused on better understanding the perceived realities of individuals. In order to gain insight into the personal experiences of individual Chinese students it is necessary to engage in a dialogue which allows them the chance to explain their circumstances and lead the researcher to valid conclusions about their time in a new environment. By using the words of participants it may be possible to help bridge the gap between macro-level theories of the globalization of higher education and the lived reality of students engaged in such a process. For instance, in the case of this particular research the micro-experiences of students studying at Kent State University could be useful for university staff and administrators when planning how to best serve this group. While large scale statistical data about this group may be helpful, students' individual experiences may provide valuable insights as well.

Most studies of the lived experience of international college students are situated in the acculturation literature. This study, however, seeks to use a particular set of social structural ideas to connect students' lived experience (facets of the social construction of reality) to the macro subjective elements of the mixing of cultural norms and values. Essentially, it is a study of the interpretation of six Chinese graduate students regarding the ways in which they are constructing a new reality for themselves in interaction with cultural differences in norms and values in an American university. This interpretation can be seen as a set of structural links between micro and macro in a subjective domain.

Significance of the Study

This question is deemed important for investigation since the examination of particular student experiences may help us to better understand one of the aspects of the results of educational globalization. Findings may also allow a first step in developing implications that could potentially improve the educational experience for both Chinese and other international students and the university system as a whole. It is the position of the researcher that with a better understanding of the elements of language and how interactions involving language help to shape and compose the international graduate student experience, administrators, teachers, and others in the university community can strengthen the linkage between educational environments and create a richer and more beneficial system of education for those involved. This research represents an exploratory step in that process and can help to provide scaffolding for the design of future investigations.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that each of the students interviewed had been in the United States for less than two years. As a result, their interpretations may be different from those from students who have been in the United States for a longer period of time. Additionally, the small sample size makes generalizations difficult and prevents us from drawing any conclusions about the experiences of other Chinese or other international students at Kent State University or other American colleges or universities.

This research, does, however, represent a first step in the understanding of a relatively new student population that is projected to grow in both size and importance

over the coming years. While large scale evaluations of data play an important part in the decision making process involving student groups, the micro-subjective elements of experience also can be an informative area that may help policy makers, researchers, administrators, and teachers make better decisions once they are further interpreted and researched.

Without understanding how individuals view and evaluate their experiences within an educational environment we are left with only part of the information needed to be truly effective in our choices regarding this student group. How Chinese students interact with different members of the student population or with members of local communities is an important area to consider if we want a more complete understanding of Chinese student experience. How they believe they are perceived and the ways in which culture may mediate the influences of various interactions or services has a role in making sure that this student group is able to realize its goals within the university. I hope that this study will represent an initial inquiry into topics associated with Chinese students and serve as a basis for future studies from a variety of scholars across a diverse array of disciplines.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to provide a background for the investigation of these questions several relevant areas in the literature will be covered. First, Ritzer's integrated sociological paradigm is explored to better understand how it can help us investigate issues of student experience in a globalized education environment. Ritzer's paradigm, though conceived for the organization of sociological theory, may also be applied to the formation of research projects. However, as this review of literature will help to show, there is yet to be a qualitative study that uses Ritzer's Integrated Sociological Paradigm to organize a study about the lives of international students and how they reflect upon their educational experiences within a foreign university.

Second, the relationships between the forces of globalization and the structure and content of educational institutions are discussed in order to provide necessary information on the background of current educational trends as they may concern international graduate students. Similarly, the relationship between the use of the English language is explored as it relates both to education and to the formation of identity and issues of acculturation for individuals. Specifics of the experience of international students, and more specifically the situation of Chinese graduate students within a particular institution, are reviewed in order to familiarize the reader with the international student experience. Finally, with a review of the literature, possible themes are identified which may be present in the accounts of Chinese graduate students as they experience their new educational reality. It is to these matters that we now turn.

The Integrated Sociological Paradigm

As mentioned earlier the sociologist, George Ritzer, has developed an integrated theory for the study of social phenomena (Ritzer, 1980, 1985). This integrated theory takes as a main focus the idea that social realities can be best observed and studied along four different levels of analysis, each of which represents a specific element of a social phenomena. These levels are composed of a dialectical relationship between the macro-micro and the objective-subjective elements of a phenomenon. While these levels are simultaneous in any social phenomena they can be divided for the purpose of research and theory. Therefore, there is a necessity to look at these different levels if a researcher or theorist truly wants to understand something as complex as the globalization of education or the influences this phenomenon has had and is having on individual lives of students (Ritzer & Malone, 2000).

Ritzer thinks of the interaction of these levels as new theoretical paradigm for the discipline of sociology, one which brings together (but does not supersede) extant paradigms such as social facts, social definitions, and social behavior at all levels. In some ways, his ideas are one response to the need for "field theories" in social science because of the increasing complexity of contemporary phenomena and the need to solve problems and understand change (Lewin 1943).

Ritzer's integrated theory is used in order to gain a more complete understanding of the various elements that compose a social system. This is necessary because, as Ritzer notes, previous meta-theories in sociology, such as Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism, have all attempted to explain the social

world but have fallen short of representing the complexity of social interaction and phenomena (Ritzer, 1980). The problem, as Ritzer explains, is that while each of these theories and their various offshoots have occasionally alluded to the fact that there may be multiple social realities, each has primarily concerned itself with one level of analysis and used this in an attempt to explain all other possible levels of analysis.

For instance, Structural Functionalism takes into account only the macro level realities of social phenomena and attempts to explain micro interactions through such a framework. Symbolic Interactionism, likewise, reduces all social interaction to micro level components and attempts to detail how these give rise to macro social structures. As a result, there has lacked a theoretical framework that attempted to detail the interplay between these different social levels and to explain their simultaneous influence upon one another.

Ritzer's Levels of Social Analysis

Ritzer separates the levels of social analysis into four different units each of which represent specific social processes. These levels are differentiated by the fact that they take as their focus different organizational levels of social reality (macro versus micro) and social facts versus social definitions and interpretations (objective versus subjective). As a result, there are four levels within which social phenomena are located, the macro-objective, the macro-subjective, the micro-objective, and the micro-subjective (Ritzer, 1991). While Ritzer cautions that society as a complete system is not actually made up of these different levels, they offer a useful theoretical tool for examining the ways in which social phenomena cut across these categories simultaneously (Fig. 1).

Ritzer's integrative (micro-macro) theory of social analysis.

Macroscopic

1. Macro-objective Examples - society, law, bureaucracy, architecture, technology and language	**2. Macro subjective** Examples - culture, norms and values
3. Micro-objective Examples - patterns of behaviour, action and interaction	**4. Micro-subjective** Examples - perceptions, beliefs; the various facets of the social construction of reality

Objective · Subjective

Microscopic

Fig. 1. Ritzer's Integrative (micro-macro) theory of social analysis

The macro-objective level of analysis focuses on things that represent social facts. These include such things as language, bureaucracy, laws, and formalized elements of the social structure. A popular sociological theory which would fit into this level would include Structural Functionalism. Looking through a Structural Functionalist lens, for example, might perhaps see changes in higher education resulting from global influences as representing a drift towards the best educational practices and the most functional elements for different societies. This is the level, too, where one would look at issues of educational globalization, such as the issues of convergence and divergence that have been discussed in the literature and how they may be beneficial or not for educational practice.

The macro-subjective level includes large scale ideas that give structure to various social systems but may be based more on interpretation than on objective organizational elements. This level includes such things as culture, norms, values, and beliefs. At this level, beliefs and ideas function to imbue macro-objective elements with meaning and shape the relationship between these larger social forces and more micro environments. Within this level one could place the work of such theorists as Marx as they detail the notion of class consciousness (Marx, 1886). Specifically, if one were to apply the ideas of Marx to the discussion of global education and student experience, Marx might contend that the educational reality which students inhabit is related to the efforts of those in power to shape individual reality in order to guarantee their own privileged position within a system. As a result, the ideas of students might represent a false consciousness regarding the role of education in their lives.

The micro-objective level takes as its focus of analysis elements detailing the patterns of behavior between individuals and groups. These can include, but are not limited to, actions and interactions such as exchange, cooperation, dominance, and submission. It is within this realm that one would classify work such as Blau's (1964) which details the role that the act of exchange has on social interactions and group dynamics. These ideas might view educational globalization in terms of the structure of classes and the patterns of interactions that occur between students and teachers or between different groups of students.

Finally, the micro-subjective level of analysis consists of such things as the social construction of reality and individual accounts of experience. With the focus on

individual construction and interpretation one could place the work of Berger and

Luckmann (1967) as they detail the subjective elements of the construction of social

reality. It is also in this realm that one would place the investigative practice of

phenomenology as it attempts to detail the individual accounts of experience which

function to make up a subject's lived experience. This is the realm, too, where one would

place the subjective interpretations of international graduate students as they experience a

foreign educational system.

Again, while Ritzer cautions that one should not interpret society as being made

of distinct levels, this form of analysis is encouraged by Ritzer when looking at social

phenomena. It helps to show that while some elements appear to be separate (global

educational structures versus individual student accounts) the investigation of one area

still yields results which can be used to interpret other areas. This is due to the

interconnected nature of these levels as they exist in actual social systems.

Theoretical Antecedents to the Integrated Sociological Paradigm

The ideas behind Ritzer's integrated sociological theory, though offered by Ritzer

as "an exemplar for a new integrated paradigm" (Ritzer, 1991, p. 151), have been in

development since the early days of sociological theory. However, as Ritzer himself

points out "although the idea of levels of analysis is implicit in much of sociology, it has

received relatively little explicit attention (1991, p. 140). Nevertheless, there have been a

number of theorists who have dealt with similar questions and by doing so informed the

development of such a paradigm. As Ritzer writes, these theorists have contributed to

the development of this integrated paradigm even if they did not take the express goal of integration as their primary theoretical motivation.

One work that touches on similar subject matter is that of Edel (1959). The main strength of Edel is that he connects the ideas of levels of social reality with the influences that structure has upon individual lives. For instance, Edel posits that individuals are responsible for creating social structure and that it is something that arises out of the shared experience of many. These structures are produced and reproduced on a daily basis as individuals interact with one another in a social sense. However, despite the fact that individuals help to create such structure they also are constrained by the very social institutions they create. As a result, structure is dependent upon the individual but the power of the individual to direct their self in such structure is limited.

Another author who addresses issues that are tied to the idea of an integrated social reality is Wagner (1964). Wagner's strength comes from the idea that sociologists have traditionally staked out a specific level of analysis not just because of feelings of validity, but also as a way to distinguish themselves from predecessors and find a new niche. Therefore, theories are not constructed merely because they are finite representations of reality, but may also be based around personal and political concerns of the author. As a result, though previously theories have treated social phenomena as occurring on distinct levels this is not an indication of the separateness of social life, but rather indicates the motivations of individual minds.

Rizer (1980) also mentions the work of Kuhn (1970) as an important theorist who helps to lay the groundwork for an integrated sociological paradigm. Kuhn's idea of

paradigms and how they function in scientific revolutions both allows for the development of an integrated sociological paradigm and shows why such a development is necessary. According to such a viewpoint, science originally sets out to gather knowledge around a particular event. In the process, anomalies are discovered which cannot be explained by prevailing theories. When enough anomalies arise to seemingly tip the balance against a prevailing theory or set of theories, whole paradigms may have to shift.   Such paradigmatic shifts are often not based solely on factual anomalies, but can also reflect subjective interpretations of reality and what is considered valid knowledge. Therefore, existing ideas may be based as much on intellectual fashion as they may be on the discovery or understanding of an objective element.

Criticisms of an Integrated Sociological Theory

While there has been discussion of the usefulness of such an approach and the ways it may more accurately reflect complex social situations, Ritzer's Integrated Sociological Theory is not without its critics. One of the most vocal criticisms has been around the use of the Kuhnian concept of paradigm and how it has been correctly and incorrectly applied to the generation of theories within sociology. As a result, a dialogue has developed centered on the appropriateness of the term and the true meaning associated with the use of the concept of paradigms.

Two of the most vocal critics of Ritzer's use of the term "paradigm" have been Douglas Eckberg and Lester Hill Jr. (Eckberg & Hill, 1979; Hill & Eckberg, 1981). Both of these scholars critiqued Ritzer's work along three dimensions: 1) his use of terminology; 2) the notion that sociology does not exist as a mature science; and 3) the

ways in which Ritzer does not understand the central argument of Kuhn's work. According to these critics, Ritzer picks and chooses from Kuhn's extensive use of the term and only focuses on the elements that are of the most use to his theories about an integrated sociological paradigm. "Ritzer's analysis then, like most others, lacks a necessary specificity of referent" (Eckberg & Hill, 1979, p. 932).

Both authors do acknowledge that Kuhn can be criticized for an over abundance of definitions concerning the concept of paradigm. However, despite reporting that there are at least 21 different uses of the term, they feel that the most salient definition is that of the paradigm as exemplar. An exemplar functions as a concrete instance or accomplishment within a discipline and allows other members of the scientific community to draw upon this instance when formulating the answer to puzzles. As a result, exemplars are accepted ideas (such as a mathematical formula) used to advance understanding around a particular issue.

These exemplars also presuppose the existence of an integrated community of scholars who subscribe to the use of the paradigmatic exemplar. As a result, exemplars do not exist in the sociological sense since sociology is not a mature science with specific subfields. Sociologists are linked more along the lines of theoretical orientations and not through the use of specific exemplars. Therefore, according to these authors, Ritzer fails in his usage of the term because he attempts to use paradigm as a discipline wide example rather than as a concrete instance of investigation or as an achieved fact within a discipline. "We argue that the situation is not that simple, that the major issues facing us

is the implication of substituting one definition of paradigm for another" (Hill & Eckberg, 1981, p. 249).

Ritzer has responded to these criticisms along several lines (Ritzer, 1981a, 1988) including direct criticism of both Eckberg and Hill as well as in the context of larger issues regarding the importance of meta-theory in sociology. According to these responses Eckberg and Hill are at fault for being purists when it comes to definitions surrounding the concept of paradigms and have lost sight of the purpose of creating something useful for the application of science. Rather, they are concerned with staying exact to a pre-stated definition and therefore are limited in their efforts. Paradigms, and exemplars, according to Ritzer, are useless for understanding disciplines as a whole since they tend to be narrowly focused on specific occurrences. Therefore, a discipline matrix like an integrated sociological paradigm is far more useful due to the fact that the appropriate paradigm should be based around the issues being studied rather then being completely focused on remaining accurate to a previously postulated definition. Therefore, an integrated sociological paradigm is appropriate when looking at complex social phenomena such as the way that macro-objective environments can be better understood through the use of micro-subjective elements since it more accurately represents reality.

The Educational Environment of Global Universities:
What Trends are Influencing the Education Students Receive

Due to a more interconnected world where education is tied in closely with national economies global trends influence the educational environment where students

learn. When examining institutions of higher education, for example, it is possible to see

these trends represented among such aspects of institutional life as the curriculum and

academic standards of colleges and universities, the use of English as both a subject and a

language of instruction, the reliance on a corporate business style of management, and the

expansion and demand for university level education across a variety of societies and

nations. Each of these specific areas showcases the influences of a globalized

environment as it pushes educational settings to change and adapt in specific ways.

  While the ideas of what constitutes an "educated" person have broadened, there

has also been a coinciding restriction in domains and methods of instruction around the

globe (Chua, 2004). As a result, curriculum standards are more in line across diverse

settings and similar subject material has been incorporated into classrooms across a range

of schools and educational systems. Largely, these effects can be attributed to the

comparative international assessments of student competencies (K-12) that comprise a

sizable section of educational research (Carnoy, 2000). Comparisons such as these are

seen in the results of the internationally administered P.I.S.A. examination and yield

standards which have tended to result in a similarity towards particular subject matter and

standardized methods of instruction which are evident across a range of settings. For

instance, Singapore (Chua, 2004), the United States (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), China and

Taiwan (Leng, 2002) have felt the effects of such comparisons on the development of

academic curricula and instructional pedagogy in their K-12 settings as they attempt to

adapt their educational systems to meet the demands of a globally connected society with

changes to curriculum and the incorporation of new population groups within their borders.

Some scholars (e.g. Said, 1993) see globalization as a culturally destructive force and have posited that such trends really represents the homogenizing aspect of globalization as it pushes systems to become more like Western imperial models. According to this view, local systems of belief and understanding have been pushed aside as they encounter the "superior" knowledge of Western sources. However, questions of homogenization and cultural hegemony are complicated by issues of universality, or the idea that findings may be applicable across groups regardless of individual group characteristics (Hoffman & Zhao, 2008).

Homogenization of knowledge, especially within the realm of education, may be represented by research demonstrating that what has sometimes been considered homogenization is due actually to the mandate of scientific research and experimentation, illustrating that certain practices are by nature universal across student groups. Therefore, though a teaching technique or element of curriculum may be adapted from a Western model this does not necessarily indicate that knowledge has been homogenized. Rather, according to these authors, it purportedly showcases the application of science to determine what is best across settings and therefore what should be considered acceptable practice within education. This represents a highly contested issue but one that still informs the debates about educational convergence in an era of globalization.

One closely related example that influences educational environments is the increased use of the English language both as a subject of study and as a medium of

instruction within non-English speaking cultures. English as a component of curriculum

has come to dominate international educational practice (Yang, 2003). In many cases,

this is related to the fact that English has become the dominant language for academic,

scientific, political, and business pursuits (Arnove, 2007; Chua, 2004) and therefore

educational institutions have responded to this growing dominance by making English a

central component of curriculum. Schools and other educational institutions that are

interested in equipping students with 21st century skills have increasingly incorporated a

greater focus on English as a necessity. Using the analytic method set forth by Ritzer this

element could be viewed as a macro-objective issue since economic realities have

influenced the structure of the language used by individuals involved in particular macro

settings such as whole societies.

One possibility in this regard is that English may be becoming a global "lingua

franca" which is capable of integrating diverse groups from different reaches of the globe

through a shared linguistic practice and medium of expression (Stromquist & Monkman,

2000). This idea has also been represented with the term "globish", a term that indicates

the belief that English has become the dominant language of global interests (McCrum,

2010). However, this view is not espoused by all. For example, as Phillipson (2001)

notes, there is a lack of literature detailing the study of globalization and English and that

"to describe English in such terms ignores the fact that a majority of the world's citizens

do not speak English, whether as a mother tongue or as a second or foreign language" (p.

188). Another possibility is that English is losing its distinctive cultural and expressive

elements (Said, 1993) and being transformed largely into a technical language that is used

to discuss problems and advance findings and interests. Regardless, the fact that English is increasingly finding its way into more and more school systems across the world makes it an important element.   Again, such an element could be viewed as a macro-objective element using Ritzer's approach, since the use of the language influences the structure of global society.

Another area which is shaping the educational environment for students is the increasing reliance on a business ideology and practice in order to address the issues associated with the providing of education for students. Smith (2004), for example, asserts the influences of a global system in education are represented in the commodification of education and the reliance on a corporate management style to distribute and organize the delivery of educational services. Further indications can be seen in a wide-spread sensitivity to a "bottom line" concerning educational spending and an attention to customer interests, whether these customers are students or the businesses whose potential future workers come from those educated inside schools, colleges, and universities. As Altbach (2002) has posited, this represents movement away from the notion of education as a common good to education as a commodity which can be bought and sold by business and academic institutions. Ritzer again would classify this as a macro-objective element influencing the overall structure of a social system.

Reaching across different nation state systems with different cultures and social structures, the influences of globalization have created an environment in which "education as investment in human capital has become a key plank of official educational policy platforms in many countries" (Yang, 2003, p. 278). While each institution may

represent a unique location, similar elements such as the increased mobility of both

students and staff within the institution, can be found across comparisons. Furthermore,

with the adoption of private industry techniques such as financial control and

management, differences between higher education systems have been further reduced as

they employ similar managerial techniques. As a result, higher education systems are

finding themselves affected by market elements regardless of initially differing

organizational characteristics and orientations. Using the approach set forth by Ritzer we

could classify these elements as both macro-objective in the case of educational

organization and micro-objective in the way that such organization influences the

individual classroom experience of individuals.

The processes of marketization and the commodification of education are not only

found when examining more traditional colleges and universities. In the arena of the

global marketing of education the for-profit sector has shown increased growth and

development and now competes with these more traditional institutions for an expanding

share of the global market. According to Morey (2004) "a major force for change in

higher education is the globalization of economic, cultural, political and intellectual

institutions, along with the increasing interdependence of nations" (p. 131). While there

have always been educational experiences that do not require individuals to leave a home

environment, there now exist virtual and online courses which traverse national

boundaries and state systems and offer degrees in a number of fields and disciplines.

As classes travel back and forth across such boundaries they have the effect of

freeing the delivery of education from the constraints of both time and place. Individuals

that inhabit vastly different geographical zones are linked together in a platform that allows for participation without relocation. Also, the increased ease with which education can be delivered asynchronously has created an enormous appeal for adult learners. Adults eager to change their fields of employment or advance themselves in fields in which they are already participating are able to take classes and earn credits while not having to restructure work and family life to as great a degree as if they were enrolled full time in a traditional educational institution. Corporations have also gotten in on the game by offering lessons and training that grant credit at participating institutions. While not typically accredited themselves, the fact that increasing funding for higher education is coming from private sector entities such as corporations creates incentives for receiving institutions to allow such a development to take place (Morey, 2004).

Education is further changing related to the growing demand for access to education and instruction worldwide. Knowledge is essential for individuals and countries that want to pursue economic growth and competition (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). Both nations and individuals are increasingly being forced into competition in a global economic environment (Torres, 2002) and education is quickly becoming one of the preferred ways to deal with issues arising from such a process. As incentive expands, changes occur within the enterprise, such as the growing number of institutions capable of granting undergraduate degrees (Thomas, 2004). The rise in this demand can be traced, in part, to ideas regarding the place of education in the advancement of both nations and individuals. If we use the approach of Ritzer we could

classify this as a micro-subjective issue as it relates to the importance that individuals attach to the process of education.

Education plays a major role in the distribution of life chances, ranging from physical and mental health to positions available in the economy (Mirowski & Ross, 2003; Scott, 1998) and both nations and individuals are increasingly coming to realize this as they gain a global perspective. Not surprisingly, this realization has resulted in growing insistence on access to educational resources and institutions. It has also led to institutional changes such as universities transforming themselves from traditional elite institutions to those more centered on providing mass education for a range of individuals. These institutional changes do not necessarily result from wholly altruistic inclinations of university administrators. Rather, they represent attempts to capture larger shares of the student market by opening enrollment to previously disenfranchised groups and sectors of society. Further change is illustrated by the fact that American institutions are rapidly becoming the model according to which other countries are redesigning their college and university systems (Wagner, 2004) and as a result aspects of global influence can also be observed along these trends. These trends could be interpreted along the lines of both macro-subjective in the case of nations and micro-subjective in the case of individuals and their belief in the importance that education holds for individual lives.

The Acculturation Process of Individuals in a Foreign Context

Foreign individuals who undertake to live or work in another country experience the process of acculturation as they conduct their lives. As Berry et al. (2006) asserts acculturation is the process of psychological and cultural change that follows intercultural

contact. Additionally, Berno and Ward (2005) describe acculturation as the changes resulting from continuous intercultural contact. While these initial thoughts concerning acculturation may posit a somewhat straightforward experience for international sojourners the actual process of acculturation itself is far more nuanced and contested within scholarly circles. In fact, as Berry (1997a) points out acculturation itself is a somewhat neutered term as it is used to describe a wide range of processes that occur within the lives of individuals.

Psychological versus Sociological Theories of Acculturation

One of the main issues present when examining the process of acculturation within the academic literature is the debate between the viability of psychological versus sociological models of acculturation. Depending on the particular aspects of the acculturation experience under question there are a variety of theories and schools of thought that can be used to analyze the process. Historically, due to a strong early influence of psychiatry, discussions of acculturation tended to focus on negative medical aspects of cross cultural transitions such as stress and depression (Ward, 1997). However, more contemporary approaches have expanded their field of discussion and focus on multiple aspects of the acculturative process.

Searle and Ward (1990) describe the fact that while psychological and sociocultural aspects of acculturation are related they need to be discussed as separate variables which are predicated by different factors within individual lives. According to this work, the variables that represent adjustment to a new culture are related but are predicted by different things. For example, issues of psychological adjustment are best

predicted by aspects of social difficulty, life changes, the degree of extraversion an individual posses and their reported satisfaction with their new host culture. Sociocultural adjustment is best predicted by the expected difficulty an individual suspects in adjustment, the cultural distance between an individual and the host culture and any issues of depression that a cultural sojourner may face as a result of an international transition. Therefore psychological adjustment can best be understood with a stress and coping model derived from clinical and developmental psychology while sociocultural adjustment should be analyzed with a social learning perspective. This line of thinking is further echoed by Ward and Kennedy (1993) who report that sociocultural adjustment is best analyzed either by a psychological approach that deals with issues of stress or by a more sociological approach that focuses on the social learning aspects of acculturation.

While it may seem difficult to understand why there are so many different theories of acculturation based upon either psychological or sociological aspects this is in part due to some of the inherent problems that come with acculturation research. As Berry (1997) states, since the field of migration research is so large it is not surprising that there are a multitude of theories to choose from depending upon one's desired focus. Furthermore, Searle and Ward (1990) state that there is often much disagreement within the literature regarding key terms such as acculturation resulting from the distinction between psychological and sociological aspects of the process. Additionally, Ward and Kennedy (1993) point out that there is a difficulty in developing direct comparisons

between groups since there are so many different types of people engaged in acculturation processes throughout the world.

Interactions with Host Cultures

Whether one subscribes to psychological or more sociological theories regarding the process of acculturation the idea of interaction with a host culture plays a major role in the adjustment of the individual or group within their new setting. Berry et al. (2006) point out that the longer an individual remains within a host culture the more likely they are to acculturate and that the local ecology of group relations plays a major role in this process. When people sense discrimination they are more likely to draw inwards within their original cultural group and this slows the process of acculturation within a new society.

In fact, Ward and Kennedy (1993) discuss the issue regarding the process of acculturation as it is influenced by the perceived social distance that exists within and between groups. The larger this perceived distance the more likely the process of acculturation will be slowed as individuals draw closer to those with which they are more familiar and away from individuals that might help them adapt to their new circumstances. This is all the more unfortunate because, as the authors report, individuals need the process of interaction in order to learn the skills that will enable them to thrive within this new cultural setting.

As Berry (1990) asserts students fall under the category of sojourner since they voluntarily made contact with people in a new setting and posses a high degree of mobility within the culture. This differentiates them from other groups as it pertains to

social distance since often times there is a willingness to close such distance and have

contact with members of the host culture. This is apart from the case of other groups

such as indigenous peoples since they often times have very little voluntary contact with

members of the dominant culture.

Campbell and Li (2008) also discuss acculturation specifically as it pertains to

students within a new cultural context. According to these authors the closer a student

host culture is to their new culture of residence the easier the transition when discussing

issues of acculturation. In fact, these authors report that student's self reported levels of

satisfaction with their new learning environment were most closely correlated with their

overall degree of satisfaction regarding their cultural adaptation to their new

environment. The greatest challenges when regarding the acculturation process had to do

with issues regarding the language barrier and how it influenced interactions within the

classroom for students. The more difficulty students had with the language within the

classroom the greater the degree of dissatisfaction they reported regarding their learning

experiences regardless of the perceived quality of the institution where instruction was

taking place.

Strong and Weak Social Support Systems

When individuals live and work within a foreign cultural context it is invariable

that they will develop connections to others within that setting. However, the nature of

these connections and how they are made play an important role in how well people are

able to adapt to their new cultural context. As a result, the concept of social support

systems plays a central role in the literature describing the acculturation process.

As Adelmann (1988) reports the social landscape of human existence is a critical part of the process of cross cultural transition and acculturation. Those that exist within a foreign cultural context require others to help teach them the norms of cultural interaction and access cultural capital they need to successfully live their lives. The simple act of being listened too, as long as it is not followed by extensive attempts to problem solve the other person, has shown to benefit cross cultural sojourners in the acculturation process. In fact, as Fontaine (1986) points out individuals need to rely on social support systems to deal with the stress of cultural relocation and those that do, even if these support systems consist of self help groups, often times experience fewer psychological problems then cross cultural sojourners that do not have access to such resources.

While the importance of social support systems may be evident to an individual within a foreign context this does not mean that the establishment of such a system is straightforward and simple act. Campbell and Li (2008) have discussed the fact that many students studying in a foreign context tended to make friends with other home nationals and had little interaction with their new host culture despite a desire to do so. As a result, Fontaine (1986) has discussed the importance that "weak" social support systems may have for people living in a foreign cultural environment. Weak social support systems consist of individuals that are outside of one's immediate social circle but still provide a social outlet for interaction. They may be composed of such people as shopkeepers, bartenders, hair dressers, or anyone that an individual might interact with on a semi-regular basis and therefore develop some sort of bond. Due to the difficulty one may find in making friends with host nationals Fontaine believes that these weak social

support systems serve an important role and should be encouraged for people in the acculturation process.

One area that is related to social support systems is the idea of environmental mastery and perceived locus of control. Ward and Kennedy (1992) have spent much time discussing the idea of locus of control and how it relates to the process of acculturation for individuals. According to the authors, locus of control can be conceptualized as the belief people have in their own abilities to influence desired outcomes and the influence of situational factors that are outside the control of the individual. People with an internal locus of control believe that they are the ones responsible for creating positive effects in their environment and have the ability to influence outcomes as they wish. People with an external locus of control feel that their lives are influenced by factors outside of themselves and they have little sway over the way situations are enacted. Ward and Kennedy found that the greater the social support system for an individual the more likely they were to believe in an internal locus of control and therefore were more comfortable dealing with issues of cross cultural transition. However, people without such systems in place were more likely to experience depression and had a greater deal of stress, especially when the cross cultural transition was accompanied by other major life changes.

Language and Student Identity

Issues of language and identity are interwoven and represent a complex relationship. Sometimes this relationship reinforces pre-existing notions of self (micro-subjective) and at other times locates the self in a new social space and among a different

cultural group (macro-subjective). Therefore, it can be very difficult to separate an individual's identity from the language that they use to express that identity. After all, language provides individuals with the symbols by which they make meaning for their lives (Cushner et al., 2000). Furthermore, among the many elements that can make up an identity, discursive elements are a powerful component in shaping this identity as well as in the act of communicating it to others (Gee, 2000).

Interactions involving language are shaped by the politics of ethnicity, race, and class in a nation and by the politics of ethnic nationalism between nations (Urciuoli, 1995). From the actor's perspective this consists of such things as different languages, accents, mixings of languages, and vocabulary. In reality, Urciuoli asserts that language consists of border making elements and locational markers. These elements and markers assign people a place in society. Often this is an oppositional place between those that have the language and those that do not. Language is exceptionally powerful in such a process because it is something that can be immediately recognized by others and therefore can instantly create borders.

Often, individuals who are part of the dominant culture of a society are unaware of their own identities and culture until they come into some sort of contentious circumstance or conflict with another identity or individual (Erickson, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Language use is something that immediately identifies difference and therefore creates borders with a minimum of interaction between individuals. These borders would represent a micro-subjective element as they are not something tangible but rather exist in the individual interpretations of specific personal behaviors. While the

specifics of language use are not something that are bound to any particular setting, the process of creating borders and identifying differences between individuals is something that carries across societies. This process makes language a necessary element to investigate when looking at the experience of students learning in a foreign educational environment as their daily interactions with others may create or reshape personal and cultural borders.

English Language Use and Education

English is a language that one can find in many different cultures. However, this does not exclude variation in the ways in which individuals use the language and understand its structure (Jenkins, 2009). Again, this can be viewed as a micro-subjective element since it focuses on individual understanding and the social construction of reality. It is not surprising, then, to learn that there is much contention as more individuals in the world come to learn this language. "Language rights, or linguistic human rights, have taken on increasing urgency worldwide in the light of the twin threat posed by the loss of a vast proportion of the world's linguistic resources- the endangered languages- and by the growth of world languages like English" (Hornberger, 1998, p. 450). Many people see the increased use of the English language as something that is snuffing out indigenous and local languages and putting into place a homogenized and imperial form of knowledge originating from powerful Western sources.

This is also not just an issue for "endangered" local languages but is something that affects more established languages as well. For instance, English has been taught as a core college, high school, junior high school, and elementary subject in urban China

since the 1980's and 1990's (Fong, 2004). Therefore, it is more likely to find individuals

that speak English fluently among younger groups as compared to older adults. It has

been documented that immigrant children frequently learn to speak a language much

faster than their parents, a situation which can result in an acculturation gap between the

parents and their children (Qin 2006). With the increased instruction in English it is

possible that this acculturation gap is beginning to form even if families do not leave their

established cultural circumstances and re-establish their lives in a new cultural

environment. Again, it is possible to view this under the classification of micro-

subjective since the cultural separation is a socially constructed boundary between

individuals.

While there is a difference between needing to learn a language because one is

living in a new environment and the need to learn a language because there is global

educational pressure to do so, the fact that pressure exists affects the relations that people

have to the language that they are learning. "A need to acquire the language can create a

conflict between outside requirements forced upon the learner and the learner's pre-

existing attitudes towards or beliefs about the language and the cultures of English

speakers" (Francis & Ryan, 1998, p. 27). Pedagogical orientations towards the teaching

of English can greatly affect what messages students take away from such a process.

This further complicates the already difficult task of forming identity as the user of a new

language as attitudes are often times very contradictory and combine aspects of positive

identification and rejection as well as nationalistic consciousness and self-deprecation.

It is also important to understand that the use of language is not something that is constant. When language is used in different circumstances it is transformed and takes on characteristics of the culture utilizing the language (Ha, 2008; Widdowson, 1997). With increased global contact there is a premium on using English as a *lingua franca*- a language used to communicate by different groups of non-native speakers (Brutt-Giffler, 2002; McCrum, 2010; Warschauer, 2000). While culture remains an important part of language, English is being repeatedly transformed by different cultures when used to communicate with other non-native speakers. Therefore, there is increased pressure on language instructors to teach English to be a functional communication medium rather than teaching English as something that never deviates from "pure" forms such as American English or British English (Holliday, 2005).

Immigrants and English

One of the major difficulties faced by immigrants is the problem of cultural conflict, such as differences in language and cultural practice (Schnittker 2002). Differences of language and practice have been investigated involving such psychological concepts as self-esteem or the ways in which immigrant parents interact with their children. For immigrants to completely assimilate within a culture they must have a working knowledge of the language of the culture in which they are attempting to assimilate. If no such knowledge exists, they are at risk for being marginalized and exploited as they are moved to the edges of cultural boundaries and systems.

Language is an essential skill for those that wish to seek membership within a new society. Language is a primary source of socialization since it is never divorced

from the social worlds of the speakers and because it can also be used to achieve social ends (Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). It is through language that immigrants are able to make connections and build relationships that help to foster their new identity as citizens of a nation. While immigrants bring with them many things, such as skills and identities, their integration into the labor market is affected by such things as the transferability of the skills which they import (Kheimets & Epstein, 2001). English as a *lingua franca* (micro-objective) is the language most often used to carry out transactions outside of the individual's original culture of practice (Seidlhofer, 2009). Due to this, language plays a central role as it is what allows the skills of the immigrants to be discussed and made salient in interaction with others. Chiswick and Miller (2002) clearly demonstrate this process with immigrants in the United States by showing that those with greater English proficiency were better able to realize advantages they had from higher levels of education and their later employment and earnings. If immigrants are not able to communicate their skills and identities to other members of the society these other members have no way of knowing what positive characteristics these immigrants bring to their society. Command of the new language is therefore a crucial issue.

Globalization (macro-objective) has fostered an unprecedented flow of immigrants around the world (Suarez-Orozco, 2004). The ability to move back and forth between different languages allows the individual many advantages, such as being able to adapt to evolving situations and the ability to enter into various work place environments and employs. The formation of identities that allows individuals the ability to move between contexts is crucial to those that wish to form identities as global citizens. A

trans-cultural identity is responsive and malleable in an era of global changes and influences. With the ever increasing migration around the globe individuals are forced to develop such identities to be better able to provide for themselves and for their families.

Daily practices and lived activities are what bring the structure of social existence into reality (Holland & Lave, 2001). Identities are shaped by personal practice but are also shaped by the historical realities of which individuals may find themselves a part. Therefore, both persons and lived struggles are "works in progress" which are in a constant state of development and flux. For immigrants, these identities are worked through social practice and intimate dialogue and thus the role that language plays is highlighted for these newcomers. However, since many members of the new society may not share in the cultural practice of the immigrant, the role that language plays becomes more crucial as it allows the intimate dialogue of identity construction to proceed. Though transnational movement has limited the states' role in identity construction this does not mean that geographic boundaries do not play a role in the formation of self. Rather, the citizens of various nations that immigrants come to interact with help to shape their identity by engaging in a process of interaction which is facilitated or hindered by the immigrant's ability to use language as a tool for identity formation.

Transnational Youth

For the young people in a globalized world, transnational practices play a considerable role in their identities, literacies, and cultures (McGinnis et al., 2007). Transnational youth are increasingly engaged in online culture, which transcends geographic boundaries and influences social identities and realities (micro-subjective).

Therefore, these young people may develop affinities with and ties to other cultures outside of their own familiar circumstances. While tensions between cultures may be influential in their own right, the online medium in which individuals negotiate these identities has effects as well. For instance, issues of identity continuity are affected by the use of digital communications technology as it both expands potentialities and restricts privacy (Palfrey, 2008).

Prior to the advent of such technology and the development of the skills to use it, individuals were historically bound to local circumstances and events with less ease of communicating their identities to a wide circle and therefore these identities were fixed to a greater degree and static to their location. They may be very well known in their own locales, and even well known for a primary trait or social position. When individuals are able to relocate, however, they are more able to develop new identities and the only ways in which their old identity may influence current conceptions is if there is a link through an individual to their previous circumstances, such as a member of their old town moving to their new location.

This situation is exactly the opposite today. Individuals, with the aid of digital communicative practices, are able to create multiple identities which they can exhibit in a variety of circumstances. These identities may in fact even be different from one another and vary greatly across the context in which they are applied. However, the simplicity of divorcing themselves from their created identities is lessened in this environment. Once such an identity is communicated through digital means it maintains permanence within the medium. Individuals may relocate vast distances and be far removed from any person

associated with their past life, yet strangers are able to access more intimate details of individual's identities than would be possible if such identities were not available within the communicative medium.

Most of the research concerning transnational youth has focused on pop culture, media, and social change but there has not been enough that aims to understand how transnational youth understand the process of globalization or how they understand their role as actors within such a system (Maira, 2004). Therefore, works which focus on macro level processes, especially in the areas of education and cultural studies, are needed in order to further understand this group. Through interactions with educational systems these young people are situated in such a fashion as to be directly exposed to influences of the global environment while also maintaining a well defined position of an actor within individual schools. By better understanding the ways in which transnational youth are effected by globalization we are better able to understand both the macro-objective level processes which compose globalization and the micro-subjective level interpretations which construct the lived reality of such forces.

International Students

Under the category of transnational youth international students make up an interesting and growing group for research. Tapping into the growing global market for increasing revenues from such a group has become a primary motivation for universities to solicit and attract international students (Kumar, 2008; Lee & Rice, 2007). Despite their growing importance within the literature on international students and international language there has not been enough attention paid to how these students appropriate a

second language to construct their identity (Ha, 2009). However, in what research has been carried out regarding this group the importance of language and identity is further highlighted. For instance, in a phenomenological investigation quite similar to the one described in this study, Halic et al. (2009) found that language played a central role in the identity construction of international students. While English language deficiencies could act as a barrier to complete participation, use of the language also served to overcome obstacles and allow the students participation in a wider variety of circles than were available to their non-English speaking peers. Though there were difficulties associated with use of the new language, such as being moved from an "expert" position within the home culture to a "novice" position within the new culture, students also described English as something that was more alive and contained more expression then they had come to understand from the standardized instruction they received within their original educational institutions (Halic et al., 2009).

Issues surrounding the difficulties of using English are further complicated as the growing popularity of international student recruitment has influenced the type of student coming from foreign universities. For instance, Fischer (2010) highlights the fact that there are no firm statistics for how many poor English ability international students are admitted to universities in the United States each year. According to her research, colleges and universities have formed partnerships with independent English as a Second Language (ESL) services in order to be in a position to increase international student enrollment without having to make large additions to existing administration and teaching resources. While this has increased the bottom line for universities and external

ESL businesses this has also lead to a more costly education for students coming from international contexts as they must often times pay out of pocket in order to meet English requirements and undergo testing.

Another way that language is tied into the process of schooling for international students is how the use of language is interpreted by host culture members as a manifestation of knowledge and ability within the classroom. Kim (2002) reports that there is a belief that basic cognitive processes are a universal human trait and shared across cultures. However, this is not the case as culture has a strong influence on how people use the act of cognition. There are differences in modes of thinking that individuals from different cultures use to negotiate the same information. Specifically, in regards to language, cultural differences found in the act of talking are consistent with cultural beliefs regarding the process of talking and thinking. The Western idea that talking is connected to thinking is not necessarily shared in Eastern cultures. While Westerners may believe that the act of verbalization is a necessary component of thinking Eastern cultures may be more holistic and therefore not place talking and thinking within the same category.

When this concept is transferred to the classroom there can be many difficulties for Asian students studying within a Western context.   Lun et al. (2010) discusses the fact that the relationship between culture and critical thinking abilities has not been demonstrated clearly but that much literature has focused on the outward expressions and interpretations of critical thinking. The lower ESL abilities of Asian students were found to influence perceptions of critical thinking ability when these students were in the

classroom.   While this could be considered more linguistic as opposed to cultural this

still lead to perceptions within the classroom that Asian students were not as prepared for

the act of critical thinking and discussion as their Western counterparts. This is also

consistent with the work of Campbell and Li (2008) that found that a lack of

understanding of basic Western academic tenets, such as report structure and class

discussions, caused a great deal of difficulty for Asian students regardless of their level of

schooling or academic aptitude within their home environment.

Chinese International Students

Concern for international students is not only limited to the abilities with

language. For example, Misra and Castillo (2004), Wei et al. (2007), Ward and Armes

(1998), and Yan and Berliner (2009) have all dealt with the stressors associated with the

life of the international student. According to these researchers there is a need to

recognize cultural differences in stress management and the research concerning Chinese

international students in particular is somewhat limited. International students experience

more stressors then native students as they try to accommodate themselves to a foreign

learning environment. Often, these international students are deprived of their

established elements of social support and carry with them high expectations that they

will succeed academically once they enter the university. However, these students may

suffer from a mismatch between their expectations of their abilities and the actual results

once they begin the process of acculturation to a new system.

Working with this group is further complicated because members may not want to

admit failures due to pre-existing cultural conceptions. When this group feels

acculturated stress they may become overwhelmed and doubt their abilities. However, they are also the least likely to seek treatment for such worries because of the importance for many Asians to "save face". According to this tradition, to admit ones failings is viewed negatively and therefore this group is least likely to make outward overtures for assistance. This inward reliance, coupled with a high pressure to succeed from social expectations and members of their family, makes Chinese international students one of the most vulnerable groups to depression.

The Influence of Global Trends on Local Sites of Education: What Researchers May Find When Interviewing Students

Through a review of the literature concerning such topics as the process of globalization, language, identity, and the particular case of Chinese international students we can see different themes arising that shape the educational environment of study participants. Through careful consideration and a rich analysis of both the pre-existing literature as well as the words of the international students who are part of this study we hope to see the interplay of established ideas and lived realities at work. The structure of educational environments in a global age will be helpful to understand as we look into the acculturative process of students studying within a specific educational environment.

In order to answer the guiding question of this study, the ideas from the review of literature can be differentiated into themes which are used to structure open ended interviews with participants (see Interview Protocol Appendix A). While not asking directly if participants agreed with ideas presented in the literature, interview questions can be developed and these themes can again be utilized in the analysis of interview

transcripts. As a result, there are several possible areas where there might be linkages

between what the participants experienced and what has been learned through a review of

literature.

One central theme that may be related to the lives of participants is the growing

role and importance of English education across diverse educational systems. English,

may in fact, be understood to act as the universal language of business, politics, and

science and therefore may hold a place of prominence in the classroom. However, it may

be interesting to note if English is indeed being transformed into a global lingua franca

and as a result losing its ability to display particular elements of cultural communication.

What will be interesting to observe, if it exists, is the particular relationship that research

subjects have with the language of English and what role they believe English education

plays in their life. For instance, the way in which English ability influences student

perceptions of their own effectiveness within a new educational environment will be an

important point to develop over the course of interviews.

In accordance with the vast literature on acculturation it will be important to keep

in mind any way in which particular student groups differ from one another within a

specific educational environment. Student groups, for example, may exhibit differences

when it comes to such things as English language skills and knowledge. Student groups

may also exhibit differences on a variety of other variables that have yet to be discussed.

Whether these variables have been previously researched within the literature or not it is

important to be aware of the fact that there is no hard set reality that determines the

character of the international student and therefore there may be much variability in the accounts of our participants.

Finally, it may be helpful to look for elements of student stress and the possible mitigating role of social support systems as we examine the educational experiences of our participants. This stress may come from a variety of areas but according to the research that has been reviewed thus far we can be almost certain that we will find some manifestation in the accounts of our research participants. Student stress may be linked to such things as the disconnect from established familiar relationships of support for our students. Student stress may also come from the mismatch between student expectations of their own success and the realities that they face once they enter into a culturally different educational environment. Throughout these discussions it will be interesting to see if such stress is manifested in participant accounts or if cultural conceptions, such as the desire to "save face", limits the amount of discussion of such elements with the researcher.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introductory Comments

This study is concerned with a phenomenon affecting a growing number of individuals around the globe. The importance of researching such a topic is best understood when one realizes that those students who are currently enrolled in higher education institutions are increasingly going to be taking on roles in business, science, and industry which will affect a wide range of people around the world. While having an impact within their own lives, the way in which they view their educational experiences and come to understand the roles they are being prepared to play is something that extends beyond their immediate circumstances. Indeed, this impact extends onto the global stage. Therefore, any attempts at better understanding the specifics of such an experience from the point of view of the student are beneficial.

Once again, this study seeks to answer two research questions.

1. How do students studying in a foreign educational environment perceive their experience and what can this tell us about the structure of education in a global age?

2. What, if any, implications are there from this research that will enable higher education planners to assist Chinese and other international students as they seek education in American colleges and universities?

Importance of Method Selection

The role of methodology in such a research study cannot be understated. Proper design is crucial because this will be the way that the researcher collects and organizes the data which he believes reflect the questions under investigation. For this particular study qualitative research seems to be the most applicable because "when seeking to understand the human condition, with all the problems this enterprise poses for traditional scientific research approaches, qualitative research is held to be in some ways superior to highly quantitative research" (Caelli, 2001, p. 273). In this study, what is of interest is how individuals create an understanding of their own situations in the context of a seriesof global factors that both influence and are influenced by experiences and understandings of the individuals under study. In the field of qualitative research there are many possible designs which offer insight into such experiences. Choosing a proper research design is crucial (Starks & Trinidad, 2007) as this is how the researcher will obtain the correct results from their investigation. Since this research study is concerned with the lived experiences of individuals and how they attach meaning to such experiences the qualitative method of phenomenology was employed to gain such an understanding.

Phenomenology as a method focuses on the comprehension and meaning of action (Annells, 2006). "The goal of empirical phenomenology… is to describe the world as experienced by the participants of the inquiry in order to discover common meanings underlying empirical variations of a given phenomenon" (Baker et al., 1992, p. 1356). While some qualitative research methods specifically employ a critical or

transformative agenda this is not the case with phenomenology (Caelli, 2001). Rather, phenomenology as a method seeks to illuminate experiences by drawing on the accounts of individuals who are living such experiences. More than simply being descriptive, phenomenology has two complimentary aspects; the aim of giving voice to the concerns of the participants and the requirement to contextualize and make sense of the accounts which the researcher collects (Larkin et al., 2006). Therefore, according to such commitments the researcher engages with participants in order to develop an understanding of the individual interpretations and contextualizations of the lived experience of a phenomenon. Thus, phenomenology is the most appropriate method when the type of problem dictates that "it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). This understanding and contextualizing is accomplished by the rigorous application of the methods of phenomenology.

Methodological Debates

While the phenomenological method may be a highly adaptable approach to research there are still debates of which the researcher must be aware. One such debate concerns the blurring together of different qualitative research methods, particularly phenomenology and grounded theory. For instance, Maggs-Rapport (2000) suggests that these methods can be triangulated together in order to produce richer data sets and help bolster the validity of qualitative findings. By cross checking findings between different methodological approaches the researcher has a better chance to find the true essence of an experience under investigation. However, Starks and Trinidad (2007) disagree with

such ideas and suggest that such cross method blurring is not valid since each method takes a different approach to identifying different subjects and therefore different theoretical conceptions. Phenomenology is concerned with illuminating and detailing the individual lived experience of a participant. Grounded theory, though it employs much methodology which is similar to that of phenomenology, is more concerned with the emergence of conceptual categories that can be used to explain social actions.

Another debate concerns the involvement of the participant in the construction of meaning from the interview transcripts. The phenomenological researcher must decide to what extent incorporation of the participant into the evaluation and analysis of the transcripts generated from the interview process is beneficial. Should the participant read over the transcribed interview and suggest to the researcher what may be important for future development or should the researcher act as the main instrument of analysis and suggest things over the course of the interviews which need to be developed further? These are questions to which each particular phenomenologist has a different answer. Depending on the individual researcher and the researcher's familiarity with the subject under investigation, not to mention characteristics of both the participant and the research location, it is possible to arrive at different conclusions for different studies. While the debates that exist within phenomenology are important they do not necessarily mean that there is a sufficient lack of agreement to push the potential researcher away from such an investigative technique. Rather, much like the considerations associated with the ethics of study, the researcher must be aware of such questions and concerns and actively attempt to answer them both before the research begins and during the research.

Steps of Analysis

As with other research methods there are specific steps through which phenomenological research proceeds in order to arrive at an understanding of the data collected during the research process. These steps are composed of the collection of verbal data, reading of the collected data, breaking the data into parts, organization of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and synthesizing a summary of the data for presentation to the scholarly community (Giorgi, 1997). Collection of the data is achieved through the conducting and transcription of in-depth interviews with the study participants but also relies upon a mix of observation and the reading of extant texts in order to gain a complete picture of the phenomenon being researched. Observation, specifically, makes up an important element because it is important to see how individuals live in time and space in order to figure out how they embody the meaning of a phenomenon. Without efforts of observation the researcher loses a necessary component of context which can lead to an incomplete understanding of the questions being investigated.

When the data from the interviews has been collected, the researcher attempts to "bracket out" any initial a priori assumptions that may be brought by the researcher into the study and then into analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the researcher must go through a process whereby he or she acknowledges any biases and attempts to understand in what ways such a bias could alter the meaning of the data that has been collected. However, it may not be possible to completely free oneself from such bias (Maggs-Rapport, 2000) and accordingly "while one may not be able to fully place

into brackets one's oft unthematized stance before the subjects of one's inquiry, one can endeavor to describe it as completely as possible so as to illuminate how it has affected what our inquiries disclose" (Garza, 2007, p. 315).

Since the ultimate goal of phenomenological research is to understand what subjects think of a phenomenon and to give a description of such accounts (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007) good phenomenological research is more than a simple synthesis of the contents of a group of interviews (Donalek, 2004). "The division of data into parts is a means to an end- a way of grasping a phenomenal totality such that the researchers' intuition and interpretive frame of reference can be brought to bear" (Garza, 2007, p. 337). Descriptions of phenomena are always from someone's perspective and therefore the researcher treats the participant, in part, as a co-researcher so as to learn from the participant's descriptions the essence of the phenomenon as he or she experiences it. The role of the researcher is to take these positions into account and help to form them into phenomenological renderings. This means that far from being apart and outside of the research process the researcher should attempt to involve the subject in the compiling of data and the discussion of transcripts to understand the meanings that they may hold. While this may be a challenge for the researcher, it is not an impossible task to negotiate.

The Study Sample: Methods and Population

Questions are often raised about the sampling methods of phenomenological research. Many times this type of research is criticized because of a belief that sampling methods of phenomenology are biased and therefore skew the results of such research. However, phenomenology has only one type of research subject, those that have

experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Baker et al., 1992; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Respondents are purposefully selected by the researcher because of their experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. Sample sizes are also often much smaller than with traditional quantitative research due to the in-depth and intensive interviews that comprise this investigative technique. Phenomenology is only possible with small groups, 5-10 individuals being the usual sample size (Smith, 2004). While there is a tendency for researchers to work with smaller groups of individuals there is also acknowledgement that the more subjects one has the greater the odds of variation and coming to understand what is essential to the experience (Giorgi, 1985) and therefore the potential phenomenological researcher is urged to err on the side of caution and over sample when creating their initial pool of respondents.

The sample population for this research consisted of 6 graduate students from China who were studying at Kent State University. There were five female subjects and one male subject with ages ranging from 21 to 26. The five female subjects all studied within the college of business and the sole male participant studied in the department of computer science. The socio-economic status and geographic makeup of the individual participants was evenly distributed ranging from a subject that grew up on a farm, three subjects that lived in medium sized cities, and two subjects that lived in the large cities of Beijing and Shanghai. Student time in Kent State ranged from one to three semesters. All subjects completed the full round of three one-hour in-depth interviews except for one female subject who departed the study after her first interview to pursue an internship

in New York City. In the case of this participant, only completed interview data from the first interview was used and factored into later analysis.

Individual students were selected from among a class cohort at Kent State University that was studying for a major within science, business, or industry. This choice of major is purposeful because in these fields English is the internationally used language, and the students will have had experience with English instruction through their schooling in China. The abilities in the language are paramount because, as discussed in the literature review, English is not only the dominant language in the teaching of these subjects but also holds an important position in the later practice of such areas within a globalized economy.

In addition to this, use of a closely related student group allowed for an easier comparison among interviews as confounding variables, such as drastically different curricular content, were reduced due to overlapping fields of study. In order to further minimize confounding variables, all members of the cohort were selected from one particular nation. For this research, all participants were from China because this allowed for participants to meet the scope conditions necessary for this research but also makes sure that international differences in student accounts might be kept to a minimum.

All subjects were recruited through email solicitations sent to the main offices within the business department and computer science department. When subjects answered the email and indicated their desire to participate they were met for an initial interview to establish that they met the scope conditions for the study and to make sure that all questions were addressed before beginning the interview process. Subjects were

given consent forms written in both English and Chinese to guarantee that they understood the study and their rights as participants in research.

The Respondents

Xiu is a 22 year old accounting major who comes from one of the largest cities in China. Both of her parents hold professional or government jobs which has helped her experience a middle class lifestyle. Zheng is 26 and comes from a small village where both her parents are subsistence farmers. She wishes to return to China after completing her studies to help raise her daughter with her husband. Zhong is a 21 year-old computer science major. Both of his parents are middle school teachers who focus on mathematics. Lin Mei, 22, is an MBA major who originally wanted to be a foreign language teacher. Min, 23, comes from the far North of China near Russia, and is a big fan of American soap operas. Her parents work in business and are employed by a Japanese company. Liang, 23, comes from a medium city where both of her parents work as professional managers. All of these students were eager to participate in the research study to help create a better understanding of the Chinese student population at Kent State University.

The Development of Interview Questions

The questions that make up a phenomenological study provide the primary structure by which interview data is generated. As the researcher is trying to uncover the lived experiences of a participant, questions are best when they are open ended and allow the respondent considerable room for reflection and answer (Sanders, 1982). Phenomenology reveals richer data when the questions asked are fewer, probing and in-depth, rather than many that are relatively shallow (Sanders 1982). Thus, it can often be

difficult to prepare a complete list of questions to be asked of respondents before beginning a phenomenological research study. Rather, the researcher must be attentive during the course of the interviews for opportunities to probe for further conversation that may facilitate understanding. This can be accomplished by keeping notes during the course of the interviews and carefully reviewing the transcripts of previous interviews in order to identify core concerns and areas of meaning which should be developed further. Furthermore, while it may not be possible to come up with a complete list of questions to be asked, the researcher can develop avenues of inquiry beforehand based upon his or her knowledge of the subject being investigated and the literature that exists in the field. As a result, the researcher should be familiar with a variety of texts, even those that may not directly relate to the phenomenon under investigation, so as to generate a suitable list of inquiries for discussion with the study participants.

The questions that made up the interview process were a particularly crucial area of concern for this phenomenological research study. The questions needed to be both open ended as to allow the respondent considerable room for the development of their answers but at the same time be structured enough to keep the focus of the interview close to the main topic or topics under investigation. Therefore, it was initially difficult to completely set forth what questions were to be asked and in what order and manner they would be addressed and responded too. This was further made difficult by the fact that during the course of the interviews new areas of interest could arise which either the researcher or participants feels warrant further investigation and development. Therefore, the interviews took many unexpected turns over the course of the data collection period.

However, these difficulties aside it was possible to create a structure based upon the specific content areas that it was hoped would be better understood through the in-depth interview with participants. This technique is similar to other qualitative studies that have used interview protocols despite having open ended questions (e.g. Devlin & Gray, 2007). Questions were organized into themes which were broadly focused on the participants experiences of higher education, the role that English education plays in their education, the student's perception of the role that English will play in his or her future, and how the student sees the immersion in another language as affecting their national or cultural identity. By focusing on such themes it was possible to ask questions that could be linked to larger global factors discussed in the literature as well as allow room for the development of new topics of inquiry.

Question Theme 1: Family Demographics, Student Perceptions of their Education in China, Education at Kent State, and the Role of English in Both

Questions that would elicit information about the participants' lives and education in China were important. What was the socio-economic position of their families before they left home to study? What type of educational institutions did they attend before coming to Kent State?   Such demographic information, however, are only part of the initial concern in the early part of the investigation. It was also important to understand the conditions of the experiences of higher education for the participant and therefore questions should be designed to go deeper than mere surface level variables and observations. A good way to discover the lived experience of participants is to focus on the importance that students attach to their educational experience. Particularly,

questions should allow the student to discuss both what they believe the role of education to be in their future but also the areas in which they would not be able to see themselves if they did not have such an education. In understanding both how students see their education as a function of their later life and also in what ways they feel they would have been limited if they did not receive such an education we may come to know the unique psychological experience of the participant a little better.

The life that the student associates with the completion of their education is very important. Do they see it as allowing them to enter into social or economic circles which they are currently not members of or as something that will extend the possibilities for their future in a significant fashion? Also important to understand, though, are the ways that students perceive what their life would have been like had they not obtained such a level of education. Most likely, each student will have a different idea about what this other "self" could have been. It is probably unique based upon their social circumstances but there may be many themes which run concurrent with the accounts of participants. In understanding just how important education is to these participants it may be just as valid to understand the lives they believe they may be moving away from as opposed to solely focusing on the lives that they are making through their educative experience.

Question Theme 2: Students' Perceptions of the Role of English in the U.S. Setting with Respect to their Own Identities

Another area of concern which must be addressed over the course of the interviews is what the role of English is within the education of the participant. It is going to be important to understand the reasons that people are continuing to learn

English as well as the more technical details of how they are instructed in this language. More specifically, how does the specific culture of their institution interpret the importance and role of English education? It is possible to speculate that the different orientations towards the language would have an effect on the way that students experience such instruction and the way that they factor this into their overall higher education experience. Is English taught because of the close relation that it has with business and technical ventures? Or, is it something that is taught because it identifies the learner with another culture and is therefore an important part of developing a more cosmopolitan and refined individual? Furthermore, is English taught as something that is akin to a lingua franca or is a specific and standardized form of the language presented to learners? Even more important is the way that the student envisions the educational institution's orientation towards the subject of English. While it would be possible to find official university literature detailing the importance of foreign language learning it is not the same as the way the individual participant experiences such a subject. For them, their reasons for learning English may be very different from official declarations and therefore this is an important area to understand, especially since phenomenology is so focused on understanding the situation from the point of view of the respondent.

The way that English plays into conceptions of the future of the student is also another important theme when conducting this research. How does the student in question see English functioning within their later lives? Do they plan to use it as something to aide in their economic pursuits or do they see themselves involved more in a process of acculturation with another culture through the learning of language? Related

to this concern is how students feel that knowledge of a language affects their national and cultural identity. Since language and cultural knowledge are bound together as language reflects the thought process of a culture and helps to identify its members we can expect language to play an important part in a student's national and cultural identity leaving us as researchers with many interesting questions that we can pursue.

For example, do these students feel that they have a cultural or national identity which is different from their non-English speaking contemporaries? Identities are worked out through dialogic interactions with other members of society. If these interactions take place in a language which is not the dominant language for their culture or nation what effects would this have on student identity? Something that could be very revealing here is to have the student consider the difference in their life if they had not learned English or if they had learned a language other than English. While this may be just speculation since it would be impossible for the student to know for sure this still helps to reveal the individual interpretation of the experience for the participant. In order to think about the differences that would be present in their life the participant first must come to understand what they see English doing within the parameters of their education and their future. By focusing on a speculative situation it is possible to see the conceptions about an actual situation since its structure must factor into deciding the differences that would characterize the speculative situation. Many times individuals become more aware of the particulars of their own culture when it comes into conflict with another. Therefore, by asking speculative questions it is hoped that students will reflect on their own unique

cultural positions as they imagine the differences that are present within the speculative

situation and the ways in which it contrasts with their current social position.

Question Theme 3: Perceptions of Differences between Chinese Students, Impressions of

Americans, and Relation of Experience to Personal Identity

A final theme of questioning arose out of the course of earlier interviews with

participants. As part of the phenomenological research process previous interviews are

examined before beginning a new line of inquiry to see if additional points of

consideration are brought forth which may help to further clarify student accounts. While

reviewing previous interviews several lines of questioning emerged that seemed

important for further investigation.

One of the first lines of questioning that emerged from previous accounts was the

idea of differences between Chinese students. During previous interviews with

participants several made statements alluding to the fact that they were not sure if what

they were experiencing would apply to all Chinese students, both undergraduate and

graduate, at Kent State University. As a result of these statements, the researcher felt it

was necessary to further investigate and determine if there were perceived differences

between groups of Chinese students and if these differences would change the experience

for these students.

Another line of questioning that emerged was Chinese students' overall

impression of Americans. Were they considered polite and friendly? Were they

considered easy to approach? What was the nature of interactions between these

different groups? This line of questioning came about from several reasons. First, it

seemed important to determine the tone of interactions with Americans and how this perceived tone might influence student accounts of their own experiences. Second, with the importance placed on the difference between Chinese students there was also a need to investigate whether these differences transcended student groups or if they were confined to one specific subgroup, namely that of international Chinese students.

Involvement of Research Participants

All subjects completed the full round of three one-hour interviews except for one female subject who departed the study after her first interview to pursue an internship in New York City. In the case of this participant, only completed interview data from the first interview was used and factored into later analysis.

All subject interviews were recorded and transcribed upon completion. Transcriptions were analyzed using NVIVO, a qualitative analysis software, and were checked for consistencies and differences between subject accounts. Subjects were coded according to Chinese pseudonyms to help guarantee confidentiality and protect subject identities from other individuals, including making it harder for subjects to recognize their own accounts to the researcher.

The degree of involvement of research participants in the analysis section of this study is a final crucial component when considering this type of research. In phenomenology the researcher and the participant are engaged in co-constructing the meaning given to a situation, however the actual mechanics of such a process vary according to certain situational factors. For instance, the availability of the respondents dictates quite a bit about how deeply they can be involved in such a process. Due to this

fact, the availability of respondents will be limited more than if both the researcher and the participants shared the same national borders. Since time for the collection of data is limited this also means that the time for involving participants in analysis is limited as well. For this particular study research participant involvement in the analysis section was limited but was not entirely absent. Since phenomenology is such an adaptable research technique it is possible to address this concern without impinging on the validity of study results.

Rather than having participants read over entire transcripts and help the researcher clarify meaning the researcher had to take a greater role in such decisions in order to maximize the time they have with respondents. Instead of waiting for a series of interviews to be complete the researcher evaluated each interview looking for points that they wanted to address with the participant in the next scheduled interview. By referring both to notes taken during the interview process and by listening to the recordings of each interview and making further notes the researcher was be able to pick up on important themes which are present in the transcript. Once such themes are identified the researcher used the open ended nature of the interviews to their advantage by going back over key components with participants and having them reflect more upon the things that they have already said. While this method may be more work intensive on the part of the researcher it is the only option for carrying out research under conditions such as these. In this specific case the researcher needed also to be more diligent about identifying and addressing their bias. Since the researcher is taking on a greater responsibility for finding meaning within the text they must be acutely aware of how they may be "reading in"

their own thoughts about importance and not focusing on what the participants

themselves find important about the experience. However, if this effort is made and the

researcher allows for the careful reflection about how their own experience may be

affecting their analysis many of the potential problems in this process can be avoided.

Also, by being clearer about personal bias the validity of results will be bolstered since it

will be easier for others to trace the development of important themes and ideas from the

interviews.

Ethics and Concerns of the Method

Phenomenology, like any research methodology, has particular concerns about the

ethics of such a research approach as well as the influence such research could have on

the lives of participants. While some of these concerns can be seen when looking at

qualitative research as a whole, others are particular to this methodology and the specifics

of groups under investigation. Regardless of whether these concerns are general critiques

of research or specific to a particular research process it is important to understand and

actively pursue answers to raised ethical issues.

One concern that is raised regarding phenomenology is that it requires the

articulate abilities of the respondent in the language used by the researcher to create valid

data for analysis. If there is a breakdown of communication or an inconsistency with

such communication there is likely to be a loss of meaning as each party may understand

something different during the research process. However, as Smith (2004) makes clear,

this is not necessarily the case. According to Smith, true meaning does not rely as much

on the articulate abilities of the respondent as it does on the meaning and importance that

a respondent places upon a topic. If the subject matter of the interview is something that is meaningful to the respondent he or she will be able to convey this meaning despite the lack of highly articulate abilities in a certain language. A particular strength of phenomenology is that there is no set way of carrying it out and therefore it is highly adaptable to different and emerging circumstances (Annells, 2006; Smith, 2004). Thus, we can see that with the careful attention of the researcher the method of phenomenology may be applied to many different groups and circumstances.

This of course does not mean that there are no problems associated with language issues when attempting this type of research. For example, if the researcher employs a translator to help with portions of the interviews he or she must be extremely careful that the translator understands the research process. The translators could, for instance, come to see themselves as the voice of the participant and therefore selectively edit what was said in order to cast the participant in a more favorable light. While this is indeed a concern, it is not sufficient reason for the researcher to completely abandon all hopes for conducting the research. Rather, there must be extra attention paid when phenomenology is used in a more non-traditional group and the researcher may have to take a greater role in the facilitation and analysis of the interview process.

As opposed to such methods as ethnography, where the study site itself is of primary interest, in this type of qualitative work the locus of the study site must not become the sole focus of the study (Schram, 2003). What is important in phenomenological research is the lived experience of the participant and not so much the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. For example, in this research,

unique characteristics of Kent State University are of less importance than a focus on the experiences of respondents in this setting. If researchers become more focused on the characteristics of their research site it can lead to less of a focus on the individual interpretations of experiences within this site. Even though the particular culture of an area is important, phenomenology is about how the participant sees and understands the culture rather than how the researcher sees and understands such culture. Analysis should not center on the uniqueness of a location to the detriment of understanding this uniqueness from the point of view of the study respondents.

Much of the discussion concerning ethics in any form of qualitative research is theoretical in nature (Caelli, 2001). What is important to remember when conducting phenomenological research is that while it does not purposely employ a transformative or critical agenda there is still the possibility that both the researcher and the participant could be transformed or affected by things learned during the research process. Since much of phenomenology rests on the illumination of taken for granted assumptions on the part of the participant, there is an appreciable risk that what the participant has come to believe may be changed by their exposure to such notions. Also, as the researcher must take steps to acknowledge his or her biases with respect to the situation there is real potential that such actions may also transform the character of the researcher as they become more familiar with the ways in which their bias has shaped their thinking. While both of these issues do represent real concerns regarding the ethics of such research, it is possible to anticipate such issues and work around them. Researchers must be aware of such problems and do their best to minimize the potential impact that such discoveries

could have both on themselves and the participants that they engage with in such research. Also, the researcher must be aware of institutional policies regarding research of this nature and the rules governing the specific groups which will be a part of the research effort. When the research involves groups that are of a highly sensitive nature, such as children or pregnant individuals, extra caution must be taken when considering ethical concerns and possible harm to the subjects. If these concerns are kept in mind and actively enter into decisions regarding the research process it is possible to conduct phenomenological research with a minimal risk to all groups involved.

Concluding Word on Methods

Phenomenological research, like all attempts at research, is subject to difficulties that threaten the validity and analysis of results. Despite this, the things which can be learned from such investigation are very important for better understanding the ever increasingly connected world of which we find ourselves a part. While there are many studies and research attempts which detail the macro level of impact that changes relating to globalization have for different student groups there is less corresponding research at the micro level which helps to further illuminate this line of inquiry. If we are to truly understand the changes brought by globalizing systems we also need to understand their effect on individual lives. Phenomenology is helpful in addressing this situation since its focus rests on understanding the individual lived experience of groups that are affected by such changes. Its adaptability further enhances its usefulness as it allows for differences in research sights and structures to be taken into account and addressed in such a way as to not damage the potential knowledge gained from such investigation.

While the results garnered from phenomenological research attempts may not be applicable across a range of settings this does not diminish the importance for furthering understanding. Rather, by becoming more aware of some of the differences that may be present within individual accounts we also become more aware of the similarities which are present between them as well. Therefore, the phenomenological investigation purposed in this study helps to better understand the macro level situation of global change and interconnection as it relates to education by making us more familiar with the effects as felt by a specific student group.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

After interviews were conducted and transcribed they were analyzed using NVIVO software. The use of this software allowed for the coding of elements of subject accounts that did or did not match with the suggested themes of analysis. While some statements directly matched what would be expected from a review of the literature there were other statements that led to new variables of analysis or that needed a deeper interpretation. In this chapter we will examine the dialogue of the participants to see if this dialogue deepens our understanding of their personal experiences of education in a globalized environment.

As is often necessary with phenomenological research it was important to address any biases which could influence how results were coded or interpreted by the principal researcher. In order to do this a list was generated about possible biases and their effects on the research. Once themes were identified this list was used in order to make sure that biases had been addressed and they were not unduly influencing either the themes that were suggested or the way in which ideas were linked together throughout the research process. One of the major potential biases that came up as part of this study was the idea of the average educational experience.

While this study was based on the experiences of foreign students in an unfamiliar educational circumstance there was still potential for the educational experience of the researcher to skew results and create biased conclusions about subject accounts. For instance, it was important that the principal researcher did not add elements of his own

schooling into the interpretations of the participant accounts. In order to avoid such

occurrences the principal researcher made sure to only use the text of the interviews in

the transcription and analysis process and kept any notes separate from the transcripts to

avoid potential confusion between competing ideas.

Another potential bias that was addressed was the practice of normalizing one's

own educational experience and then using it as a rubric to assess the experience of

others. In order to keep this bias from influencing the results of this study, the principal

researcher needed to remember that what was important throughout this study was the

way in which the research subjects interpreted their experience and personal

interpretations held no place within this study. By remembering to engage in such

practices the twin goals of illuminating the accounts and realities of participants and

making biases clearly available to outside observes was hopefully achieved.

Student Accounts as They Relate to Question Theme 1:
Family Demographics, Student Perceptions of their Education in China,
Education at Kent State, and the Role of English in Both

Perceptions of Education in China and the U.S.

One of the first themes to emerge from the accounts of the participants was the

idea of similarities between their home educational environments and the new contexts in

which they found themselves. While there was reason to expect such a theme to occur

from the review of literature it was surprising how limited such direct expressions of

similarities were present in subject accounts. In fact, only 3 of the participants made

direct references to similar elements between educational systems. For instance, Xiu

reported:

I think some similar things are, maybe, well almost most of the things. We have midterm exams and finals. And maybe in China also we have some case study and most people would like to go to the library to study. And something I think beyond the differences are the same.

Furthermore, Xiu reported that another similarity between her educational experience in China and her experience here was that similar course materials were used in her classes.

The experiences that Xiu reported directly relating to similarities between educational environments were also not only limited to what occurred in the classroom but took into account external educational experiences as well.

One thing I thought is just the experience, I attended the job and internship fair, and I have attended one in China also and I think they are almost the same. In China also (we) have some fairs like that maybe twice a year and many companies will come and try to introduce what they have, their positions, and something like that. It is almost the same. I feel very familiar when I entered into the hall.

Zheng also mentioned directly similar elements in her accounts. However, instead of comparing the higher education experience in China to what she was experiencing here she found more similarities between her high school education and her new college environment.

In China the life of high school is a little similar like my study life here. We have many homeworks and have many exams and we have to learn many subjects.

For Zheng, the preparation that she experienced while preparing for her college career in China was more like the higher education experience she was currently having at her mid-western university.

Lin Mei, finally, commented on the elements of similarity that she found not strictly within the classroom but rather in the relationships that characterize the student/instructor relationship.

Ok, similar, you only meet with the professors in class. If you don't talk to them you will never know them more.

While not strictly speaking of an overt element of educational similarity as we would expect from reading through the literature, this participant found similar elements of an academic relationship translating between two different educational environments.

Despite an increased pressure towards common educational elements as a result of the influences of globalization participants also reported differences between the educational experience they were familiar with and the new experience in which they were taking part. Interestingly, these differences appeared to be more salient in the lives of participants. They were more aware of the ways that their educational reality differed from what they had previously conceived as normal. Differences for participants ranged from issues of student choice within the university to the quality of education and the ways they felt it was or was not preparing them for a later economic environment.

Student Choice and Academics

One of the first ways that students reported a difference between educational systems was in the concept of student choice within the American university system. For

them, the structure of classes and the opportunities that were available both inside and outside the classroom setting marked a departure from the traditional system of education of which they had all been a part. As Xiu explains:

> Well, I think the biggest difference here is about the courses. In China most courses are scheduled by the university and you don't have a choice to choose which ones are first, and there is only one teacher for one course. So, your schedule is always set by the university so most of your majors you can see your classmates with the same major in the same classroom all the time. So you didn't know. But here I think it is really different. And maybe you can see in the same classroom, I have friends that are from another major. But in China mostly it is always the conception of a class like in high school. You are classmates, even in the university.

For Xiu, this new choice was reflected in two different ways. The first way was the fact that she was free to choose classes and set the structure of her day to reflect upon her personal wants and desires. The second way, however, was less about the courses themselves but rather the way that such choice influenced her relationships with others. Xiu moved from a system where due to strict schedules she could rely on seeing the same people at every point in her university career to one where the possibilities for social interaction were opened due to the increased student choice about course load.

Zhong also had similar thoughts when discussing the differences between the educational system that he had grown up within and the new educational system here in the United States.

> And another thing, I think is that I can have more freedom to choose the class that I want. But in China, for undergraduate almost you have to choose what the major wants you to choose. This means, in my experience, we don't have any chance to choose another class that we want. Except maybe in the last year of study.

The opportunity to choose classes, something taken for granted by American university students, was something that was markedly different and easily identified during reflection by study participants.

The elements of student choice did not only find themselves characterized within a classroom setting. One of the greatest differences that participants reported was the ability to exercise these same elements of choice when it came to outside of class activities as well. According to Xiu:

> (There are) more activities here. In China we have some activities but mostly not like things that I want to attend. Well, I think every year they are the same and maybe I just take the time to attend once and I never go there twice. But here I think maybe it's really a difference between China and the U.S. I just think the activities here are really interesting.

While this increased choice was seen as a positive element of education in the lives of participants this did not mean that there were no complicating factors associated with such a change. Lin Mei again mentioned that there was much more student choice when considering differences between educational systems.

I think there are many activities here also, and it is based on your decision, on

your choice. I can go to many activities if I want but here I want to pay more

attention to my studies so I will choose some important ones to attend. That's it.

While this increased choice initially presented itself as a positive element it quickly led to

difficulties that were new to Lin Mei.

A problem that occurred to me, I think, is that I cannot manage my time properly.

Because too many activities and the classes, I think it is too heavy for me. So I

cannot manage these two properly. I have to pay much more attention to the class

study and in the other hand I have to take part in many activities that our major

requires. So, I cannot handle it right now.

This element of increased student choice was both positive and negative in the life of Lin

Mei. While she appreciated the fact that she could rely on herself more for decisions

regarding her academic life she also was unsure of how to manage all the competing

demands on her time that her choices created. As a result, a balancing act between choice

and responsibility was created for Lin Mei who was only now beginning to understand

and develop a plan to benefit from increased personal freedom in education.

Course Content and Organization- Theoretical vs. Practical

Elements of student choice were not the only way that class issues differed

between the education participants had received in China and the new educational

environment they were experiencing in America. Another difference that was reported

involved not just the choice to take certain courses but the content of those courses and

what elements comprised the lessons for participants. These issues of different curricular

content related both to the preparation students believed they were getting for the working world as well as the quality of instruction they believed they received from their professors.

The actual content of the courses was something that differed from what students expected when they entered the American university system. As Xiu reported in her interview:

Well, I think there is much more reading here because in China mostly you just read the book, that's ok. But here you have to read other materials like the professor gives you and also he maybe has some, just some cases, not for you to discuss or things like this, just to better understand what he is teaching. So sometimes, I really spend much time on reading.

However, the fact that there was more reading was not really the main difference that this respondent observed when reflecting on course content.

Well, till now I didn't have the chance to deal with some reality problems but I think here the textbooks and the courses are designed to combine the knowledge and something in the real life. Just like I have MicroEcon which we just use a textbook called "Microeconomics in the News" so it will collect some clips from the media and also try to explain what this news is trying to, try to give you some information about microeconomics. And then you can use the microeconomics knowledge to explain what has just happened. But in China it almost has some models and then some theory and it will just list but not something that really combines the two.

Zheng also reported similar elements when discussing differences in course content between university experiences.

> Here what I learn is more practical and we often, the professor, analyzes cases and the cases are all facts about the famous corporations like GM so we can link the theory with our life.

> Ok, what we learn in China, most of the part is theoretical and has no direct relationship with the reality. And the theory may be obsolete or deficient so after we finish our courses maybe I don't know, maybe we don't know how to deal with the job or many simple things. But here, what we learn, like in the textbook, the cases in the textbook are real corporations and the data the textbooks quotes are real.

The way these courses were organized had a direct impact on how well the students believed their education was preparing them for the working world outside of the university. It also influenced what students thought about their professors and how well they believed faculty did in delivering an education that would allow them to find and keep jobs once they left the classroom environment. Economic preparation existed not only as a motive for coming to the United States to study but was also identified as lacking in previous educational experiences in China. According to Zheng:

> Most important of all, what we learn in the university are theoretical and we can't use what we learn in our work directly. So even we get a bachelor degree or master degree and then we have to go to work we still don't know, we still can't finish our work properly.

Despite this lack of experience in previous attempts at education Zheng believed that the education she was receiving in this university was far superior to preparing her for work.

> When I was in the first week, in the business college, a professor reminded us to get in contact with the career services and to update our resume and learn something about how to interview better. So this is really something different.
>
> And my homework is associated with accounting. If I want to be an accountant the job I must do, my homework is associated with this. And what we do is of course beneficial to our future work.

Min reported similar thoughts when reflecting on how her education in this university system was or was not preparing her for a life outside of school.

> Even though it is called financial engineering it is kind of focused on the practical use, for like a trader, like the financial quantitative area. So we take courses and then we learn more from guest speakers, from the industry. So this is kind of different because one is preparing you to do research but this one is preparing you for work, to get into the industry. Yeah, so that's the difference.

Again a difference was present in accounts of educational experience despite what some see as the overly homogenizing influence of a global environment on curricular issues. While education in China seemed to deal with theoretical matters as they related to different theories of business these participants both reported a more practically oriented education within the American university system. This, in their minds, was more effective for allowing them to make headway into a later employment situation. These

points seem similar to the ideas presented by both Medina-Juarez (2008) and Wang (2003) as they discuss the idea that knowledge is informed by the specific cultural practices of a society and therefore does not make a seamless transition between various locales. As a result, though disciplines may be similar across environments this does not mean that the same lessons will be emphasized in the same fashion.

Style of Instruction in the U.S. vs. China

The fact that education took on a more practical nature in this new education system was not only reflected in the way participants described issues pertaining to coursework. It was also reflected in personal evaluations of the effectiveness of instruction they received and how well they believed their professors functioned in the capacity of expert and teacher. In some cases, this difference in educational focuses led to reflections on the education system of a nation as a whole. For Zheng:

> I think this is a failure of the education system in China. The advisor, the professor, they don't talk about the career or something with us. Every time in the class they told us something that is usually theoretical and when class is over they leave.

Lin Mei also expressed a similar concern reflecting on how the education in China had made her study life here more difficult because of the difference in expectations regarding knowledge in the classroom.

> I think that when I was in China I would think "oh, this is just routine work and I can get through it" and that's perfect. And when I come to the United States I

myself need to pay more attention to the study because I came here for study,

that's my purpose. So now I have to pay more attention to study.

Zhong was even more critical in his opinion of the Chinese educational system and the

role (or lack thereof) that professors played in the lives and development of their

students.

For graduate students I think most of the, especially in China, or especially in the

computer science major, most of the lecturing, most of the professors in the class,

I think their main energy or their main focus is not in the class. It's in the

projects. Or how to apply for fundings, and actually it is very easy if you want to,

if you can pass the class. But you cannot learn much since, because if the

professors didn't spend much time in class and maybe some topics even they are

not familiar with they will just do some things of their interests. And they didn't

care much about the students. Especially if they are the very famous professors.

For these students, the way that education was practiced directly influenced what they

thought of education systems as a whole and how well their professors functioned within

such a system.

Interactions with Professors- Communication Practices

A final obvious difference that respondents reported centered on ideas of

communication within and outside the classroom setting. These differences existed in the

minds of participants regarding both the communication of other students with the

professor as well as the communication that could take place with the professor outside of

the classroom setting. According to Xiu:

Well, I think, I don't know whether this is a difference, it is about the student's

response to the professors. In China most of the people will just sit and listen,

take notes, and they have little communication with the professor. They just take

notes and even if they have a question they maybe just discuss with their friends.

I don't mean that the professors don't like us to ask questions, or that they don't

want to answer, just like Chinese people they like to do work by themselves so

they just try to work the problem by themselves and sometimes if they really

cannot solve that they maybe come to the professor to get some help. But mostly

people in class in China are very silent.

Xiu was not alone in her description of different communication practices within the

classroom. Lin Mei also reported a difference in what happened in class in China and

what happened in class in America.

What do I like the most? Students talk a lot in class. Most Chinese students don't

talk back in China, so all are silent when the teacher asks some questions. I think

I like the atmosphere in class here more.

Min had similar things to say when reflecting on classroom communication.

Well I think, first one of the differences is like, for here students are more open to

communicate with teachers. Like in class, like you can just speak something and

then ask and also the teacher will pause and to say do you have any questions.

But like in China, just like the students sit there and then the teacher is talking the

entire time, no pause, no questions.

For all of these students the differences in the communicative norms of the classroom were a stark departure from what they had experienced in their original educational cultures. However, communication within the classroom was not the only difference. There were also differences in how communication with faculty and staff were practiced outside the classroom as well. Lin Mei also reported on the difficulties of trying to communicate with faculty outside of the classroom.

> I think it is easier to approach them here. Chinese teachers in the university in China, they always have their classes and then go back home. And I think the doors of their offices are always closed tight. You are afraid to knock on the door and get into their offices. So, at least my classmates, they don't go to the offices more often. I just talked to a few teachers in China. And others we just had class and then no more connection.

Zhong also reported similar feelings regarding the communication with his professors.

> I think I like the teachers here, because in China maybe there are too many students. Even in the universities sometimes the professors mostly they don't spend much time in class. And, uh, not like here. Maybe you can ask him individually after class but they are not as kind as the professors here.

The Role of English in Students' Education in China and the U.S.

There were many instances where participants reported experiences which are very similar to some of the globalized educational themes discussed in the literature, especially those based around the ideas attached to the role and importance of the English language. As a result, it is possible to further observe informative discussions regarding

subject attitudes about their education in English, the ways in which English is utilized outside of a classroom setting, and the instances where English is used as a medium for cross cultural communications.

When comparing subject accounts one of the first similarities that is present is a commonality in when English education began for each participant. Though each individual attended a different school system in different regions of China, each subject began to study English in earnest in his or her middle school years. Occasionally, as reported by one subject, English did appear in their early education but this was only a development of interest in the English language in much the same fashion that we may instruct first graders to say hello in another language. Actual instruction in the form of class materials and teacher led training did not occur until the participants were enrolled in middle school.

The format that English education took was another similarity that appeared in subject accounts despite the fact that each individual was enrolled in what were essentially different school districts spread out around the country. A binding theme of English education was not only the content of the instruction but also the way in which the instruction was delivered to subjects in their class. The overwhelming emphasis for learning English was placed on grammar, sentence structure, reading, and writing with very little emphasis placed on being able to speak the language or identify other oral elements of the use of English.

These points help to confirm what was discussed by Yang (2003) regarding the place of English within the international curriculum. The fact that all respondents,

regardless of their specific school or social location in China, had to undergo a course of study does make it appear that English holds an important place within the international curriculum. Furthermore, the specific instructional style reported by participants helps to highlight the fact that while English is considered an important subject there are specific ideas being emphasized across a range of classroom settings.

English Instruction in China

When Xiu was asked to discuss how she was instructed in English she said:

We have a textbook which has paragraphs first and then there will be vocabulary which is new to us. And typically our teacher will go through the text and pick out the new words and some grammar. And then he will teach us what the new word means and also what the sentence means and what the author tries to tell us.

Furthermore, when asked about the role of conversation in the language classroom Xiu reported:

We just learn. Just learn and the teacher tries talking, talking, talking, and we just listen. And then if we have some question we have some conversation (in Chinese) but not like what you said [in reference to conversations in English].

This style of instruction and the limited use of conversation as an instructional tool was something that was consistent across subject accounts. When asked similar questions Zheng reported:

We don't talk actually. The teacher focuses on grammar and reading and the exam covers multiple choice reading and writing. There may be a short

composition. We don't do much listening and all our learning is to prepare for the exam.

Lin Mei also reported a similar experience when describing her education in English.

Uh, you have an English textbook and you open it and the teachers read it from the very beginning to the very end explaining all the vocabularies in the book, that's all.

Min's experiences within her English class also contained these similar elements.

Like, we start from the alphabet and then from pronunciation and then some simple sentences. And then maybe, like in China, we put too much emphasis on grammar (at the expense of speaking).

Zhong's account of his education in the English language further highlights the common practices that make up the Chinese English classroom.

Oh, I think when I was in junior of middle school our teachers just teach some basic grammar, something like that, and I think his pronunciation is also not very good and sometimes we just listen to some tapes and we follow it when we read the textbook, but it is just for listening and reading. Sometimes we practice writing but there is no speaking.

Yeah, yeah, we never have conversations. But we will practice following the textbook. Yeah, most of the time it is just following the textbook.

Despite being in different school districts across different areas of the country each of these subjects reported almost exactly the same experience when it came to the way in which English was taught and used within a classroom setting.

When asked about why such practices occurred in the classroom subjects gave answers which represented two different forms of influence. One such influence was the structure of the Gao Kao examination, which is used to asses student's learning in China and is the only avenue for college admission. The other influence on the way that English is utilized within the classroom had to do with the role and importance of English within a business or scientific environment.

Regarding the influence of the exam Min reported that the structure of the exam influenced what was taught within her language experience.

> So, that's why in High School the English teacher pays much attention to the grammar, and to the listening, we focus on taking the exam, like, and there is no speaking section for that exam so we do nothing for that.

Liang reported similar elements when discussing the reasoning for why she learned English through a particular instructional fashion.

> Yeah, you know we have two very important entrance exams. One is from junior high school to senior high school. So English is very important course in the exam so everyone takes it seriously.

With the apparent importance of English for college admissions the researcher was curious as to whether students ever opted to study another language in place of English. Liang was quick to dismiss that idea, stating that the importance of English for later education removed any considerations about studying an alternative language in place of English.

It's not a choice, it's kind of a decision that's already a decision. No one doubts

this decision, no one will do this decision, everyone will, you know, make this

decision (in reference to choosing to study English).

Zhong also highlighted the influence of the entrance examinations as one of the

prior motivations for why an individual would study English and why it is taught in a

certain way.

Hmm, maybe it is just because in Junior Middle school actually we don't even

know what English is for. And, uh, just for the examinations because English is

important for our, it's very important in our examinations. We want to go to a

good high or middle school or go to a good university.

The other major source of influence on the instruction of English and the

universal application of such a subject through formalized education came from the

impact that English has within the external economic environment. This, again,

highlights the importance of English as described by Arnove (2007) and Chua (2004) as

they describe English as dominating scientific, business, and political employment fields.

Subjects reported a need to learn English in order to obtain and maintain employment

once their course of study had ended. As Zhong mentioned:

Most of them, the companies, it is a requirement for the companies. The will

have a requirement about English or a bit of English. And perhaps if you are

good at it, good at writing or reading in English some companies will do some

requirements for speaking.

It is interesting that companies will have a requirement for speaking English, but it only comes in after one has proved their abilities to read and write within the language.

> Lin Mei also spoke about the importance of English for later employment.
>
> Many foreign companies are required to write emails, write documents in English and the Chinese staff talks in Chinese. And when you meet the boss that comes from America, then you speak in English.

> Xiu also reported on the importance of English for employment but took it a step further. She described the economic situation of people living in the countryside and small village in China and how current economic realities were shaping their need to learn English.

> Even though they now don't need to learn English, when they want to get jobs they need to so then they will be required to learn. But most people in small cities, when they stay there they don't learn that.

English and Cross-Cultural Communication

English, as an element of life in China was mainly confined to the classroom or as part of the hypothetical future work environment that would be part of the lives of the participants. This, however, did not represent the only role that English took in the interactions study subjects had in their day to day life. English also served the role of facilitating cross-cultural communications for some individuals, where neither party spoke a common first language but was able to use English to communicate and create collective decision making. These ideas seem to be similar to the ones expressed by Stromquist and Monkman (2000) as well as McCrum's ideas regarding "globlish" (2010).

For these authors, English indeed served as a language for cross-cultural communication between different individuals from different countries. Interestingly, while not dismissing this line of thinking, it does raise interesting questions concerning the ideas presented by Philipson (2001), who asserts that English does not exist as a *lingua franca* since a majority of the world's population does not speak the language.

Min related the experience of working with a German businessman as his liaison in China.

> I used English one time to work as a translator for a medical conference. Like an expo. I worked with a representative from Germany and it was seven days a week and we spoke English all the time.

In this case, neither individual involved in the interaction had the ability to utilize a first language for the purpose of conversation. Min did not speak German and the representative did not speak Chinese. However, through the use of this common second language they were able to involve one another in cross cultural communication and facilitate interaction. Min also had a similar experience when working with a tutor from Russia.

> Yeah, I also like, you know, my hometown is kind of close to Russia. So one time I got a tutor from Russia and her major is English so sometimes, no, no, all the time we speak English because I know nothing about the Russian language.

While Min was the only participant to directly report such an experience while living in China all the participants later experienced this particular type of communicative

interaction when they began their educational experiences within the American university system.

Perceptions of Education

Concerning perceptions of education in a new environment respondents touched on facts about the perceived quality of the education, issues involving time management, how they felt the education was preparing them for an economic reality, and what participation in class meant for educational success. Taken together, these issues formed the basis of an opinion about the class time they had spent at Kent State University and how this class time had or had not been worth their efforts studying in a new culture and social location. Regarding education as a sum total of experiences respondents reflected on how they felt about the cumulative total of their education. Zheng, in general, felt pleased with her efforts and the time she has spent learning.

> I think my expectations are true. And what I learned is really, it deserves me to come here. And although I don't have much money because of the exchange rate, I feel more happy.

Lin Mei also believed that her efforts were worthwhile and led to a better understanding of subjects with which she had already developed some familiarity.

> I think that I came here for study because it can help me understand the culture, and the meaning more deeply. In China we just know that it is a Western science, we learn it, we translate it into Chinese, be we cannot get to know it better. It is only in books.

Lin Mei was not alone in believing that this experience had taught her more than the education she was exposed to in China. Min also believed her new educational environment held many important lessons.

> Yeah, like I would say it's pretty good because, like, I, firstly I learn more from my program. You know. And secondly I explored more different cultures. And also I practiced my English. Even though I know how to say salad and maybe it's useless when we are back to China but like, I kind of learn more how to organize my world and it becomes better.

However, despite these positive beliefs about the experience there were still general things that concerned some respondents. For example, Zheng reported on the difficulties associated with certain customs and realms of knowledge that she had not expected.

> Um, many customs or many regulations we don't know. Like someone told if I select courses, more than four, the tuition is the same as the four courses. But I don't know about it and although we have orientation and the college of business and administration prepares an orientation for us but we worry and the ability of the teacher is not the same. And so I think current students can provide more helpful information for us.

As a group these general perceptions led to evaluations about the quality of education and the quality of instruction that students had experienced during their classes and educational experiences in the university. Again, these experiences and opinions were mostly positive but also contained some negative aspects as well as concerns about furthering their education in positive manners. Zheng was the first to report that she felt

positively about the quality of education she had received so far in this new university setting.

> So to compare here and my university in China? Actually, most Chinese students come here and they will feel wonderful and that's what I thought of my feeling because the professor and staff at KSU are really nice. And the resources such as the library, they are wonderful.

Liang had a somewhat different interpretation of the quality of university instruction with which she had become familiar. For her, the initial disappointment of learning that Kent State University would be her school of study was transformed to a positive reflection due to the actual experiences once she arrived.

> And I think, when I came here I felt very disappointed because I applied to 8 universities, but because of my poor English, so only this university gave me an offer. So I feel very disappointed but when I study here I think the education at this university is kind of, it's still very good, it's kind of systematic, you know, you have your own systematic and the professors are very good. They work a lot on their teaching staff and they pay a lot of attention to that and they work hard and so yeah, I think I learned a lot and yeah, for my major accounting, if you pass the CPA exam it will be more important than which university you graduated. So I think my point is that even though Kent State University is not your dream school but I think it still will be good so don't worry and you just accept that.

> If you ask me whether it is a good choice to be here for undergraduate study I will hesitate because the elements are very complicated. But for graduate

study, definitely here will be much better. First of all, you will speak English and

you English will be improved. The second is that to be honest, Chinese education

when they enter the high levels, like the university, it's kind of, they really have a

lot of free time. And our education system really has some problems to be

improved, so it's kind of, we cannot learn a lot from the university. And here,

defiantly not the case. I think it's kind of no matter what, to be a young people

you need to go abroad, to go outside. Not just in your city, in an environment you

are familiar with, it will be definitely, you will get a lot of benefit from this kind

of stuff.

Zhong also felt that there was high quality to the education which was preparing him with

the knowledge that he needed for his field.

Yeah, because for the computer majors, and the professor is very good, the U.S.

has the best scientists and the best devices for us to use to study. So that's why I

come here and I realized most of my friends they come here before, one year

before, and he talks with me about the conditions here and I think it's much better

than in China.

Xiu, on the other hand, had a harder time deciding which experience of education was

better, in part because her life experiences with education had yielded both positive and

negative outcomes.

Maybe one thing that is worrying me is that teachers here, really they are

diversified all over the world, maybe they are Chinese professors but also some

from Africa and European, and sometimes teachers will have strong accent which

will make it very difficult for me to understand. In China there will not be a

problem like that. Yeah, that is partly because the professors in China, in the

university in China are Chinese. But here, yeah, it is really good that you have

professors from all over the world but sometimes the accent really, I think, maybe

you guys will find if you try to understand you can know what he is talking about

but for international students it is really hard. Sometimes I even use the recorder

and after I have played and re-played I don't know what they are talking about.

One element that helped to shape the opinions about education quality was the

participation that went into the typical classroom experience. Participants felt that there

was greater class participation in their new educational environment and that this led to a

greater degree of learning than that to which they had initially been accustomed. For

example, Xiu believed that the class participation was an element that assisted her in her

education.

We use American textbooks which is all in English. So it is not very hard for me

to change that, so I think it is just the same. I really like the speaking here

because the class is more active and I think sometimes other's questions are

always mine so I can just learn from what the professor answers.

Zheng also pointed out the participation by students as an element that stood out in her

experience. For her, the atmosphere created was more conducive to her opinions about

education quality.

Liked the most? Students talk a lot in class. Most Chinese students don't talk back in China, so all is silence when the teacher asks some questions. I think I like the atmosphere in class here.

For both of these participants the involvement of their classmates in the process of learning contributed to their positive experiences within a new environment.

Another part of what informed participants experiences of higher education and the overall quality that they attributed to such a venture were the issues of greater freedom of time management while enrolled in this institution. While issues of time management were highlighted as stressful in some instances there was still a belief that there was a better system in place in their new environment that allowed more control over how time was managed and to what end. For instance, Xiu believed that the system of time management here came with many positive benefits.

Oh, of course I like it. Yeah, because I think it is better to manage your time by yourself. Yeah, you know what time is good for you to take classes, which time is good for you to do some cooking or something else you would like. But in China sometimes I even didn't want to go to school at that time but I have too. Yeah, so the schedule is fixed and I cannot change it.

Zhong also believed that a better system of time management existed in his new educational environment. For him, this better system not only led to higher educational engagement but also a better quality of life.

And, umm, I have to think. And another thing is I can think is that I can have more freedom to choose that class that I want. But in China, for undergraduate,

almost you have to choose what the major wants you to choose. This means, in my experience, we don't have any chance to choose another class that we want. Except maybe in our last year of study.

That could mean that you have more time to do what you want and you can go anyplace that you want if you have enough money. And you can do a more flexible schedule, and if the professors don't push you so much and you can, generally, you can lead a more happy life.

One of the final ways that students decided upon their opinions of the educational experience of which they were now a part was through their ideas about how well such an education was preparing them for later economic realities. For the participants that addressed this issue opinions tended to be positive and these participants believed that their education left them in a better position to obtain a job whether in the United States or back in China upon their eventual return. Xiu was the most reflective on such an issue though she displayed some mixed feelings resulting from her life experiences.

Well, I think I have only taken classes for about two months but I think it works. Also, I have to tell you that the workshops which prepare me for the resume and interviews and public speaking and communications skills, it really works I think.

Well, it is really hard because I think the goals are the same, that they really want you to get a better job. But it is really hard to tell because I only stay here for two months but I stayed in China and received a higher education for three years. Before I came here I already got an offer and so that is proof that the

education there did bring me some perfect things because I got an offer and I

think if I didn't have a good education I would not hear from the company.

But here I think I can learn more and also in China now if you have an

education which you received abroad then you will be more competitive.

Zheng also expressed similar feelings about economic preparation through education.

When asked which education she felt better prepared her for the job market she

responded:

Of course it is the education here. I do learn a lot, a lot of things so often I feel

exhausted and tired but I really enjoy the learning process.

Student Accounts as They Relate to Question Theme 2: Students' Perceptions of the Role of English in the U.S. Setting with Respect to Their Own Identities

Evident both from a review of the literature and from the content of participant

interviews were elements of perceived stress and how these elements impacted the lives

of participants. As would be expected from the discussion of Misra and Castillo (2004),

Wei et al. (2007), and Yan and Berliner (2009) the experience of leaving an established

culture, along with a secure knowledge of the norms and roles of that culture, for a

wholly different environment would manifest itself as stressful in the lives of any

individuals involved in the process. What makes these elements unique, however, is the

perception amongst respondents that these stress inducing elements and the ways they

were or were not mediated derived existence from the sole characteristic of their lives due

to their unique states as international students from China. As we can see from these

interviews elements of student stress and the ways these challenges were met ranged

across issues of the use of English as the primary medium of communication, friendships, believed perceptions regarding Chinese individuals, differences in cultural norms, and the ways these stressful elements influenced participant advice for future exchange students.

General Uses of Spoken English

One of the first things that participants identified as creating difficulties in their new lives as exchange students were issues involving the use and purpose of the English language. A general theme identified was the structure and mechanics of the language with less emphasis on the specific cultural communicative elements that composed language norms. With further probing many participants connected these issues of language mechanics to the way they received English education while still in China and with how the purpose of English was defined versus the way that English existed in their new communication environment.

As Xiu reported:

Sometimes, you know, there is much difference between the written English and the oral English. Sometimes I just can guess what they are talking about but I am not sure so sometimes I try to think about what makes sense and just try to understand what they mean (referring to professors and classmates).

Because English is my second language it's, I really have to some problems every time I spend a whole night but it is only a small page. Little pages. Sometimes I do not know how I can do that so sometimes I find come Chinese version on the internet and it helps me a lot. It just saves time (referring to reading assignments).

Zheng was also quick to point out difficulties having to do with the mechanics of the language.

> The most challenging thing is the language. I have difficulties in listening and speaking. These difficulties do not exist in class, because I preview my textbooks so I know what the teacher will teach us. And that's not usually a problem. But sometimes we have group discussions in class and other American students, they speak a little faster or whatever, I can't understand what they said. So sometimes some classmates ask a question to the professor and I can't catch what the classmates said.

Lin Mei responded with similar ideas when asked what the most difficult part of English was.

> Maybe just some past tense, and "ing", or something. All kinds of grammatical problems.

Liang expressed elements of an experience which were similar to those involving an identification with the difficulties and structures of English.

> Hmm, I think, I think my abilities is totally in charge here. But I do realize sometimes my English is a problem.

Zhong similarly expressed concerns that the vocabulary which he had associated with the use of English was insufficient to cover other elements of conversation.

> I think I don't have the troubles with the vocabulary in the major. But I have trouble in the, in some maybe some vocabulary that is related to the medicine, or some vocabulary related to the plants or animals.

Min had a slightly different approach identifying elements of cultural dialogue within the language while still drawing upon elements of formal language structure.

> Like first, I think, for our classmates, the young students, so they kind of talk fast rather then what we learn form the book or the TOEFL test rather then like, the professor. You know, they talk fast, they use slang, and sometimes the joke but sometimes I just don't get it because there is some background. Ok, so that's like, that's kind of a challenge. But when we get the material in class I can totally understand because what we are talking from is, we pay much attention to the content, to the material, to what we are studying rather then just the language.

As the interviews progressed other themes which related to perceived difficulties regarding the use of the English language began to emerge. For instance, there was connection between previous educational experiences regarding the teaching and content of English and current difficulties with language use within a new environment. For example, Xiu identified Chinese English education as a contributing factor to her current difficulties with the language.

> Yeah, it is just like the English education in China is just like that. Most people can read and write but their listening and speaking is really weak. Because all the time they just listen to what the teacher says and take notes, they know what the words mean but sometimes they can't pronounce it right and sometimes they have no idea how to say it when you speak.

Lin Mei had similar concerns that the content of English education in China did not sufficiently prepare her with the knowledge to operate in a new cultural environment.

I think the cultural differences, because we don't have much access to the idioms or your, maybe, or the cultural things we don't know much. We just, teachers don't, they just teach us about the vocabularies or the style of English, and we don't know much about the reality here.

Maybe because Chinese people pay more attention to the classwork vocabulary back in China and not those words related to life.

Min, too, believed the content of English education in China did not adequately prepare her to operate in an English environment.

We learned some but not too much. You know, like, if you learn a foreign language it is kind of to learn standard language rather then learn slang because it depends on what kind of occasion you might use it.

Min was not alone, as Liang further confirmed this theme.

It's very different. It's kind of, well before I came here what I learned is about grammar and, and the vocabulary is very formal. It's kind of very good vocabulary and it's very difficult and I learned a lot but when I cam here, what I used is always other stuff.

And I think, yeah, this kind of problem. And, oh yeah, and what we learn, it is very formal and reading English, so we don't know "awesome", "sucks", like this kind of stuff.

Participants, when asked to reflect on why they had such trouble using English in this new environment cited various reasons. One reason which seemed to be similar across respondents had to do with the purpose of the English language in China and how

this impacted the English education they received while in school. Due in part to this purpose, English education was focused in such a way that created difficulty to the use of English in their new cultural environment.

As Min reported the point of English education is to get you ready for English use in a business environment.

But for the standard, you can use it in a business occasion or a class situation. You know, that is the difference between what we learn. Like, I know a lot of vocabularies but it's more like formal language, it's a standard language.

Yeah, but think about this. Like, if you want to learn English in China and you want to use English in China you don't have to know how to order because you don't have to live in the U.S., you just need to learn English because firstly you want to communicate with the foreigners in China. And secondly you want to read academic papers in English, and sometimes maybe articles in the newspaper in English. So that's the difference because like, when we come here I know much vocabulary in the academic area or maybe in some papers because it helps me study in class. But not for my daily life. Because we don't learn for that.

Zhong also reported that the purpose of English was to produce documents and written works in furtherance of a specific goal, in this case graduation.

For us, I think, if we want to graduate, maybe if you can publish enough papers you can graduate. I think you need to try your best to publish papers. Or do some research or whatever, then you can graduate.

Despite being from different parts of China and presumably having different experiences leading to their choice to study in the United States both of these participants reported a similar focus of their English education which lead to similar difficulties using the language in a new environment. English education was focused on more formal applications and therefore made conversational exchanges more difficult.

English and Negative Self-Worth

All of these experiences using language and the education they received in the use of the English language led participants to reflect upon their own perceived English speaking abilities. By and large, these perceptions were mostly negative and focused on deficiencies in speaking ability and how it impacted interactions with native speakers. Difficulties ranged from a lack of necessary vocabulary to express themselves to an inability to communicate the desired meaning of a statement to others. In referring to conversations with others Zheng reported that her understanding was often hampered due to her English abilities.

Most of the time they think I don't understand it. Because of the language. Lin Mei also commented on the fact that her speaking ability needed improvement and this was partly related to the way she was taught English in China.

Actually, I think our oral English is not so good. Chinese people pay much attention to English on paper, like exams, and about the grammar things. Not really so much oral practice, so I am still getting used to saying everything in my mind in English.

Liang was another respondent who reported that her perceived English abilities were low, drawing upon information she received while being tested for English in China as well as her experiences communicating with others.

> Actually, I think my English is very bad because when I take the TOFL exam my score is very low. So I think my English sucks. Yeah, total sucks. Especially my speaking, yeah, because like in the test my speaking part only got a little score.

> Umm, like you, when I talk to you it is very formal English and you can understand me. But when you guys chat you talk to each other and it's hard for me to understand and because I use this kind of English my English is not very good so when I talk I cannot use very, you know, because language is a kind of art, when you use it, when you speak, if you are a native speaker like I speak Chinese I can make our conversation very interesting and very attractive. But when I talk to American people we just kind of describe the task or describe what I want to see, not anything else. So, it's hard for me to be very good friends with American. Since I came here, yeah, I think the hardest part has been to keep conversation with American.

Finally, Zhong reported a negative self-perception of English ability and how this deficiency held him back in some ways.

> And my English is not very good. So I need to spend much time on it.

> Yeah, I think sometimes my pronunciation is something that I cannot make it very clear. I think you have already noticed that. And sometimes the vocabulary.

I think my biggest challenge is my pronunciation.

For these respondents, experiences with English education while in China and the way they were and were not able to use English in their new environment led to negative self-perceptions about their abilities in the language. This is similar to the ideas presented by Halic et al. (2009) who describe the issues of stress created by not being able to use English within a foreign environment. Part of this, as put forth by these authors, rests on the fact that English contains more expressive elements than were originally taught to foreign students, a situation participants addressed when discussing the limitations of their English education in China.

Life Vocabulary

Despite seeing themselves as lacking in certain aspects of the use of English respondents also used this time to reflect on what might have helped them when they first arrived and what actions might help future students making a similar transition. These ideas were again influenced by the education that they received in English while still in China and the way in which this disjuncture with a new speaking environment influenced their personal experiences. A major thrust of this desire to improve their situation as well as the situation of future students revolved around language that might be coined "life English". These ideas centered on the need to teach common names of food and activities to students since this was a crucial component of interaction but something that was lacking from previous educational experiences.

As Zheng explained:

When I go, like, to the bank or when I order some samples and need to call to the service hotline it's a hard time for me. Because they speak too fast on the telephone and I can't understand what they say…. If I go to the supermarket or another store and when there are something wrong in my apartment and I need to tell the officer of our apartment and someone comes to check the talk is a little harder for me. Because maybe some utensils in my apartment I don't know the name or what they ask me and I can't catch the meaning.

Food

Food was an issue that seemed to cause difficulty for respondents and they believed that it would be helpful to learn the names of certain foods through some sort of educational class. For example, Lin Mei commented on the difficulties of having to use vocabulary related to food.

Maybe because Chinese people pay more attention to the classwork vocabulary back in China and not those words related to life. To daily life. So it is kind of hard for us to recognize what it is when we are going to buy some food.

Min also expressed a similar concern to that of Lin Mei.

So that's the difference and also another difficulty for me to live here is the name of food because I don't have any idea of the name of food, like, we didn't learn that before.

Liang also believed that the vocabulary relating to food was a major difficulty for students in her position and that a specific class relating to such issues would be helpful.

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Yeah, I think because I came here last fall and it has been several months but I

still don't know now. So I will feel very awkward when I order. When I go to

the Starbucks and go to the student center. Yeah, I think maybe it is this reason

but still there is no one to teach me how to speak English.

Oh, you are an education major. So maybe when you guys kind of, when

you want to improve the international students' lives maybe you can introduce

some courses which will introduce, like, how to say many kinds of vegetables,

many kinds of sauces.

For these students difficulties with vocabulary associated with everyday living was

coupled with a desire to see the situation improved through education.

Cultural Norms and Values

Another element that was associated with student stress was perceived differences

in cultural norms and values that influenced the lives of respondents. While some

respondents viewed these differences as a way to learn about a new culture or as a given

element of studying in a new environment they can still be viewed as a stressor due to the

fact that they required adjustment on the part of the participant to make sure that they

could function within their new educational environment. These perceived cultural

differences covered such things as differences in lifestyles, norms associated with

politeness, issues of physical space, interactions with Americans, and the influence that

such differences had on the establishment of friendships.

As was mentioned, even though these differences were viewed as stressors in the

analysis portion of this research this did not mean that they served no positive function in

the lives of participants. For instance, Xiu summed up her desire to learn from such differences and how to best view such accounts in order to get the best understanding of a new culture.

> I think different cultures will have their different thoughts and mind and after you have some contact, well, it is something like they also say that there is a thing that if you have two apples then maybe you can exchange. Each one will get one, but if you have two minds, you exchange and you each get two. Something like that. It is really that you can learn now.

This statement illustrates the importance of viewing cultural differences not only as stressful but as a hopeful place to start the process of intercultural education.

Despite this hope there were still negative aspects associated with cultural differences in that respondents had to adjust from that which they were familiar to that which was new. Anytime this process takes place there is an element of stress as people leave established norms and take on the process of learning a new way of coping in a strange environment. One of the first things that subjects had to negotiate were perceived differences in lifestyles from their home environment to this new culture. As Xiu states:

> Mostly, I think it is because I come from Shanghai and sometimes it is really, oh yes, the lifestyle is a little different in Shanghai. Because in Shanghai it is really fast. People try to work overtime but here I don't think that people will do that. There is more serious competition between each other, maybe they pay no interest or attention on their personal lives or how to entertain themselves. They didn't do that. What they just think is to earn more money to support the family, but here I

think most people will try to live their life better, not just earn money. The concept is a little different.

Lin Mei was also concerned that there was a difference in the overall cultural environment that influenced how she acted and what was considered proper in her new role.

> I think Americans prefer individualism more then collectivism. But, how do you say, I don't know. Just that I think all of you have the attitude that we should let people go first and it's just an idea in your mind. And Chinese don't have that idea in their mind. I think the cultural background is very different maybe then here.

Liang also provided evidence that there was a difference in lifestyle but referred more to specific incidents rather than a general feeling of cultural difference.

> It's like, the lifestyle is not to study, it's not studying. Americans like to go to the bar and when they come back it is very late so it's kind of disturbing to my sleep. Also, sometimes they don't care about what others are thinking, sometimes they sex and things like that. And we are roommates, we can hear clearly what they are doing, and it's awkward.
>
> Yeah, in China we would not have this kind of thing. It is very private and it will, everyone will want to cover this stuff. I do not want others to know. But for the American it seems they do not care about this kind of stuff. Yeah, so it's awkward.

Zhong also remarked on the fact that he perceived differences in the lifestyle of America as opposed to the one he was familiar with in China. He also traced these differences to the way that Americans are socialized as opposed to what occurs in China.

> For the lifestyle, I think it is a little different. For me, because if a Chinese student, and maybe students from other countries, since we stay within Chinese (community) maybe it will be a big problem. And sometimes we didn't really get into the American lifestyle. The lifestyle we have is mostly the same as in China.
>
> How do you say, most of the, if these are general conditions, most of the Americans already have their friends and family. I don't know how to describe it, they have a very strong personality because they have their own space, not just as a real space, but as a personality space and a living space. But in China for students, most of them don't have their own space. They have to live with other classmates. From the elementary to the university. Even in the graduate you have to live with others. So you have to get used to it, the environment, because there is conflict with others. So each of you will have to share a lot of things. So you should adjust yourself to many environments. To many different peoples. So I think this could be the reason why, and I'm not sure if this is totally correct and perhaps different people have different conditions, but most Chinese people can tolerate a lot of things.

Manners and Politeness

Another way that elements of stress exhibited themselves in the lives of participants was in differing experiences of politeness from what respondents had grown

accustomed to in China and what they found in their new environment. While most experiences reported were positive they may still be considered stressful because they influenced a re-adjustment of previously held norms and ideas in order to better fit with a new cultural landscape. Therefore, despite being pleasant in nature the act of having to readjust one's self carries with it elements of a stressful experience.

Referring to issues involving manner and politeness Lin Mei found an environment that was more open compared to what she had previously experienced while living in China.

I think Chinese people tend to judge others all the time but Americans do not. So if I want to do something maybe others don't like I can do it here but I can't, I had to think about it for a while before I took action in China.

Lin Mei also traced this development to the ways that overall cultural norms influenced behavior.

And I enjoyed very much because I always thought that you go and you say hello to each other and they not only say hello but there are hugs. It's a very enjoyable thing to see. I think Chinese people are more inside, maybe, they are happy to see you but just act like, kind of, that's all. And Americans I think they express themselves more directly.

Min also expressed the belief that Americans were more polite than Chinese. However, she wondered if this politeness was only extended to her due to her status as a foreigner and if in fact she was still not able to interact with Americans because she did not understand this norm.

Here is the difference. And also, yeah, like American people tend to be very

polite. I don't know, like, maybe just because we are not so close and they think I

am a foreign student so they want to be polite to you. Maybe they don't be so

polite with each other.

Yeah, I guess it's true. Because the thinking for me, maybe I would say

something like, a joke, like something that is maybe not compliment joking, like

other joking with my Chinese friends. But I would think that maybe it's improper

to say that too American, like you know because we don't know their opinion

about that joking so they maybe they are hurt or they will, so I guess maybe the

American people would think so.

Min was concerned that she could not tell if the emotions being expressed by her

American colleagues were genuine and therefore she was unsure about the ways that she

would be able to interact with this group. Liang, on the other hand, was sure that the way

that Americans acted was in fact true and was simply a part of the culture where they

were raised.

Yeah, for example I know when people tell you that you are good at something

you need to say "thank you" but in our country we will say "no, no, I'm not good

at it". It's kind of just human nature.

Physical Space

Another way that individuals had difficulty with norms involving issues of

politeness was differing relationships to the concepts of physical space. For some

respondents there was an uncertainty if the rules governing contact between individuals

translated into their new social circumstance and the influence this had on the formation of new relationships. Zheng was one of the respondents that expressed such concerns and wondered if physical space translated into her new environment.

> Like avoiding body contact. In China if I walk with my friend and maybe I can grasp her hand or put my hand on her shoulder. That's not unsuitable. But in America maybe it is strange.

Lin Mei was also concerned that there were differences in norms regarding physical space. However, as opposed to Zheng who was somewhat unsure Lin Mei believed that there was indeed a difference that could be traced to cultural norms regarding the topic.

> I just think Americans are more free and more open and as you can see when American students stay in the library they sit in every structure. They sit wherever they like. And students in China they always tend to sit tight, and in front of the desk. And Americans can like this, like this (places legs on extra table and chair). And it never happens in China.

> All of the respondents in this research study acknowledged that they felt there were specific cultural differences between the environment in China and their new environment here in the United States. These differing ideas influenced such things as the way in which respondents related to others and how they felt about their efforts at communication. Another way these perceived differences influenced the lives of respondents was the way in which they influenced friendships or the attempts at making friends in a new environment. For example, Zheng expressed concerns about her efforts at making friends in a new environment.

> With Americans? Yeah, but since the cultural differences sometimes I don't
> know the extent (referring to friendships). For example, in China if I get to know
> a new friend and maybe we are very new in our relationship, but in America I
> don't know whether even we are friends we should keep a distance. So I don't
> know how to master the extent or style.
>
> Sometimes I'm afraid that what I do is not suitable or makes my friend
> feel it is impolite or such a thing.

Lin Mei was also concerned that there were cultural influences on her ability to make friends in this new environment. For her, one of the major factors was the purpose behind friendships and how it differed from her home to new environment.

> I think Chinese people may pay more attention to the guy's position, that guy's
> power, and something like that. And they tend to make friends with some
> purpose. Especially when they go to the job position, that is important in China
> now. And I think Americans make friends more freely. For example, if you just,
> you are like that is a good guy, and then you can make friends with them. And
> then you make friends. Yeah, Chinese people just count much more than
> Americans.

Zhong also remarked on the fact that cultural differences had influenced his abilities to cultivate friendships in a new environment. For him the major concerns were not necessarily in the relationships between friends but rather the environment where such friendships could be formed.

Yeah, I think because in here one difference is that in here you can meet a friend

with multiple groups. That means from different persons, but in China you will

make friends with the people maybe you know from the same majors or from the

same classes or maybe just like this. And you also have a chance to meet other

people but I don't think this will be the major way.

This could be another common problem, but because many of my friends

have a lot of American friends. I think for some persons this could be, as I

mentioned before, they cannot find the appropriate way to express their views and

they are not getting used to actively finding friends. Because in China you have a

lot of chance to, even you are not actually actively, to find a friend. And there are

a lot of chance to meet with different people.

Student Accounts as They Relate to Question Theme 3: Perceptions of Differences Between Chinese Students, Impressions of Americans, and Relation of Experience to Personal Identity

Differences Between Chinese Students

An interesting theme that emerged during the course of the interviews was

discussions about different Chinese student groups that made up the American

educational experience. While not originally a question that was intended for

examination the open nature of the interviews brought such concerns to the attention of

the researcher and follow up questions were necessary. For participants, there was a

universal agreement that there was a stark contrast between the undergraduate Chinese

population at the university and the graduate Chinese population at the university. These

differences were based along two primary areas: academic ability and social class in

China. What is most revealing is that despite having no knowledge of previous respondent reports each participant generated what is essentially an identical answer when asked if there were differences between Chinese students in this university.

As Xiu reported:

Well, frankly speaking, Chinese will divide students who can go to study abroad into two groups, which is really hard working and they got some scholarship or some assistantship and they want to learn something, and another group which their parents will have a lot of authority and maybe they can get in. Because in China the college entrance examination is really hard and someone didn't pass that, they will not receive higher education in China, so they will pay more money to try and send their kids abroad so they will receive an education here.

When asked to consider which students fall into these different categories she responded:

Well, I think most graduate students are the first type. Because graduates, the admissions for graduates will place much limits. I think, so maybe most graduates are the first type. I didn't interact with the second type, I just heard from my friends. Maybe you can find them in the cafeteria, or like Evergreen Buffet, something like that. I have known no one who is from the second type but there will be.

Zheng also had a similar account when asked about differences between Chinese student populations in the university.

For undergraduate students, there are not so much differences. Most of them come from rich families or else they can't afford to the tuition and the living

expenses. And most of them spend much money here, they don't worry about it. For graduate students maybe there are many differences.

When further assessing the abilities of these different student groups Zheng reported:

For the undergraduate students actually some of them don't study hard or their score is terrible in China during the high school. They aren't good at study. The graduate student maybe better about study.

Lin Mei also drew upon similar experiences when discussing the differences present in the Chinese university population. For her, differences also tended to be situated around issues of ability and social class.

I don't know whether it is good to talk about this but I think it is the situation here. Many ESL students and undergraduate students, they just, they are those people who cannot take a good score in the Gao Kao and so they want to just come out to America and have a degree back home and just find a job. There are many people that come here for study like, for this purpose, and for graduate students that I have met I think more tend to, they can study well, they can find a good job and they come here for further study and I think they have more self concept about themselves. Yeah, and that's the reality.

I think graduate students know much more about their goals, much more clearly about what they are doing here. And the undergraduates, maybe together with the ESL, they just spend their time here enjoying, not studying, and they just want to go through the undergraduate program and get a degree. And then go back home.

Liang was by far the most vocal on the subject of differences between Chinese students. During what was a lengthy analysis of differences compared to those of other respondents Liang was visually agitated in a way that she had not been, nor was not again, during other lines of questioning.

I think in, I cannot say the specific person but for the group, the undergraduate group and the graduate group, it's very different. The undergraduate group is, they are kind of, they are, many of them, most of them, why they came here I think because they cannot enter a very good university in China. Because in China even though our university does not have a good ranking in the world, but everyone will know how hard for us to enter a good university, what kind of people will be there, what kind of students will be there. So everyone will know to enter a good university is a very proud thing for the whole family. It seems that every parent when they are in their companies their topics will always, one of the topics between them will, this kind of, it's kind of which university your child entered and where your children are going, and how is your children's study. Whether they study good or not.

So people come here, it seems they cannot enter a good university because they are rich, and this is the case. This is the true situation. They are really rich and they really are not very good students so the come here to escape the Gao Kao. Yeah, it is kind of a method to escape the entrance exam.   But for graduate students, maybe you can see, maybe several years before the Chinese undergraduate students will not need to take the ESL course. But now most of

them have to take the ESL course. This is kind of a phenomenon you can see, it's

not what I talk about, it's not objective, it's subjective. Yeah, so but if you

compare the graduate stuff or the Ph.D. and some of the graduate stuff, they got a

scholarship. It's totally different, it's because you are excellent.

Because I think people came here, American people do not need to escape

the entrance exam. So as the people came here for undergraduate they do not pay

a lot of tuition. And so this is a problem. For you, it's kind of normal procedure

for you to enter the university or pursue a graduate, and for us it's not normal. So

people came here, it's kind of they need to be chosen, so one of the conditions is

that they must be rich.

Zhong, while not as animated about the issue as Liang, still reported similar

concerns when discussing these student groups.

For Chinese graduate students, especially for Chinese, I think…For Chinese

graduate most of them get financial assistance from the universities. But for

Chinese undergraduate students most of them are just, get financial support from

their families, and they don't have any concerns about their future. Maybe I'm

wrong, but for us we are concerned for our future, for graduate we are not young

anymore, right, and our main concern and consideration is graduation. And

especially for Chinese, I'm not sure my thing is totally right, but for here, for the

students here, undergraduate students, most of the students are from very rich

(families), very rich undergraduate students. Because they are, they're not like

the American students, their families can very easily pay their tuitions or pay their living costs, so yeah, that's a difference.

For all of the respondents interviewed this was one line of questioning that yielded near universal responses. While there may be a tendency to lump student groups into the same mold when viewed from the position of an outsider this is not the case for the minds of individuals within those groups. For respondents, there were vast differences between these seemingly similar groups centered around issues of their own ability and the social class of their families back in China.

This discussion is on par with the work presented by Fischer (2010) where the author describes the current state of ESL students within the American university system. According to Fischer while there are no firm statistics reporting how many poor English ability students are admitted into universities there is reason to suspect that the creation of partnerships between universities and ESL programs and the increased profit to be found with this student group has led to increased enrollment despite issues with language usage. The responses from participants would lead one to believe that there is indeed such a situation present at the university where they study and this could in fact be a valid concern of international student populations across the board.

Friendships

Friendships were a major theme that arose during the interview process and carried across the differing experiences of participants. Over the course of the interviews there were two main themes that were present: Why it is important to have friends and how friends are made. Within each of these themes there was the interplay between the

way that friendship relations worked in respondents' home cultural environments and how friendships seemed to function in this new educational environment. While some things seemed to make a seamless transition for participants there were other elements that were much more vexing and difficult to navigate.

One of the first elements that was identified during the analysis of issues of friendship was the importance of having friends in a new cultural environment. The importance, however, ranged from issues of practicality to issues that would influence the quality of life for participants. Regarding practical uses for friends Min commented on a desire to make friends in order to develop her skills with English and be better able to function in her new educational environment.

> Like last semester, I kind of study and hang out with Chinese friends but
> sometimes with international students, not from the U.S. Like my friend from
> India and some other countries other than the U.S. But this semester, I would say,
> because I realize it is important to practice my English so I'm trying to hang out
> with American students and to practice my English.

For Min, there was a premium placed on using friendships for a practical purpose in order to better fit her new environment. This, however, was not the only reason that respondents had for why it was important to develop friendship relations while in a new country. Xiu commented on the importance of having friends from her home culture to be able to meet the challenges of life in a new land.

> Well, maybe from another perspective, we came here and there are many things
> we need to do by ourselves and also we need friends from China to help us and

we also have some Chinese student associations. Yeah, when you come to

another country you know people from your own country and you can be so

connected but in China maybe you don't think you are connected like that.

According to Xiu's beliefs the process of acculturation necessitated the need to form

friendships but also provided a coherent choice of becoming more connected to people

that shared her new circumstance.

Liang also identified the importance of having friends in her new environment.

For her, friendships directly contributed to issues of quality of life and her need to make

friends here was one thing that motivated her return to China after her upcoming

completion of study.

You know, for me I think here is really good. America is a very good country but

when I live here I feel my happiness degree, how do you say, this kind of feeling

of happiness is very low. It's very low. When I was in China it's really high.

Maybe our environment, maybe our living quality, the air quality is not so good as

here. Maybe our food is not qualified but I feel really happy because I have many

friends. I play with them, I hang out with them, I have my own friend group. So,

I really feel very happy when I was in China but when I was here, no. So that's

why I definitely will not be permanently to be here.

Despite what she identified as a higher quality of living within her new environment that

lack of established friendships and the necessities of such a relationship for well being

prompted her to consider relocating back home upon the completion of her education.

While there was a discussion that friendships were important this did not mean that they were only beneficial for international students looking to become better prepared to deal with their new educational reality. In fact, there was also the belief that the establishment of such friendships would be beneficial for the general student population as well.   For example, Xiu commented on the possibility for great cultural understanding to take place once friendships were established.

> I would really like to help Americans to know more about China because some of them just know nothing. They suppose China will be a very rural place but sometimes it is really different and I would like to show them more and also I think to make some American friends. Maybe it is interesting, maybe I can ask them back to China.

For Xiu the avenues that friendship offered could be an effective way to address cultural misinformation as well as foster a positive relationship between different environments.

Difficulties Making Friends

While there was an established idea that friendships were important for all individuals involved the actual mechanics of making friends were somewhat more perplexing for respondents. Influences from previous educational environments, issues of ethnic cohesion, problems with schedules, and the new reality of which respondents found themselves a part all made friendships a more complicated endeavor. The former educational environment played a role especially since this was the primary way respondents had established friendships in the past and were most accustomed. Xiu

believed that most friendships formed in high school as well as the university were a result of being in the same class throughout a course of study.

> And maybe you see in the same classroom (in America) I have my friends from different majors but in China, mostly, it always has the conception of a class like high school. You are classmates, even in the university.

Zheng also believed that the way that class was organized and the stress that her education produced had a lot to do with how her friendships with others formed.

> So the high school is about three years and the life is really hard. But when I thought about such a life or experience I enjoyed it. Because I learned many knowledge, and all my classmates, although we don't have much time to play or do other things, but we encourage each other and share our studying experience together. And so the friendship is deepened.

> Lin Mei also believed that the friendship relations formed in school benefited from the increased stress of that time. However, she also expounded on the fact that these relationships were free from the negative elements that were to be found in the friendships of the adult world. To her, the friends made in an educational environment represented a truer form of friendship then what she believed she would find later.

> When you are in universities or schools the relationships between classmates and friends tend to be more pure then those in society. My father always told me you cannot be that naïve, if you do that when you enter the career world you will be hurt.

School, in effect, represented an environment where the desire for success did not interfere with the formation of bonds between others. This was not to be the case later when she left an educational environment and entered the career world.

Zhong also believed that the educational environment in which he had grown up allowed for many opportunities to form friendships and grow close to one another. In fact, the very structure of education lent itself to the establishment of such relationships.

> I think it's easy. Because in China, most for elementary and from the universities, most of us will stay together maybe the whole day. Maybe from 7am to 5pm. If it is in the high school perhaps they will stay together from 7am to 9pm at night. To study for the exam. And they have a lot of chances to talk with others and I think most of them become very close friends.

Once again, the structure of the educational environment acted as a catalyst for the formation of friendships in the minds of respondents. Through experiences learning and preparing for later careers respondents met a cohort of individuals whose bonds grew closer as they moved through this stressful time.

With such an emphasis placed upon the structure of education one could assume that similar elements would be found in new educational environments. To some extent this is true and the educational environment does influence the types of friends made and the types of friendship relations that form. What occurred in the new educational environment for respondents was the fact that while the educational structure did influence friendships they found it far more likely that such influences restricted them to

being friends with other Chinese students. The results were friendships based primarily around issues of ethnic cohesion. As Xiu explains:

> Actually, most Asians mingle with Asians and they just sit together in the same classroom and among us we will have some conversations but to some native we just say "excuse me", "thank you", things like that.

> So sometimes I come here and then some of my friends just think that after you have arrived in the U.S. you will mingle with Chinese, not the U.S. And I didn't believe that because I think Chinese are foreigners here and you will see more Americans so maybe you have more contact with them but now I believe that is true, that the most people I talk with are all Chinese.

When asked why this was the case Xiu responded:

> And I think the reason is you are more easy to communicate and also you came from the same cultural background, you understand things in the same perspective so maybe you can have a nice chat with the same idea or something. But I think if I had more chances I would like to try to mingle with Americans.

> Xiu was not alone in this assertion that there were greater connections between Chinese students than between Chinese and American students. Zheng also reported similar feelings.

> As I observed, Chinese students here, they tend to make friends with Chinese people here.

Yeah, just as in my MBA class more Chinese students tend to talk to Chinese students in Chinese. Not even English. So I think maybe they tend to make friends with Chinese.

Maybe they just think Chinese friends are more close to them. Yeah, that way they can speak our mother language and don't pay attention, there is no need for them to pay attention to the cultural difference and that kind of thing.

I think we are more polite to each other here because we think we are a small group in America and we are family here because all of us come from China. That makes us more intimate.

Despite complications with the influences of old environments and the fact that there was still a high degree of ethnic cohesion amongst friendship relations respondents still had a desire to meet people in this new environment and form bonds. While their efforts were complicated by their status and were not always successful the need to form friendships still motivated participants to engage in the process of attempting to make friends. Respondents had different strategies and ideas on how to accomplish such a task but the final goal of meeting new people and establishing a relationship was common. Xiu thought that one of the best ways to make friends was to establish conversation partners.

So I have a few conversation partners and I wan to practice something. And also sometimes I told my friend that if they have some new foreign friends we can get together. I just want to know more people.

Liang also believed that a good way to make friends was through some sort of formal organization. However, rather then picking an organization that was part of the university Liang settled on a church which as part of the local community.

Umm, because I participate in a church group I attend, I go to the meeting every week so I have some friends there and this spring break I go with them to New York, so I have some friends there.

For Liang, this external organization allowed her to link her educational environment and personal environment together as she made friends with other students that attended these church functions and trips. Zhong also drew on the importance of these multiple environments as he debated what it takes to make a friend in his new situation. For him, the groups present were a reminder of what it took to make friends in China.

Yeah, because I think here one of the differences is that in here you can meet a friend with multiple groups. That means from different persons, but in China you will make friends with the people maybe you already know from the same majors or from the same classes or maybe just like this.

Despite the fact that respondents acknowledged the importance of finding friends and did engage in such attempts there were still difficulties associated with the process. These complications centered around issues of student schedules and the way in which the educational environment did or did not allow for the formation of friendships between respondents and other individuals. As Lin Mei pointed out, the relations between her and her friends were influenced by different schedules.

Yeah, it is not convenient and I can't meet my American friends everyday. I

think maybe we can meet online but we cannot meet face to face.

Zhong was also concerned that the way his schedule was made prevented him from

participating in all the interactions that he would want to be a part of with different

friends.

I don't know for the undergraduates, many of my friends are undergraduate

students, some of them, they can have much more chance to meet with some other

students. Or some other American friends or from other countries. But for us,

especially for graduate and Ph.D. students, we always stay in the lab. Always,

maybe even holidays. Maybe it is hard for us to make friends, I think.

Again, the interplay between class responsibilities, work, and the schedules of other

possible friends intermingled to create difficulty when trying to establish friendship

relations.

Schedules, though they did exhibit an influence in the minds of participants, were

not the only potentially complicating factor to forming and maintaining friendship

relations between participants and other individuals. The particular culture of their new

environment and the norms associated with such an environment also posed challenges

for establishing and maintaining friends. For instance, Min was concerned that she did

not understand norms of politeness when it came to friends and worried that this would

hold her back from establishing such relationships.

Yeah, but like my question is more like, in China, it's kind of different. Because

in China, for me and I don't know for others, but for me I have friends and if she

is in my class or in my program I will study with her and I will go out with her and I will shop with her. So everything I will do with her. You know, but for here like, some people just study with them and some just hang out with them because they are funny, so this is different. But for China, like, we usually mess up, we don't categorize, even if there is like for I here I know maybe there is no straight line for that, but for China like if he is my friend I assume like I would work, or hang out, or go shopping, like do everything with him. Here is the difference. And also, yeah, like American people tend to be very polite, I don't know, like, maybe just because we are not so close and they think I am a foreign student so they want to be more polite to you. Maybe they don't be so polite with each other for the U.S.

Liang also noticed differences in the environment that complicated friendship relations.

It's very easy (making friends in China) because when I was in China I had a lot of friends and many people would talk to me first before I do not know them. But, see, since I came here, I think almost nobody talks to me before I talk to them. So, it's a very big difference. Yeah, I think so. So I think maybe, and I think I talk to other Chinese people and they all have this kind of problem.

Liang went on to explain that most likely this was due to the fact that she and other American students had no similar experiences which they could use as a basis of conversation.

Yeah, definitely, you know actually the important thing is this kind of stuff. If you do not know the school what else do you talk about, what's the topic? You do not have a common topic. Like me, like you, if you find a people who is in Ohio State University what are you guys going to talk about? Yeah, I hear about them, other students, in American's conversations, the common topic of them is kind of courses, professors, and tests, so if you do not know each other what do you talk about?

Zhong also believed the new environment had different norms for friendships. However, he took a slightly different turn when he discussed the fact that the environment influenced the personalities of individuals and therefore had impacts on what type of relationships people could develop.

Well, I think one thing I feel is very different is, in here, or in China, I have a lot of friends. A lot of friends. In China I have a lot of friends and all of us form a group and in this group we do some things, some things just like a group. But here our personalities of everyone appears. And you can find that each one in a group, every personality is for everyone. And sometimes this will not, well, in China we can go to travel, we can go on a tour, in a group of maybe twenty or forty persons. Without any conflict. But for here, even we go to New York with only six people there will be some conflict.

These ideas add something to the discussion of language creating borders between individuals.

Perceptions of the New Environment

For the respondents of this study experiences boiled down into perceptions of their new environment. While most perceptions were positive there were still negative elements associated with the student experience and the life that participants were creating. These perceptions were divided into elements of the physical environment that made up their new surroundings, the interactions they had with other individuals, and what could be termed a cumulative total of all experiences. It was through these perceptions that students negotiated their ideas about what their experience had to offer and how this measured up against expectations they had come to hold before they arrived in the United States to study.

Perceptions of the Physical Environment

Another variable that respondents had to negotiate regarding their experience were characteristics of their new physical environment. These included such things as perceptions of the natural environment as well as how participants were able to travel and experience things. As far as the physical environment respondents who commented on such issues had positive experiences. For instance, Xiu reported that she enjoyed her new physical environment and that the positives of the environment contributed to positive feelings about her experience.

> Well, I think when I came here on the plane and I think it is really amazing that I can see, even though I was very high, I can see everything in the ground. Yeah, I think the air here is really clean, but in China almost if you fly very high you will see only clouds. Nothing on the ground, you can't see that. But here I have two

connecting flights so every time I went from San Francisco to Chicago and I have seen all the scenery and also I really, it's really amazing because sometimes you can see that there are not many clouds in the sky. But in China sometimes you didn't see what color the sky is.

For Xiu, her new environment was a positive experience. The only negative aspect that she reported had to do with the food choices available to her as part of this new experience.

Frankly speaking, actually I am very satisfied with the life here and one thing I think, is something about eating. The food here, I want more green vegetables which sometimes I call back home and I miss the green vegetables. In China there are really a lot, here I'm trying to get used to the food. I've tried but I think I will never get used to it so sometimes I will cook for myself, but some materials you will never find in the supermarket.

Zhong was another respondent that discussed his perceptions of his new environment. For him, the new environment was not only a pleasing place to be a part of but also something that afforded him better opportunities for travel between locations and classes.

Yeah, the environment both comes from two parts. One is from nature and the other is from the behaviors of the persons. The one from nature, I like the animals and I like the trees and grass. And the flowers, yeah. But in China, if you live in the city you have very little chance to see these.

And another thing I like here is there is a lot of lawn. And a lot of grass and flowers. But in China there is also a lot of grass but there is not a lot of trees. But for me I like the grass here more.

Yeah, because in my undergraduate my campus was very big and especially the class. The classroom, always separated so when I finished one of our classes we have to make walk about twenty minutes to another class.

And another thing I like is in here one department have a building and you can finish work and almost all of your classes in the same building. So if I want to take a class I don't need to walk too much, it will allow time for me to go to the classroom just on a different floor. Still in the same building. But in China they are separated. There is a research place and a classroom in a separate building. There the whole building is just for the class. Both the teachers and the students have to spend a lot of time in transportation.

The mechanics of transportation were something that evoked mixed emotions from those respondents that addressed such an issue. For some instances, the mechanics of transportation were positive and for some other instances there were negative opinions about the transportation within the new environment. As an example, Xiu addressed issues of transportation and felt that when it came to the human element of such an experience there were positives that needed to be addressed.

I think it is quite good because people here are really helpful and sometimes when you go back home, you are walking home, there are people that will greet you and also, although I say it is inconvenient to go somewhere else but if you can use, if

you know how to use the bus and also you know how to check the schedule and

make your schedule more close to theirs maybe it is convenient. So it is ok.

Despite the positives associated with the experience of traveling Xiu also believed that

there were negative elements that went into the experience of using transportation in her

new environment.

Well here, in China most of the public transportation construction is really good.

So even if you didn't have a car you can go to a place very conveniently and it

won't take you much time. But here if you don't own a car it will be a big

problem for you. Because sometimes you have to go to the bus stop and check

the schedule but then the bus won't come and you keep waiting for an hour and

then the bus comes. But in China I think it is very convenient for you to drive,

even if you don't have a car you can go somewhere else by subway, or bus, and it

is really convenient. Here I have to, if I want to go shopping I need to know some

guys who have cars and then I will go if he wants to go someday and then I will

call him and tell him that I want to go with him and see if he can give me a ride.

Then I can go, just like that.

Well, maybe I have never expected that here the transportation is really

bad. I had never expected that. I didn't think that if I didn't have a car it's really

hard for me to get from one place to another. Because in China it is really

different then here and sometimes I really need to check the schedule and also try

to call my friend who owns a car to give me a ride. I didn't expect that, I have

never expected that. I just think America will be more, let's see, it's a developed

country maybe the transportation is really great here but then I figure out it is just

like everyone owns a car, just like in China everyone will have a bicycle, you

really don't need the subway or some bus. And also here, I think Kent, it is not

the wisest decision to have a bicycle, there are ups and downs and it's really hard.

Even if I choose to walk, because maybe we spend more time and energy to use

the bicycle.

While Xiu felt that the construction of public transportation was something that

held her back Zhong had the opposite opinion. For him, the public transportation that

was available here was something that was better than what he had experienced in China

and allowed him more opportunities.

Yeah, so that makes, I like this more. I like the small campus and also the

transportation her is really convenient. Another thing is the transportation is

really convenient here. And even at night you can take the free bus to anywhere

you want. But in China even on the campus you should pay if you want to take

the bus. And so most of us just take a bicycle or walk by ourselves.

Perceptions of Interactions

A final theme that emerged during these discussions was how respondents

perceived their interactions with Americans and what that did to inform their opinions of

this new environment. These interactions ranged over topics of face to face interactions

to what participants believed about the norms of their new environment through the way

they interpreted these interactions. For direct interaction with Americans respondents

reported positive experiences they believed contributed to their overall experience. For

example, Xiu believed people in the United States were good and she was learning from her interactions.

> Yes, of course. Yeah, I think it is really, I love the people here.
>
> So far I think, well, I'm really learning a lot here. Yeah, because in China you come across someone and they just give you a cold face or any other expression, so maybe you pay them back the same face. But here, you should keep on smiling , and also I think it really works because sometimes you smile and you feel good with yourself.

Lin Mei also believed that her interactions with Americans had been positive and contributed to her development. When pressed to explain why, she responded with what she believed to be an overarching characteristic of her new environment.

> I think the United States is more people oriented than China. And you can see all the signals for the disabled people. It never occurs in China. And I think the experience is good for my personal development.

In fact, even though Lin Mei was somewhat disappointed with the fact that her interactions had been limited she still was able to draw on positive experiences and think about they impacted her opinions.

> I do not go outside much so maybe not so many, I stay at home most of the time. We have a host family so they will take us to dinner or to visit some places so I think it is a good experience for us. Yeah, and they make me feel at home, they treat me like family, so I think it is wonderful.

Zhong also reflected on why he felt he had more positive interactions with individuals here even though it was a new environment where he was not completely sure of the language or customs. For him, the answer came from the differing populations and the influence that population had on his interactions with others.

> And from the persons, I think I like the behavior of the persons here and they will
> be polite to each other. But in China sometimes, and this could be because there
> is too many people in China, I heard about maybe this is not a good reason, since,
> for example, if I go to the library here and I borrow a book the clerk is very polite
> to me and I like that very much. But in China, even in the universities, some of
> the clerks are not so patient. But sometimes, because my friends and I, we will
> think about reasons and I think it could be for here on clerk perhaps works with
> maybe 50 persons each day, and maybe this will be the maximum. But in China,
> maybe they will have to serve 500 persons each day and they will be exhausted
> every day. And this could be the reason and makes them impatient to others. Ok,
> so this could be the reason. I say most of the problems in China come from the
> amount of people. Because there is too many people and there could be a lot of
> stress and there could be a lot of competition about the patience and a lot of bad
> behavior.

Involvement of the Local Church

Another factor that contributed to the interactional experiences of participants was the importance placed on the involvement of a local church group which was not affiliated with the university. Several respondents reported nearly identical experiences

which helped to shape their time in their new environment and factored into their reflections on interactions with American citizens. The involvement of this social support group is similar to the ideas expressed by Fontaine (1986) regarding the concept of weak social support systems and the importance that such systems can play for individuals living in a foreign context. Xiu reported that one of the first experiences she had interacting with people once she arrived came from the members of this church that met her at the airport.

> When the international students came here they just, some guys from church, just gave us a free ride from the airport even maybe in the midnight. They kept waiting for us and then brought us to the house we rent or the apartment. About a week they all, some of them stayed in the airport for 24 hours to pick up students and I think it is really hard but they did. And also after we arrive here and take the van they have some presents for us, just like some fruit and crackers, something like that, but really you know after maybe more than ten hours travel it is really hard but now someone gives you something that you really think is great.

Zheng also believed that the church was very important and that the relationships she formed there were one of the things that made her life in America happier than her life in China.

> The first is the church, I attend the church every Sunday and I attend the bible study every week and I learned a lot and maybe the religion makes people different.

Firstly, I learned much knowledge everyday and I feel it refreshes my self. Secondly, I get strength or support from the church or from God. That makes me feel safe. And third, I don't need to worry how to get along with others, so anyways, the life is simple.

For example, when I come here and arrived at the airport the church, there is someone to pick us up and we arrived in the midnight so they prepared some food and water for us. And after we entered into our temporary dorms it was about 2am so they have to stay up so late. It's really a wonderful experience. I attend the church every Sunday and I learned the bible every Wednesday and the teacher or the minister he taught about the bible. So I feel I benefit a lot.

Lin Mei also felt that the church was one of the elements that was contributing to her experiences here and influencing them in a positive manner.

I just attend the Christian Organization Thursdays and I went there and take part in their activities. I think it is interesting. And I think the songs are very beautiful songs.

For these students the involvement of an off campus group was just as influential for shaping their educational realities as that which went on inside the classroom or was contained inside the campus or university itself.

Perceptions of Freedom of Expression

Finally, these experiences of interacting with other people led some participants to form opinions about what they believed to be the ability to express themselves in interactions with others and in their chosen styles of life. For these participants, their

experiences led them to the belief that America was a society with freedom of expression and a place that they did not have to consider the opinions of others in forming their choices to as great a degree as when they were within China. As an example, when Xiu was asked whether her experiences led her to believe that she could express her personality here she responded:

> Yes, of course. It is a really free country, a free nation. Whatever you are you can show what you really are.

Lin Mei also agreed that this new environment allowed her to express herself in such a way that was not possible while still in China.

> Yeah, we never do that in China. I think the environment is free. It's free for me to do what I want to do.

Finally, Liang decided that her interactions had led her to the belief that America was a free environment. When asked what the most important thing she had learned from her studies was she responded:

> I think America is a country, it is a very fair country.

For all of these respondents their limited interactions with others led them to form beliefs about an entire system of society that was different from what they had experienced growing up in China.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

The results of participant interviews presented in chapter 4 offer many clues about what an experience in a foreign educational setting may be like for individuals. These experiences are shaped both by larger macro level forces and individual micro level variables that participants felt with the interaction of these different environments. While there was a consistency between macro themes discussed in the literature and micro level interpretations of experience there were still differences in precisely how such things were present in participant accounts. Again, despite interplay between these different levels this does not mean that things are experienced in exactly the same way in the minds of participants. This is why a theory such as the Integrated Sociological Paradigm (Ritzer 1981) can be so useful for analysis. Using such a theory, we can better understand the influence and interaction between environments, the experiences of individuals, and the way that both can be informative when seeking to answer questions like the ones this study is based upon.

Now that elements of student participant interviews have been presented it is time to turn to the ways that these statements contribute to an understanding of the main research questions and issues present in the reviewed literature.

1. How do students studying in a foreign educational environment perceive their experience and what can this tell us about the structure of education in a global age?

2. What, if any, implications are there from this research that will enable higher education planners to assist Chinese and other international students as they seek education in American colleges and universities?

By studying student accounts of their experiences it is possible to see in what ways the reflections of individual students can inform us regarding their perceptions of experience within a foreign educational environment. Furthermore, these accounts can help to inform us as to the state of current literature as it pertains to such elements. Over the course of the interviews participants made statements that help to shed light on many of the claims discussed so far.

Student Perceptions of Similarities in Education

One idea developed in the review of literature was that students may find similarities and differences based on their previously held beliefs and educational experiences. The reviewed literature for example, notes there may be much in common based on curriculum, the use of the English language as a subject and method of instruction, and a growing demand for education amongst students within a variety of political and economic systems. When reviewing the accounts of students in this study it is possible to see these themes reflected as well, though, as one might expect these themes are experienced by individual students in a variety of ways. One of the first themes presented, that of similarities to previous educational experiences and between curriculum and methods of instruction, offers a good place to start.

Theorists from a variety of fields have noted the ways in which educational environments are growing more similar to each other despite being located in differing

political and economic systems. However, despite the empirical evidence present demonstrating such a trend, it was surprising how these possible similarities were reflected in the answers from participants. For participants, the ways that educational environments were supposedly growing more similar made up a very small part of their educational experience and the way they interpreted their new educational reality. From the individual perspective of students in this study many of the elements reported in the literature were not immediately apparent.

This is not to say that there are no similarities between educational environments that can inform the student experience. These accounts only suggest that as elements of a student experience these growing similarities may not factor as heavily into individual experiences as one might expect from the readings. In the reviewed literature there are well-defined examples that are distilled from the examination of macro level data and comparisons. As the work of Ritzer posits, there are many levels to social phenomena that influence each other. These levels may be distinct in their own makeup and individual elements but are linked together through individuals and societal institutions. For example, the increased focus on a more market based model for higher education may mean students are given a broader range of classes and services in order to increase possible enrollment. However, as the interviews with participants help show, the increased choice in an academic environment may not be interpreted along a market model but rather understood in relation to their own experiences in attempting social interaction. Therefore, what is important to remember is even if something is present at the macro level it does not mean that these variables will manifest in the same way in a

more micro level, something that the accounts of participants helps to demonstrate. Rather, they may represent unique elements that are tied into macro level phenomena while retaining specific characteristics of a micro level environment, such as the structure of classes and the interactions students experienced with faculty and staff and how these interactions come to shape opinions of personal experience and competence in new educational environment.

These elements of the literature also suggest a focus on the macro objective level of the paradigm when it comes to much educational research. While levels of social reality are coexisting and simultaneously influencing one another, the focus of much research looks at the ways in which education is structured on a large scale divorced from the experiences of people involved in such educational systems. An example of such a disconnect can be seen when examining the focus on international comparisons of student performance and how such comparisons shape the educational experience for students. A driving force leading educational institutions in different countries to grow more similar in issues of academic administration and curricular content (though not necessarily pedagogy) are international standardized tests on a narrow subset of topics. While these comparisons have a place in educational research they do not take into account specific cultural elements, such as a societal belief about who should be allowed access to education, which influences which specific groups are at the heart of these comparisons. This helps to demonstrate that while macro objective level research and theory are indeed important elements for understanding the role that education plays in today's globalized world it cannot create a complete picture of education as it relates to the lives of students

since it does not take into consideration the ways in which students reflect upon elements of the larger educational structure as it pertains to their personal experiences of education or the ways in which cultural beliefs are manifested in educational practice and a societies relation to knowledge.

It was also interesting to note that when participants did discuss similar experiences between their home educational environments and their new educational settings these comparisons did not necessarily occur across the same academic level. For instance, Zheng reported similarities that were present between her high school experience and her new experiences in an American university. Comparisons between her university environments across cultures were not as salient as comparisons between different academic levels. This is informative for the researcher studying the international student experience for several reasons. One, it may be important to confront a research bias that educational levels are composed of the same things across different cultures. For example, in the accounts of participants there were many examples taken from a comparison of high school experiences in China and a relation to their university level experiences within the United States.

An example of such an issue centers around participant reports of pressure during their high school experiences leading up to their admittance to their universities in China versus the relief they felt once they had entered into their universities. This is different from participants self reported assessments of pressure once they entered into a course of study at Kent State University. For participants in this study the pressures that existed in high school and in the American university were more similar than pressure that existed

within the Chinese university system, especially when it came to issues relating to the academic workload of classes and how much time they had to devote to their studies. This demonstrates that while there may be some similarities between school systems we should not assume that what is common for one necessarily transfers exactly to another system. Additionally, this is informative because it demonstrates that experiences for participants are fluid and not solely confined to one time period or another. Rather, it is the total of previous experiences that informs their current understanding.

This further highlights the usefulness of such a paradigm as Ritzer's when examining issues of educational comparison. While university comparisons are based upon a one to one ratio of college experience (macro objective) the actual interpretations of participants regarding their educational experiences (micro subjective) creates a complicating issue when attempting such a direct comparison. If researchers are interested in creating the best possible environment for international college students by having a better understanding of what students experience, it is important to discern between educational levels that hold significance in the minds of participants.

For instance, students' accounts of their interactions with faculty and how they differed from interactions with faculty in China serve as an excellent example. As reported, interactions with faculty appeared, to the students, to be more personal and open as compared to what they had experienced at a similar academic level in China. If one were to consider only comparisons based around similar academic levels these accounts would not necessarily be considered aspects as described in the literature. However,

when looking across different levels, such as high school and college, it is possible to see evidence of similar trends reported in the academic literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

English and Educational Issues

The use of English within the classroom as well as a course of study is a process that was well developed in the literature and something that we expected to see when interviewing participants. The accounts of participants helps to shed light on the way that English is used in education across various academic settings and how this use influences the experiences of students within these settings.

According to the literature English has become the dominant language for pursuits in the fields of business, science, academics, and politics. Because this is the case, educational settings in non-English speaking countries have expressed a greater desire to make English a part of the curriculum and make sure that students are proficient in such a subject so that they may join these fields upon their graduation from school. However, despite this growing interest in teaching English to students across a range of educational settings there is less literature that details how such practices impact students and what meanings they take away from the process of learning English, again highlighting the focus on macro objective elements of language as opposed to the micro objective and subjective elements of language usage in the lives of students. There can be individual differences in how people understand and utilize English to pursue life goals, if in fact they use English at all in these pursuits. There can also be cultural adaptations as English takes on characteristics of local languages or if English is used to communicate between different non-English speaking cultures.

When looking at the accounts of participants in this study it is indeed possible to see the prevalence of English language use within the Chinese classroom. All of the subjects interviewed reported learning English at a young age in their primary and secondary school classrooms. Respondents reported an English education that was based very heavily upon rote learning and the mastery of vocabulary. Little emphasis was placed upon listening and even less emphasis was placed upon the idea of communicating with others using the language of English.

In large measure, this was due to the structure of education and the way that scholastic achievements were evaluated within the Chinese educational system. Entrance exams are required to enter into high school and college for every student in the Chinese school system. These exams are again heavily geared towards rote memorization and the recall of information from previous classes and instruction. While English makes up an important part of the exam the test covers reading and writing with no sections dedicated to the speaking or interpreting of oral English. As a result, there is less emphasis placed on being able to speak English within the classroom as students are prepared for these important exams.

The idea that English represents an essential skill for later economic positions was confirmed by the responses of participants as well. Participants reported a need to learn English in order to enter into a good college to pursue their chosen profession and a need to understand English in order to advance in their profession. Again, the role of English in the later economic world may explain why such an emphasis was placed on being able to read and write English and not the speaking of the language. Respondents reported

that when they imagined or were called upon to use English in a professional setting it largely revolved around the interpretation of written material such as emails, professional articles, and news publications. Such statements confirm the belief that English is a tool of economic potential and not necessarily for the exchange of cultural elements.

There were still instances, however, where English was used for cross-cultural communications. Two respondents talked about times when English did in fact serve as a *lingua franca* and allowed for the facilitation of interactions between individuals who did not speak the same first language. Both of these interactions, furthermore, centered on areas of academic or business pursuits. They were not intended to facilitate the exchange of elements that were part of the culture of English speakers but were rather instrumental in completing a task which took place in either of these areas. This, again, supports ideas presented in the literature that English is used more for objective pursuits and does not directly lead to the exchange of cultural information between speakers of the language.

While there were demonstrable elements that indicated that the emphasis on English may be on more objective pursuits this did not mean that there were no cultural elements associated with individuals using the language and relying on it for communication in a new environment. Respondents also reported issues with the use of the English language that they hoped to overcome or expressed concern regarding their place in their new educational setting. One such issue was the idea that as individuals moved from their home educational settings to a new environment they would be forced to move from the position of expert to a more novice position. This was present in the accounts of students in this study and offers interesting evidence for interpretation.

Participants all expressed a worry that their abilities with the English language caused them difficulties and inhibited their attempts to completely assimilate into their new educational setting. In one sense this concern stemmed from academic issues while in another it stemmed from cultural elements involving the establishment of relationships and interactions with peers. Academically, most participants expressed concerns that could be summed up in the analogy of moving from expert to novice. These participants had high scores on their entrance exams and believed that their abilities with English were at a level that would allow them to fully participate in educational exchanges found within classrooms in the United States. However, the reality that they found once they arrived and began to attend class was much different from what they had expected.

Participants commented on the fact that there was disconnect between their abilities to read and understand English texts used in class and their abilities to engage in conversations with others. For participants, reading was something that was easier than speaking. This is not surprising given the focus of English education in the Chinese educational system and the place that English holds in the world of objective pursuits. However, what was interesting was the ways in which individuals interpreted these differences and how they internalized the situation. On the one hand participants reflected on the fact that their difficulties were most likely attributed to the ways that they had been educated in the use of the English language. On the other, participants still felt this reflected on them in a negative light, whether in their own evaluations or in the evaluations of others.

Participants believed that the way they had been instructed in English had much to do with their current difficulties with the language. An emphasis on rote memorization and vocabulary was made salient in the lives of participants when they read and analyzed texts used in their college classrooms. While difficulty with vocabulary was not an issue, the way that native speakers used English and the pace of the language was something that presented participants with difficulty. This was further highlighted in the fact that participants expressed a desire to improve their English abilities through conversation with native speakers and through a better understanding of what could be termed "life English".

Amongst respondents there was a belief that the English education which had prepared them for one area of their new lives, that of the classroom, had failed to prepare them for another area, the everyday interactions which made up their daily lives. Such things as proper vocabulary for ordering food in the student hub or discussing popular media and culture, with its use of slang and idioms, had not been a part of English education within the Chinese classroom. As a result participants felt that they were unable to function within this realm and worried that they would not be able to advance their understanding and utilization of the language without learning more about these areas. In fact, several participants commented on the fact that if the university wanted to improve the lives of Chinese students a good place to start would be to teach them basic vocabulary they would need to negotiate the realities of everyday life in the United States. For example, all of the participants in this study believed that having a specific class or classes regarding the vocabulary surrounding popular foods would be extremely

helpful in making their experiences at Kent State University easier. Additionally, classes related to slang and common conversational themes would allow for a greater chance of positive interactions between international students and their American cohort.

This is reminiscent of the themes that occur in the academic literature reviewed for this study. One school of thought proposes that English is being transformed into an objective language used for business, scientific, political, and academic pursuits with little regard to the culturally expressive abilities inherent in the use of language. The other school of thought proposes that by using English across cultures there is a danger of disrupting local cultural practices because of the ways that language and culture are tied together and the prominence of English as a medium of communication. What can be learned from the accounts of participants touches on both of these issues. There is evidence that English is at least taught as if it were to solely function within the more objective realms of politics and industry. The vocabulary stressed and the methods of use, such as reading emails and academic articles, aligns with the first issue and focuses on English's more objective nature.

However, the desire of participants reveals elements of the second argument, though perhaps not exactly in the way that researchers might have anticipated. Participants expressed a desire to learn the more culturally expressive elements of the language so that they could have full utilization of their communicative abilities. By not knowing these expressive elements participants believed it was more difficult to make connections with native speakers and completely understand the direction of conversation, whether this conversation occurred within the classroom or in more social

circumstances. Thus, the English language may not have been homogenizing cultures as is predicted by the second argument but rather participant accounts reveal that there is a need to understand these cultural elements if there is going to be complete mastery and proper implementation of a second language. Furthermore, the fact that culturally expressive elements were needed in order to foster more social interactions also highlighted a desire to be able to use English for more than objective purposes, or, as reported earlier, to make conversation more interesting and attractive.

Ritzer's paradigm again is useful when examining such issues as they pertain to language instruction as the issues regarding language can be interpreted differently depending on which level of the paradigm one is using to discuss these issues. Again, while these elements can be examined separately they also interact with one another to create the whole of social reality. For example, the focus of English as an objective tool for business, economics, and politics may best be understood when using a macro objective lens in order to understand how elements of the social structure influence the need to learn a language. However, when looking at the ways in which cultural elements are or are not a part of this language a macro subjective lens may be best to understand in what ways the larger culture of nations relates to what is considered appropriate knowledge when it comes to issues involving language and interaction between nations. When focusing on the specifics of classroom interactions a micro objective interpretation is best to address issues regarding speaking in class and interactions with professors. Finally, a micro subjective lens may be best to deal with issues of how participants feel

that their use of language reflects on their cognitive abilities and how other people

interpret their intelligence and social standing regarding their interactions with others.

Perceived Salient Differences in the Accounts of Participants

While participants did notice aspects of their previous educational experiences

that were reflected in their new educational environment differences from these previous

experiences were more salient in their minds and contributed more areas of exploration in

later analysis. Not surprisingly, participants were more apt to key into differences

between their educational settings as these were most likely more visible due to their

contrasting nature. However, there were several elements of student accounts which

seemed to share much in common with areas discussed in the review of academic

literature concerning this particular area of inquiry.

One of the first elements that stood out in accounts of participants and reflected

the academic literature was the idea of increased student choice within and outside the

classroom. Students reported on their surprise when it came to issues of scheduling and

class choice as something that stood in stark contrast to their previous educational

experiences. In China many of the curricular decisions involving which classes to take

and in which order were made by the particular educational institution in which

participants were enrolled. Closely related to this was the fact that whether in secondary

or university level education participants found themselves apart of the same class cohort

as they progressed through schooling. The existence of such an academic cohort not only

physically created friendship groups but also allowed for a common educational

experience which created a shared basis for the development and strengthening of these

friendship relations. Again, this was a result of the centralized decision making that created student schedules and academic tracks.

The situation was different for students once they arrived in the American university system. Participants were surprised to find that they were able to exercise greater choice when scheduling their classes and deciding under which professor they desired to seek tutelage. One result of this "freedom", however, was the fact that they could no longer expect to see the same class cohort across the semesters. This fits with the ideas presented in the literature that the American university system offers students greater choice when picking classes as it adheres to a stronger market mentality than other more traditional systems of education. In order to adhere to this market mentality universities and other educational settings must be more in tune with the demands of customers and offer the desired services. These customers not only consist of the students within particular institutions but also the businesses and groups that could be served by the graduates of these schools. As a result, there is increased choice as universities attempt to give students what they want and make sure that the required skills are being passed to a new generation of employees. However the price of this academic choice for students from a more collectively organized culture may be a loss of camaraderie which was instrumental in developing previous friendships within an academic setting.

Here again we can see competing aspects of Ritzer's social paradigm as it pertains to issues covered in the academic literature and reflected in the response of participants. Respondents discussed how the macro objective organization of their college experience,

the centralized decision making, influenced micro subjective relationships between students in the formation of friendships within a class cohort. The situation is opposite for participants studying in the United States as the macro objective elements regarding a more open and decentralized schedule created conflicts with the development of micro objective relationships, or the opportunities they had to repeatedly interact with the same cohort. This lead to a micro subjective interpretation that while there were positive aspects of being able to experience a wide variety of different course students felt a greater degree of isolation as a result since they were less able to rely on the social structure to foster friendships.

Another aspect of educational divergence that students reported which supports the themes developed in the review of literature was the content of courses and the differing interpretations of appropriate knowledge and pedagogy between differing educational systems. Students reported taking courses with similar goals but with different styles of pedagogy and differing ideas as to the best curricular content to meet these goals. When reflecting on curricular content and styles of pedagogy in China students again reported a practice focused on rote memorization and the systematic investigation of different theoretical principals as they related to a topic of discussion.

This was contrasted by the experiences that participants had within the American university classroom. Respondents commented on the fact that the American classroom seemed to deal less with the theoretical and more with the practical aspects of knowledge as it applied to various problems, such as in courses of business where despite an initial assumption that the principles of the content would be the same across cultures there was

substantial difference in their focus of study. Students reported such things as examining

specific case studies or examples in order to better understand principals within a specific

line of inquiry. As a result, students were led to make assumptions regarding the quality

of instruction that they experienced as well as the quality of the professors that made up

the American university classroom. In both regards students had a higher opinion of

their new educational environment compared to the system in which they had originally

been enrolled.

Participants reported a greater satisfaction in many ways with their education in

the American university system compared to their education in the Chinese university

system. For them, there was a disconnect between how focused their high school

experience had been and the less structured and less demanding university environment

they found after leaving high school. Furthermore, there was a belief that Chinese

professors were not motivated by the success of their student and were more focused on

the ways they could advance themselves individually within the university. This

situation was opposite what participants believed they were experiencing within their

new classrooms. The use of examples and case studies led participants to believe that the

education they were experiencing was more likely to be beneficial once they left school

and entered the job market. While having a degree from a foreign institution would make

them more competitive they also believed that the skills developed through their training

would allow them to move up the ladder in their chosen professions as well. There was

also the belief that the professors within the American university system were more likely

to focus on the success of their students and were much easier to approach for guidance

or help with subject matter questions. All of these things created the conclusion that the education in the American university system was superior to that of the Chinese university system.

This situation is similar to some of the ideas discussed in the review of literature. While there is a greater homogenization of curricular content between different environments this does not mean that there is always a complete synthesis with no local variation, or as Ritzer would posit, that levels of the social paradigm do not exactly translate over in all cases. Both the universities in America and China focused on similar curricular elements when shaping their classes in order to prepare students for their future economic positions. However, despite the fact that there was similarity on some aspects there was still what could be thought of as local variations when pedagogical practices within these classrooms were utilized across these different environments. The Chinese system of belief and practice had an impact on what specific content made up courses and how this content was passed along to students, whether through route memorization of the theoretical or the analysis of specific case examples. In each case, the culture of an area still held influence as to how students were educated and what they were educated to understand.

Again we see the interplay of different levels of the social paradigm as it pertains to the experiences of participants studying at Kent State University. We can see the influence of macro subjective elements as it pertains to cultural ideas about what knowledge is appropriate and what should be understood by individuals within a scholastic environment. This is related to the micro objective element of actual

pedagogical practice and how interactions between professors and students are structured in the classroom as a result. Finally, we see as well the micro subjective elements of how students interpret these interactions to create opinions on the effectiveness and value of educational experiences.

Additionally, the differences that were present between these two educational environments in the minds of participants were not just constrained to the internal environment of specific classes. When examining participant accounts of the change in student populations it is possible to see further diverging trends. There has been discussion within the reviewed literature about how the nature of the student body within the American university has been changing over recent years, especially with regard to the recruitment and retention of international students. While originally focused on recruiting individuals who represented the top academic sections of their class there has been a greater push to enroll international students who may not demonstrate as great an academic aptitude or who may experience some problems with English.

This trend is observable in the accounts of participants, at least as it concerns their perceptions of their fellow Chinese colleagues. According to participants there is indeed a difference between student groups, particularly between international graduate students and the international undergraduates at the university. For participants, this difference was centered around issues of academic ability as well as social class. Concerning academic ability participants felt that they themselves and other international graduate students had earned their place within the American university by demonstrating their academic ability through their end of high school exams as well as their performance

with the Chinese university system. Their place at the university was because they had clearly demonstrated their abilities to learn and progress within their chosen fields of study. As a result, they were recruited into Kent State University with academic scholarships and assistantships within their departments.

The undergraduate students, however, were different according to the participants interviewed. This group was largely composed of individuals who were unable to enter into the university in China and therefore had to seek other options. Their poor performance on the Gao Kao (the Chinese college entrance exam) and lower aptitude for study meant that if they stayed in China they would have no way of entering into the world of higher education and would need to find a place in the workforce without the benefit of a college degree. According to respondents evidence of this lower academic ability could be seen in the way that the undergraduate group used the English language. While participants did report that they had difficulties with the use of English they still believed that they were better able to use the language as compared to the undergraduate population. Many of the undergraduates were involved in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and therefore were not able to engage in classwork in the same way as the graduate students. All these things were taken to mean that the graduate student population was superior in their academic abilities compared to the undergraduates.

There were also imposed class distinctions when discussing the differences between these student groups. While the graduate students believed that they held superior academic ability they also believed that the undergraduate students came from a higher social class in China compared to their own social position. This was evidenced

by the fact that the undergraduate students were able to pay tuition while the graduate students had to work through assistantships and academic scholarships. While this demonstrated a higher academic ability this also showed the undergraduate families were able to afford the higher cost of international tuition and therefore were from richer families than the study participants. In some ways the study participants were jealous of the undergraduates because they were able to avoid the rigors of the entrance exams by relying on family wealth to earn a place in a foreign university. For these students, life was more carefree then for participants since they could rely on their families' economic wealth while in the United States and their families' social connections once they had returned to China.

Here it is possible to see a difference between the focus of university research versus the experiences of participants when the integrated sociological paradigm is applied. The macro objective elements of the paradigm are more pronounced when examining official data and statistics regarding Chinese student enrollment. However, more salient in the minds of participants than total numbers of students within their particular cohort were individual interpretations regarding the quality of these students and how that related to their experience of higher education, a more micro subjective frame of reference.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note the differences in micro objective elements regarding language interactions for the graduate students and how they interpreted these interactions differently when they were applied to the undergraduate Chinese cohort. For the graduate students, the micro objective elements of using language to interact with

American students was frustrating because they believed that their lack of specific

abilities within the language lead to an false evaluation in the minds of their American

contemporaries that they were not as intelligent as they actually were. However, the

graduate students also commented on the fact that when the undergraduates displayed a

lack of ability in the use of the English language this was indeed a true reflection of a

lack of scholastic aptitude and further evidence that they should be considered as two

distinct groups of students in the eyes of the university.

Student Stress

While participants reported many positive aspects of their new educational

experiences, such as experiencing new things and broadening personal horizons, there

were also many elements of their experience that were perceived as stressful and

presented challenges and obstacles to a completely positive experience. Many of these

elements could again be tied to the former educational settings that participants had

experienced while studying in China. Again, whether it was through specific curricular

or pedagogical material or through the way that the structure of educational settings

influenced interaction participants felt they were part of an unfamiliar educational

landscape than they had come to expect from their previous educational experiences.

One issue that presented challenges for participants was the differing cultural

norms between environments that complicated relationships between individuals. Such

things as issues of politeness and personal space created pause for respondents when they

reflected on their interactions within this new educational environment. For instance,

participants were not sure of the norms regarding polite behavior and had difficulties

deciding if the behavior of American students was from a desire to form friendships or merely a response to their foreign status. As a result, respondents were never entirely sure if interactions held particular meanings or if these interactions were just the result of the social environment in which they had not become a part.

The same feeling was present when regarding issues of personal space between the participants and others. In China, the participants had a clear understanding of the norms regarding personal space and how it influenced the interactions between individuals. They knew that it was acceptable to hold hands to indicate friendship and how to conduct themselves in a setting such as a library. However, upon entering this new environment they had to re-familiarize themselves with aspects that they had originally assumed to be a universal norm and therefore found these interactions stressful as opposed to pleasant.

When examining issues regarding politeness and personal space it is possible to see the interplay between various levels of the social paradigm once again. Cultural elements of politeness and personal space represent a macro subjective level of reality which influences the perceived proper behaviors between people at a micro objective level. However, the effectiveness of people negotiating such reality and their personal evaluations of this effectiveness would best be considered from a micro subjective framework.

Issues relating to personal space and cultural ideas of polite behavior influenced the way that participants developed and maintained friendships within their new educational environment. This was further complicated by the way that their former

educational environments had helped them form friendships and the differing purposes of friendships between their home educational environment and their new educational setting. The way that classes were structured in China had a lot to due with the ways in which people formed friendships. In China, because there were strict class cohorts that stayed together for an entire course of study, participants could count on the educational environment to familiarize themselves with a certain group of people and to create common experiences between them. However, the varying nature of classes within their new educational setting meant that participants had to be much more active in seeking out the company of others, something that they had less experience with and therefore found more difficulty then they had initially anticipated.

Another thing that complicated these issues of friendship formation were the differing purposes of relationships between their home culture and their new settings. Friendships in China also contained an element of social connection that could later be utilized to help an individual enter into a new setting. It was important to have friends because they served as a social resource and if one had the right friends one could be sure that they could use these connections to realize other goals they desired. However, the new educational environment seemed to have different ideas about why friends were made and the purpose they served. In the new educational setting participants felt that people made friendships not so much based upon the idea of social connection but rather on shared interests or a desire to connect. Participants believed that friendships in the American setting did more to cut across issues of class then they were familiar. As a result, participants needed to re-imagine the purpose of friends and therefore this was

another element that created stress in their experience. Again we see the interplay of macro subjective elements regarding a cultural conception of friendships both from a Chinese and American standpoint and how these elements are factored into micro subjective interpretations of experience.

Implications for Research and Policy

The goal of this research study was to better understand the lives of students as they studied and worked in what could arguably be referred to as a globalized educational environment. In that respect, I believe that this study was successful. The accounts of participants illuminated aspects that were described in the academic literature and brought attention to aspects that need further development in order to be better understood. Through interviews and discussions it was possible to highlight some of the changes occurring in academic settings and how we as practitioners and providers of education might better understand such an environment and improve not only the quality of instruction but the lives of students as well.

This type of information is especially important since connections between various countries, such as the U.S. and China, are only projected to grow in the future. The presence of Chinese students at Kent State University is a feature of the current educational structure and will continue to be an integral part of future educational experiences for many individuals. It is important to understand the perceptions of this group, not only to improve the educational experience for them but also to make sure that all students entering into this particular university system are meeting with an

environment that will help to foster their further development both as students and later professionals.

One thing that may be taken from this study is the way in which individual accounts can be an investigative tool of global realities, especially when the concern is on the holistic experience of students within a university environment. Many of the things that participants discussed highlighted trends which are present in the academic literature, though these accounts may not directly line up with these themes. In any investigation of individual accounts it is important to know the broader literature base of a line of inquiry since accounts of the microenvironment, though influenced by the macro, may not directly tie these influences into accounts of experience. Without a developed knowledge base it would be very difficult to use individual experience to examine larger events.

As has been discussed over the course of this study, social reality is made of many different levels that have their own relationship to the whole. While there has been a tendency to focus on a specific level, whether macro or micro, and use this level to explain social reality this is flawed because it does not take into account this complex relationship. Rather, we should use one level to learn something about another level, and always keep in mind the inter-relationship and interplay between these different environments. Doing this is the only way to understand something as complex as educational globalization, both from the macro-level themes as well as the individual student accounts of their experience. In doing this it is possible to understand the importance of something such as Ritzer's Integrated Sociological Paradigm when

interpreting the results of academic research and how the results of such research are brought to bear in the lives of students.

However, the complexity of the relationship should not be an element that dissuades us from examining the individual experiences of students who are experiencing these changes in their academic lives. While it is important to understand larger macro forces from a theoretical or statistical vantage these insights are not more important than individual accounts if we want to truly understand how such change really impact the lives of students. Macro level accounts and micro level accounts go hand in hand when discussing complex relationships like those that compose academic globalization and there should be a premium placed on using both methods when truly trying to reach an understanding of important issues and changes within academic settings.

Despite these initial complications there is hope for making the experience of acculturation easier for Chinese international students. Zhou and Todman (2009) have reported promising results from a pilot study using pre-departure videos for Chinese students. In these videos, new Chinese international students were able to hear from other Chinese students who had already spent time studying in a foreign context. By hearing from these students, the new international students were made aware of the potential mismatch between their expectation of the foreign culture and the realities they may face once they arrive. As a result, those that watched the video reported less acculturative stress in follow up interviews then members of the control group who did not watch the video.

Suggestions for Policy Changes at KSU

Something that we can further take from the results of this study is the idea that if we want to improve the lives of students that come to the United States to pursue education the improvements may be far simpler than initially thought. Some universities have focused on physical facilities or the recruitment of top tier professionals in order to entice students to stay and continue their education once they arrive in the United States. These improvements, while they may be effective, are costly and may not meet the needs that international graduate students feel would be most effective in improving their lives here as students in a new educational setting. It may be far more effective to help students by offering a class or resources devoted to better understanding the cultural elements of their new environment than strictly focusing on the ways that one may improve the academic caliber of an institution. After all, while students may spend a great deal of time in the classroom they also live their lives within the surrounding community and therefore efforts reflecting this reality will be beneficial to all involved. Such things as teaching words for ordering in restaurants or the differences in norms of physical space and friendship that are part of the transition these students experience may do much to lower student stress and create a richer and more rewarding experience for international graduate students as they pursue their studies and explore their new lives.

This could also be a good environment for fostering interaction between student groups and allowing for the creation of friendships between individuals that may have less chance of meeting outside of an academic course. The participants interviewed in this study talked about the importance of the academic structure for how they made

friends in their new environment and the opportunity to practice and learn English with native speakers is a further way these connections could be developed. It would be good for all students, both domestic and international, to be able to come together in an open environment where they could communicate and share knowledge to build a common understanding and relationship. There is no special knowledge required, only the desire to interact with others and help ease the transition into a new setting for international students.

Interactions involving language should not only be confined to the university setting but should make use of community resources as well. Students and international sojourners may spend a great deal of time within the academic confines of the university but will also find need to live their lives within their local communities of residence in order to attend to their needs for personal and social interaction. As a result, language instruction must bridge the gap between those that primarily interact within an academic mindset and those that may be concerned with more daily affairs. Without a firm foothold in both worlds the international student will be at a deficit when trying to manage their affairs across social strata. Those concerned with the best interest of this group would do well to address both the need for professional and social interaction.

Additionally, colleges and universities should investigate ways that "weak" social support systems may be integrated into the overall efforts to help international students develop and learn within a new cultural environment. The importance of these systems has been demonstrated from student reports and could make the transition into a new living space much simpler for students. Students and other international individuals are

more than likely going to develop these relationships during the course of their daily lives so it makes sense for colleges and universities to place themselves in a position where these connections can be fostered and developed to the fullest extent to aid individuals in their transitions. Colleges and universities often pride themselves on being members of their communities of residence and the development of these social support systems could be a natural growth from such a relationship.

Directions for Future Research Initiatives

With everything that has been learned this study also raises interesting questions that would make for exciting areas for further research. One of the first things that would be very helpful in furthering the understanding of this study's guiding questions would be to carry out a similar study at another university. There is a chance that some of the elements of student accounts are caused by changes that would carry between institutions and others might be caused by specific elements of the institutions where the study was conducted. For example, reports of the effectiveness of community support systems and social interactions may very greatly depending upon local culture and custom. By examining these questions at other universities it would be possible to better separate characteristics of the study setting to characteristics of globalizing education.

Another possibility for future research would be to carry out similar interviews with other international graduate student groups, not just those students who come from China. Again, many of the things experienced by these participants could be part of the complex and interconnected reality facing academic settings around the globe. However, other elements could be part of a unique cultural system that has elements not found in

other similar settings. Therefore, it would be helpful to further sort which elements of the student experience exist because of the changes which are a part of globalization and which may be from the transition from Chinese society to American society.

Additionally, it may be helpful to develop an investigative query into the differences reported by international students who primarily interact with a cohort of individuals from their home culture and those that have more interaction with a diverse group of individuals, including American students and faculty. Those that consider themselves to be part of many groups may have a very different understanding of interactions with the host culture than those that primarily associate with members of their own groups. Taking this as a starting point, the idea of investigating these relationships with groups studying in countries other than the United States may be of further benefit as there will undoubtedly be similarities and differences which reflect the process of acculturation between groups and the particular nuances of cultures which come to shape interactions between individuals.

Finally, a promising line of inquiry for further study would be to work with the Chinese international undergraduate cohort within Kent State University to find out in what ways their experiences are similar or different from their graduate counterparts. Particularly, do these students impose the same class and ability distinctions between themselves and graduate students as we saw reported in the interviews with participants? How do these students feel about the differences in cultural norms of what has been expected of them leading up to their new educational experiences? Finding out answers to these questions would again help to improve the lives of a large number of students
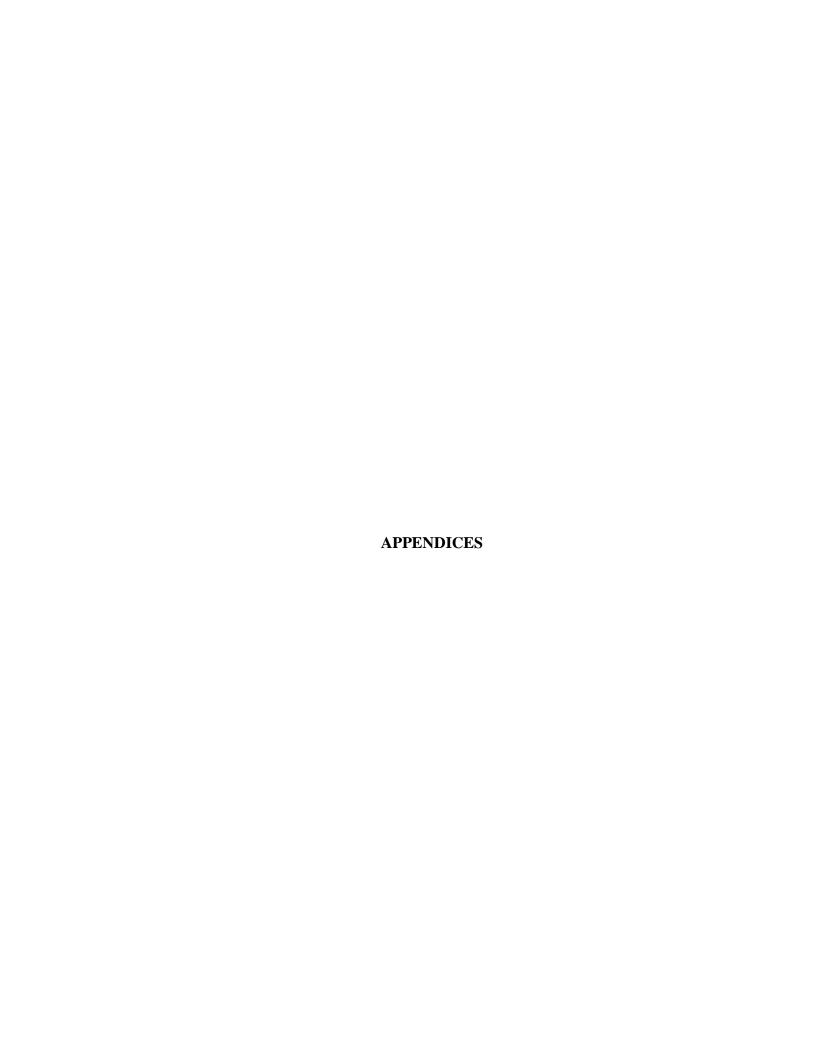
studying within this academic setting and could help to bolster the recruitment of future students as well.

This study only represents a small piece of the expanding field of student acculturation and how it influences, and is influenced by, educational settings. It is important to see this work not as a final answer to questions but rather as the start of an inquiry that covers diverse topics and impacts different groups in different ways. As a result, the researcher who is interested in such a topic must be aware of the developments taking place across a variety of disciplines, not only those concerned directly with education. Also, researchers interested in the studying the process of acculturation must be familiar with global political events and how the outcomes of international negotiations and conflicts may influence the interactions between individuals within a host culture or between immigrant groups studying within a different culture. As nations interact with one another upon a world stage it is only plausible to assume that such macro level events would have a resulting influence in the micro level interactions of their citizens living abroad.

In tandem with research focusing on international students it may be beneficial to investigate how local communities feel about new residents from other countries and how these attitudes may shape the interactions between groups or the services offered to those that may be seeking them. A difference in community attitude may very well shape the nature of support systems that people encounter outside of the academic setting and this is an important area to further understanding. Are there specific organizations such as the church groups referred to in this study that help new students from other countries? Or is

the attitude of local residents more hostile and therefore acting to limit future social

interactions and acculturation? The answers to these questions may be very helpful in

creating the most beneficial situation for new international students.

Globalization and the resulting acculturative challenges make for a diverse field

of study and the importance of such research will only become more so as societies

increasingly come to interact with each other in our modern world. For colleges and

universities that not only want to attract, but additionally, to retain top talent

understanding the linkages between cultures and the ways they interact is paramount.

While the focus is often on the global nature of changes it is important to look at the local

environment and the personal experiences of people involved in the globalization process

in order to gain the greatest understanding of this complex new world we inhabit.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND PROMPTS

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND PROMPTS

All Questions are Open Ended. Use Only as Guide to Facilitate Conversation.

1st Interview Topics:

Family Demographics (Prompt if necessary: Members of Family; Occupations; Home City).

Education in China (Prompt if necessary: Highest Level of Ed. attained; Likes and Dislikes; English Education).

Education at Kent State (Prompt if necessary: Likes and Dislikes; Similarities or Differences from Chinese Ed. Experience).

2nd Interview Topics:

Future Roles (Prompt if necessary: Where do you see yourself in five years?).

Expectations of the United States (Prompt if necessary: What did you expect from your experience before you came to the U.S.?).

Interactions with Americans (Prompt if necessary: Positive Interactions; Negative Interactions; Cultural Differences; Norms and Values; Communication and Language Issues).

3rd Interview Topics:

Differences between Chinese Students (Prompt if necessary: Ability; Class; Age; Families; Educational Experiences).

Ideas for Improvement of Experience (Prompt if necessary: What would you change about Kent if you could?).

Impressions of Americans (Prompt if necessary: Likes or Dislikes; Unexpected Things; Expected Things).

Advice for Future Students (Prompt if necessary: What advice would you give future students at Kent?).

Identity (Prompt if necessary: What have you learned about yourself or how have your
opinions about yourself changed?).

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form

English and International Student Identity
Kent State University

知会同意书

英语学生和国际学生身份认知

Principal Investigator: Mr. Aaron M. Korora
研究人: Aaron M. Korora

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

您被邀请参加这项研究。这份同意书为您提供本研究项目的信息，您所需要做的，以及与本研究相关的风险和获益。您对本研究的参与属于自愿性质。请您仔细阅读本同意书。您对本研究充分的了解以及提问以期做出清楚地选择对本研究而言十分重要。您将会收到本同意书的复印件。

Purpose: This study represents research for a dissertation project by the principal investigator. The purpose of this study is to better understand how graduate students from mainland China characterize their experiences of higher education within the United States. This study is also interested in better understanding the role that English education plays in the lives of students and the ways in which it effects student's cultural and national identities.

研究目的：本研究为本研究人进行的博士论文研究。这项研究的目的是为了更好地了解从中国来的研究生如何体认在美国接受高等教育的经验。本项研究同时也致

力于更好地了解英语教育在学生的生活中所扮演的角色以及它如何影响学生的文化和国家认知。

Procedures: Study participants will engage in in-depth interviews with the principal investigator. The purpose of the interviews will be to better answer how students characterize their experiences of higher education and the ways that they experience English education. Each interview will range from 1 to 2 hours. Students do not have to answer any questions which they find too personal or discomforting. There is no penalty for refusing to answer any questions.

研究程序：研究参与者将会参与本研究者进行的深度访谈。访谈的目的是为了更好地回答学生如何体认他们的高等教育和英语教育经验。每次访谈会进行一至两个小时。被访谈者不必对涉及私人隐私以及令他们感到不适的问题给予回答。拒绝回答任何问题不会导致任何惩罚。

Audio Tape: The interviews will be audio taped for the purpose of transcription. After transcribing the interviews, all students will be assigned a pseudonym for the analysis of interviews. Once transcription is complete all the recordings will be destroyed or deleted to ensure the privacy of the individuals involved in the study. There will be no identifying information linked to participants in any way.

磁带录音：为了笔录的目的，所有访谈均会被录音。笔录完访谈后，所有被访学生将会被冠以化名来进行访谈分析。笔录一旦完成，所有访谈录音将被销毁或抹除以期保护本研究参与者的隐私。任何身份识别信息都不会与被访谈者挂钩。

Benefits: The benefits of this study include better understanding an important and growing segment of the Kent State University undergraduate student population. It is hoped that through this project this better understanding can lead to improvement in curriculum as well as exposing students to aspects of a scientific research process.

获益：本研究的获益包括更好地了解构成肯特州立大学本科学生人口的一个重要和不断增加的学生群体。希望透过本项研究这种更好的了解能够导致课程的改进以及促使学生更多地参与到科学研究过程中来。

Risks and Discomforts: There are no risks associated with this project beyond those that the participant would encounter in everyday life. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any questions without fear of penalty or reprisal.

风险和不适：
本研究并不会对参与者的日常生活构成任何风险。研究参与者可以随时退出研究，他们也可以拒绝回答问题而不用担心受到任何惩罚或对他们不利的举动。

Privacy and Confidentiality: No identifying information will be collected. Your signed consent forms will be kept separate from your responses in a secure office and responses will not be linked to you in any way.

隐私和保密：
本研究不会收集与参与者身份相关的信息。您所签署的同意书将会与研究数据分开保存，您的回答也不会指向您的身份。

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation. Participation in this research project or a decision to end participation will in no way affect any of your course grades.

自愿参加：
是否参与本研究完全取决于参与者。参与者有自由任何时间决定退出研究。参与者退出本研究并不会对您造成任何损失或惩罚，未来也不会影响您任何利益的取得。您将会被告之影响您的健康，社会保险或者继续参加本研究的自由意愿的任何新的，相关的信息。参加本研究项目或选择终止参与本研究不会影响您的学业成绩。

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this research you may contact Mr. Aaron Korora at 330-672-7850 or Dr. Averil McClelland at 330-672-2294. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330-672-2704.

联系方式： 若对本研究有任何问题，您可拨打 330.672.7850同Aaron Korora先生联系。您也可拨打 330.672.2294 与 Averil McClelland
博士联系。本研究已或肯特州立大学伦理委员会批准。若您对研究参与者的权利或对本研究本身有任何不满，请致电伦理委员会：330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature: I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me for future reference.

知会陈述和签名：

我已充分见证了知会的程序，并相信我已完全知晓。我已充分了解本项目和参与者的指责并已主动承诺参与本项目

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

参与者签名   日期

Audio Tape Consent Form
English and International Student Identity
Kent State University

录音同意书
英语和国际学生身份认知
肯特州立大学

As part of this project students will be audiotaped during the interview process and the audiotapes will be transcribed in order for analysis to be conducted. Even though participants are being audiotaped each student will be assigned a unique pseudonym to make sure that statements made in the interview cannot be traced to any individual student or participant. After the transcription of the interviews is complete all the original audiotapes will be destroyed to further guarantee the student's anonymity.

作为本研究的一部分，在整个访谈过程中学生的访谈将会被录音。访谈录音亦会被笔录以供分析之用。尽管参与者会被录音，但每个学生将会被冠以化名以确保访谈中所陈述的观点不会指向任何学生或参与者。待所有访谈笔录完成之后，所有原始的录音将会被消除以进一步确保学生的隐私。

Students have the right to listen to their audiotapes at any point during the study. They may do so by contacting the lead investigator (Mr. Aaron M. Korora) and arranging a time to listen to their tapes.

学生有权利在研究进展的任何阶段聆听自己的访谈录音。他们可以跟主要研究人 Aaron M. Korora先生联系来安排时间聆听自己的录音

Students may also choose at any point to opt out of the audiotaping process. While there is no penalty for withdrawing from the audiotaping students who choose to do so will not be able to continue with the study since the major analysis rests on the transcription of student interviews. There is no penalty from withdrawing from the study and students will not be negatively impinged in any way if they choose to withdraw.

学生也可以选择在任何时间退出录音过程。选择退出录音过程的学生不会受到任何惩罚，但他们将不能继续参与本研究，因为本研究的主要分析依靠对访谈录音的笔录。退出本研究没有任何惩罚。选择退出本研究不会对学生造成任何负面影响。

This form will be kept with the main consent form that students sign as part of this project and may be viewed by the student by contacting the lead investigator and

arranging for a time. If the student has any questions about the audiotape process they may contact Aaron Korora at 330-672-7850, Dr. Averil McClelland at 330-672-2294, or the Kent State Institutional Review board at 330-672-2704.

作为本研究的一部分，本录音同意书将会与学生签署好的知会同意书放在一起保存。学生可以跟本研究主要研究人联系安排时间聆听自己的录音。若学生对录音过程有任何疑问，可以致电330-672-7850与 Aaron Korora, Averil McClelland 博士联系，或致电330-672-2294与肯特州立大学伦理委员会联系。

I understand my rights as they pertain to the audiotaping process of this research project.

我已充分了解了我在本研究录音过程中所享有的权利。

Name   Date

姓名：   日期：

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