DePaul University

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少壯不努力, 老大徒傷悲 (A YOUNG IDLER, AN OLD BEGGAR): CHINESE NATIONALS IN US CLASSROOMS AND THE PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GLOBALIZATION

A Dissertation in Education with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

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Abstract

Over fifty thousand Chinese students are leaving China to study in US high schools. This interview-based, narrative inquiry study focuses on the experience of ten Chinese nationals now studying at a US high school and expands work done in comparative pedagogy by offering thick descriptions of the school experience in two cultures. This study makes the case that China's changing culture is reflected in the stories and school histories of Chinese students who experience pedagogy as significantly different in China and the US. The push that drives students out of China includes high-stakes testing and public ranking systems and the individual success of students within these systems. Students' experience school in China as a symbiotic relationship between teachers, students, and schools, which often manifests in culturally located methods for efficient study, including achievement collaboration—wherein actors work together for mutual success. It is within this context that many students are pulled to study in the US in order to take up a certain degree of cultural rebellion, wherein they perceive that US schools have the resources to provide for broader constructions of school success than in China. This study illuminates how these students then gain new knowledge around how to be successful in school in two cultures and how to better navigate global education mobility. It is in this way that Chinese students become conduits of change. They influence the curricula, programming, and services offered at the schools they attend in both countries, emphasizing how cross-border mobility (re)shapes the identities and values around education for all involved, from individual students and schools to educational policy and reform. This study engages how schools in the US are meeting the needs of these students in both policy and practice, and lends nuance to the literature around intercultural education and the impact of globalization on pedagogy.

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To my husband, Douglas Warnock, my partner in it all, "I was tired again, I've tried again, and now my heart is full."—thank you for loving me for a long time.

To our daughter, Emerson Velouria Frkovich Warnock, mommy has now finished her dissertation--please know that all of this is for you and for all the classrooms in your future. All of it.

Dedication

此研究敬献给我的中国学生。

你们教会了我什么是学生所需要的，真正的勤奋和谦逊

同时也献给中国，

你教会了我孩子是上天给我们最好的礼物，而我们世代传承的教诲可以创造出最伟大的奇迹

This study is dedicated to my Chinese students.

You have taught me the real diligence and obedience required of schoolwork.

And to China, for teaching me there is no greater gift than a child,

no greater miracle than the legacy of the ancestor.

Chapter One—Introduction: New Contexts for Understanding School

In 2009, I ran "English Corner" at the foot of Golden Chicken Mountain. "English Corner" was the name of an extra-curricular club for students interested in English at a senior high school in rural southwestern China. "English Corner" provided English enthusiasts a chance to approach the language orally and without the direction of government controlled textbooks. I sat on the red bench of a covered walkway surrounded by almost a hundred high school students in early June, as about a handful of them asked me questions about Christmas, dating, and Michael Jordan. Later that week, one student slipped under the door of my dormitory room a notebook. She had meticulously written (in Mandarin and English) all the famous idioms and ancient poetry of China that she wanted to share, or could remember. She included an itemization of China's most scenic locations and prized cultural relics, lists of festivals, and a letter about herself. She created a sort of textbook for me, upon my first school visit to China, and it was filled with an air of diplomacy and cultural exchange. It struck me that while I was busy teaching English and answering questions about US culture, heroes, and holidays, Chinese students had stories of their own. Stories they wanted to share.

In her letter, the young woman who gifted me my new homemade guide to China told me she was from a village by the river—a village with lots of trees and kind, polite people. She liked to cook. She was eighteen and was soon to take the *gaokao*—college entrance exam. She said she dreamed of studying in the US. She said her English was only so-so. She suggested we would be best friends—I could help her with her English, she could help me with my Mandarin. Then she made a promise, a vow actually, that she would study, very, very hard. At the time, I had no idea that I would take up the study of studying in China, and Chinese

students studying in the US, but I have. This study is about how Chinese students make sense of school. Specifically, how Chinese nationals attending US high schools make sense of school in comparison.

At schools in China, I have come to cherish and respect how each day music and instructions come blaring over the PA system as thousands of Chinese students put down their mechanical pencils and take off their glasses to participate in about five minutes of synchronized eyelid, forehead, and temple massage. Embedded in this act are the cultural values that undergird pedagogy. Comparatively, I had never, ever, experienced this before in my life as a student and teacher in the US.

I found myself, yet again, teaching English literature and language to international secondary school students in the United States in the fall of 2009—and I announced that we were going to be participating in mandatory eye exercises. My American students looked at me like I was insane—my Chinese students looked at me like I had suddenly revealed the contents of their suitcases to the world, the stuff they didn't mind sharing, but could not believe anyone actually wanted to see. I have no idea if it was the first time a US classroom participated in mandatory eye exercise, but at the time it felt like a pioneering act of global, cultural exchange. It was obvious to me that my Chinese students had a front row seat to education in two cultures--that they were helping to build bridges between these cultures--and that we were in the process of an emergent negotiation around how to make sense of it all.

Students who attend school in two cultures can discuss the experience of school in one culture as it compares with the other. Through an examination of these comparative accounts we may try to understand what part of the global discourse around education is being taken up. We may ask questions about how these global models are manifested in the experience of

students. We may look for patterns and try to better understand how pedagogy is taking shape globally—what creates and influences this change.

As the number of students who have comparative school experience is steadily growing worldwide, the largest and fastest growing numbers of these students are coming to the US to study and are coming from China. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (2014) claims that there are 50, 526 secondary students studying in the US with a nonimmigrant status, and that "China contributes almost 29% of all nonimmigrant students[1]" (ICE, 2014, p. 11)—more students than from any other country. These minors, Chinese nationals, are now studying in the United States in increasing numbers and it is significant to understand the nuance of why.

It would seem that students who are looking to study in another country would be, by and large, interested in countries whose schools are perceived as the "best" or better than their own—this is often measured by test scores. A preoccupation with testing and ranking is not uncommon. Some comparative education scholars have argued that the world is converging upon a preoccupation with control, standardization, assessment, accountability, and performance-based manageability (Levitt-Anderson, 2003; Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003). While educational systems around the world are converging in their obsession with assessment and standardization, international test scores do not help us explain the push and pull of global education immigration, as there seems to be little correlation

[1] F-I Nonimmigrant Students—this group of students come to " the United States to pursue a full course of academic study" and are tracked by SEVP (Student Exchange Visitor Program) in order to "monitor the activities of nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors who enter the United States" (ICE, 2014). The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) SEVP publishes a general summary quarterly review. The numbers used and referenced in this study are from information retrieved by SEVP on January 15, 2014, for their most recent quarterly review. These numbers are limited to those schools that participate in and report to SEVP and students who are not pursuing an immigrant status.

between international test scores and Chinese students obtaining F-1 nonimmigrant status to study in the US.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is proclaimed by the OECD (Organization for Economic Community Development) Secretary-General, Angel Gurria, to be "the world's premier yardstick for evaluating the quality, equity, and efficiency of school systems" (OECD, 2012, p. 2). The PISA test assesses 15 year-old students, and focuses on reading, mathematics, science, and problem-solving. The 2009 test was administered to 26 million 15 year-olds worldwide (OECD, 2010). The 2012 test was administered to 28 million 15 year-olds world-wide (OECD, 2012). China's wealthiest urban students in Shanghai, particularly, not only scored higher on these tests than students in the US, but they have consistently been ranked the highest in the world. Furthermore, Chinese students who took the PISA test did far better than US students in both 2009 and 2012. It seems unlikely, then, that students from China would come to the US to be educated because of PISA scores, in fact, we may claim that international standardized test scores do not account for educational migration.

In further problematizing the notions of a number of theorists who claim that there is a global obsession with standardized testing, there seems to be a considerable number of individual Chinese students and families that measure and value school success in other ways, as international test scores cannot account for the sheer number of Chinese students engaged in cross-national educational experiences. These students have a story to tell. The ever-growing numbers of Chinese nationals studying in the United States come with complex educational historiographies and perceptions of teaching and learning. We must consider the nuance of these experiences and what they might lend to our understanding of Chinese nationals who study in US classrooms, so that I, and we as educators, may better understand the experiences

of school children who are educated in both systems in the 21st century. This focus will allow us to better understand how worldwide increases in our interconnectedness, or globalization, impact student perceptions of pedagogy.

Having taught students and teachers in rural and urban China, and Chinese nationals in my own US classroom, I begin acknowledging my own experience, as I engaged in the study of Chinese students in US classrooms. In this interview-based narrative inquiry study, I invited participants to share their classroom-based experiences in interviews--to tell their stories. Essentially, participants were asked to make sense of their experience with school and to interpret the pedagogical significance of the situations and people they have encountered in China and in the US.

For the last eight years, I lived on a boarding school campus in the suburban Midwest. Roughly 200 of the students living on that campus are international students, defined by the fact that the school must issue them an I-20 for their F-1 (educational) visa. Fifty-five of those students are mainland Chinese[2]. Nearly all of these students attend the school's summer English program and go on to study English full time at the school during the school year. After successful completion of this two-year English as a Second Language program, these students are mainstreamed into English language and literature classes with native speakers. As an English teacher, and chairwoman of the English department at the school, I taught many of these students in my own classes, and I worked with other English teachers to form, and inform, policies and ideas to support English language learners in mainstream English classes.

Through my work at this school, understanding the meaning and sense-making of teaching and learning in China and the US became increasingly significant to me. Following

[2] Another 15 of the International students are from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In this study I did not work with these students, because I focused on students with experiences in mainland China.

my work in a high school in southwestern China, I traveled each subsequent summer from 2009-2013 to Shangyou, Nankang, and Chongyi, China, to teach teachers oral English and pedagogy in a professional development course for primary and junior middle school teachers--offered by the Ministry of Education for Jiangxi Province. This course was taught at various locations and teachers' colleges throughout the province. While teaching this course, I talked to hundreds of rural teachers about pedagogy and educational reform, and about the realities of their school experiences, both as students and as teachers. In 2014, I travelled to coastal and inland China to meet with teachers, students, administrators, and to observe the classes, culture, and school life at top, rural and urban high schools.

These experiences, along with a critical examination of related scholarship (as discussed in Chapter Two) allowed me to address the areas in which there is a gap in the literature, and a place for needed focus and study. Very little research has been done on students' comparative perspectives--stories from both cultures, with a focus on better understanding the impact of globalization on pedagogy, and how the experience of education is (or is not) changing for Chinese students as the world becomes more interconnected. This interconnection—an increased ability to physically come together—also speaks to the booming number of educational migrants in the US. However, literature around the experience and sense-making of educational migration in the US is often limited to higher education. International students at US secondary schools are overlooked. Therefore, the following research questions guided all of my research here and served as the ultimate focus for the analysis of my data:

1. How do students' experience and understand pedagogy in the US and China?

- What values and beliefs about school might have been passed on to them by their parents?

- What is the purpose of school?
- What is school success?
- What is the role of the teacher; what is the role of the student?
- What is the role of assessment?

2. What is globalization's impact on how Chinese nationals with comparative experience understand pedagogy?

3. How are these experiences informed by the global movement of educational reform and reform debate as posited by world culture theorists?

It is critical that educators and policy-makers pay attention to the experiences of 50,000 Chinese secondary school students in US classrooms, and that they are mindful of how steadily this number is growing. These questions will allow us a better understanding of individual student experience and how these stories take up threads of the global education reform debate. Before we take up an examination of these student experiences, the following chapter provides a review of the relevant scholarship on the "push and pull" (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001) of education migration, culture and comparative pedagogy, as well as systems for the organization of educational reform and reform debate. We will examine what is known about why students are coming to the US and what we have to gain from looking at these experiences. We will take up how these experiences can become emblematic of larger tensions in the global reform debate.

Chapter Two—Cross-Border Mobility and Culture in Global Classrooms: A Literature Review

Introduction

China is undergoing massive change, and its schools are responding. Educational processes in the last thirty years tell a story of a changing country and a changing perception of the purpose of education and the experience of school for millions of Chinese students. Part of this vast change may be seen in the fact that it has been widely documented that students, teachers, and parents in China are dissatisfied with the Chinese education system and deeply concerned about the lack of creativity, engagement, and personal freedom students incur (Pine, 2012; Zhao, 2014). In fact, the Chinese now export to the US $24 million—this number is ever growing—in educational dollars as Chinese students come to the US to study in high schools and colleges (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001). This has caused great concern among the Chinese around the possibility of a "brain drain phenomena[3]" (Deng, 2014), and a general loss of revenue. Indeed, Chinese universities are now looking at US World and News Report to determine how they can also provide a "top" college experience—one that would retain Chinese students (Deng, 2014). As China has the largest number of students who study elsewhere in the world (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001), this examination of literature seeks to illuminate the variety of push-pull factors that create this education migration. Upon an examination of these factors, this literature review will then seek to show how conflicts in the cultural dialogue, the debate of educational reform, and the current patterns of education

[3] This term has been used by researchers (Deng, 2014) to suggest that the intelligent or talented students in China are leaving to study and work elsewhere.

migration, are "not mere inconsistencies within a global model, but rather the manifestation of conflicting models at the global level" (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p. 15).

Scope and Limitations of Review

As I do not speak Mandarin Chinese, I am limited to both translations of original documents, or documents written in English. Throughout this review, I will be transparent if I am relying on translations of documents originally published in Mandarin. Recognizing that while the dominant foreign language in China changed from Russian to English after 1960 (Bray, 2001) these changes in foreign language study influence what scholars have access to read and understand, and therefore, what is shaped and transformed in the field of comparative education in greater China (Bray, 2001). These issues lie in not only my work, but in the work of scholars globally.

There is a documented challenge to the validity of empirical research done in Chinese public schools (Luo, 2012). While there are a great number of documents that discuss theory and concepts, however, the studies that have been done in Mandarin present a number of challenges. Luo (2012) cites Hu, Han, Wen & Li (2005); Li & Wang (2008); and Wang, Zhao, Duan & Wang (2007) in the literature review chapter of her dissertation on student-centered pedagogies and test-driven accountability practices in China, as having conducted flawed studies, inaccessible to me, as they are written in Mandarin. Luo claims that with small sample sizes, little rationale, and causal inferences, there is little to say about how these curricular reforms are faring in China, and what factors might impact these reforms. Luo's (2012) mixed-methods study, however, and her findings, will be heavily referenced in this section.

Yi Che (2010), in her ethnographic study of rural and urban Chinese and Haitian early elementary school teachers implementing curricular reform, claims that empirical studies which

attempt to analyze and understand the disparities between the urban and rural school experience are rare. She discusses the lack of first-hand knowledge about educational reform and progressive schools in rural areas, and a problem with this lack of knowledge leading to assumptions that rural schools are backward, "left-behind," and stagnating in old practices (2010).

Political frameworks in China and elsewhere influence education systems and are widely used to reinforce the agenda of that party: in this way, all school activities are political (Bray, 1992). Therefore, the empirical data that is available is subject to telling the story of what is politically advantageous to the Chinese. Political agendas in education often lead to misleading data (Klees, 2008). The lack of validity of interstate reporting is a global issue, and our competition with each other fosters a host of issues around the validity of data that countries use to compare (and compete with) each other (Klees, 2008; Mundy & Farrell, 2011). The tensions inherent in the lack of validity related to interstate reporting help us to better understand the political agendas that schools take up and underscores the importance of research which can get at, behind, and around political agendas.

Organization of the Review

With these limitations in mind, we will look at globalization and world culture theory, and its counterpoints, to consider the push and pull of education migration. Specifically, why do Chinese nationals come to the US to study, what makes them want to leave China and come to the US? Following this, we will consider culture, and the process of learning itself as we look at the cross-cultural resonances of pedagogy and we consider what we might learn by comparing pedagogy in two cultures. This will bring us to an examination of the global education reform debate, as we consider how the thick description of comparative pedagogy

lends itself to best understanding the nuance of the world culture theory debate. By examining these discourses, we may also see a middle ground—global influence in local school realities, as well as local transformations of our global understandings of schooling worldwide (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014).

The Push of Education Migration

There is a long history of education in China (Pepper, 1996; Bray & Qin, 2001) and a history of reforms being both embraced, and refuted (Pepper, 1996). Simultaneously, it seems that China's educational landscape is entrenched in its ancient culture, while also forging ahead and pioneering vast change (Che, 2010). It is important to understand this history, in part to better understand where China came from, and in part, where it might be going.

There is a tremendous history of teacher-directed instruction, examinations and high-stakes testing in China (Pepper, 1996). From its imperial roots through the 20th century and into the 21st, it is important to understand the cultural values that a high-stakes examination in search of the "elite" is given in China (Pepper, 1996). China's imperial roots, the take-over of the communist party, and the country's long history of testing will be highlighted in the following section, as well as a brief history of the educational reforms taken up over the last century. Following this, we will turn to a brief examination of the urban and rural school-based inequities in China, and a discussion of the literature around how schooling and educational reform may reinscribe the social stratification it endeavors to eliminate. Providing this context better frames the push factors of China's educational migrants.

Imperial Roots and Communist Take-Over

The Civil Service Examination was the determining factor for success for China's literati throughout its imperial history, over roughly 1,300 years, until the exam's end in 1905 and the demise of China's legacy of imperialism in 1911 (Pepper, 1996; Keay, 2009). The end

of this exam signaled the conviction that all schools be reformed amid a growing push toward replacing imperial schools with western schools. The Civil Service Exam, and an idolization of foreign knowledge and foreign degrees, had dominated Chinese intellectual life for centuries (Pepper, 1996; Keay, 2009). Underlying all concepts of what was worth knowing was the assumption that Western learning would bring China great power and wealth. Foreign curriculum and degrees were prized and sought over classical learning styles and the old system of examinations "as a source of personal position and influence" (Pepper, 1996, p. 519). It may be argued that we may trace the earliest roots of the impact of globalization on Chinese education to the Civil Service Exam (Pepper, 1996) and to the curricular reforms put in place in its wake (Zhao, 2013).

At the dawn of the 20th century, new subjects, including foreign languages, various sciences, and the study of classical foreign texts were incorporated into the framework of Chinese education (Bastid, 1987). These courses, however, were separate from the general course of study. While the first translation school opened in 1861, by 1895, twenty-two schools were dedicated to teaching different branches of Western knowledge (Bastid, 1987, p. 8). Yet, a fear of being "Americanized" ensured that throughout the teaching of Western knowledge was Chinese knowledge. Early on, the Chinese were able to separate the Western knowledge they deemed useful, from that which they deemed harmful (Pepper, 1996). China's constantly changing policies regarding those who study abroad (Zhao, 2014) demonstrate China's fluctuating position of acceptability/unacceptability regarding Western knowledge. Nonetheless, the teaching style of these new schools for Western knowledge was previously unseen—classes were more lively, student-centered, individualized and applicable to student's lives (Bastid, 1987, p.9).

These new models, and the educational leaders who heralded them, took root in the coastal cities and prosperous provinces of East China (Bastid, 1987, pp. 12-13) which strengthened the trend toward the urbanization of modern educational thought in China. However, many Chinese educators saw the American model of the individual student at the center of the educational process as antithetical to China's needs and its culture of community (Bastid, 1987, pp. 11-13) No matter the origin, whatever educational reforms that were brought to China were thoroughly vetted and reproduced through a Chinese lens. Nonetheless, throughout the 1920's, demonstrations and fervor against Western education and "cultural enslavement" took shape, and many called to create and embrace a Chinese model of education (Bastid, 1987, p. 16).

The chief educational concern of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China in their takeover in 1949 was to repudiate China's imperialist past (Bastid, 1987, pp. 17-18). Schools were quickly taken out of the hands of educators and put into the hands of the party machine throughout the early 1950's. For the most part, however, pre-PRC educational policies were simply recycled and reenacted (Bastid, 1987). Party leaders simply reproduced the same education and examination driven system of standards and regulation, but with the goal of identifying and creating Communist Party elites and bureaucrats (Bastid, 1987). Reestablishing the ancient link between public office and advanced degrees, the civil service exam was retooled in communist China in the form of the college entrance exam—the *gaokao* (Pepper, 1996, Keay, 2009), serving as a gatekeeper to college and advanced positions within the government. This exam became an indicator and gatekeeper to higher education and all the social mobility, influence, and power that goes with it (Pepper, 1996). These ideas further divided the urban elite and the rural poor.

Gradually, a conflict emerged between the preexisting concepts that permeated the new modern schools and the radical antithesis of these ideas culminating in the Cultural Revolution (Pepper, 1996, p. 527). Between 1966 and 1971, all foreign educational models and influence were expunged from Chinese schools. Slowly, through the creation of a centralized bureau of education, the Chinese began to regulate their schools' quality, and did so through a series of item by item directives and fixed standards (Pepper, 1996), which led the way to mass standardization in an effort to control for school quality.

For the most part, most schools in the second half of the 20th century continued to use a non-reformed *sishu* style, memorizing and studying in rote didacticism (Pepper, 1996). The urban elite, however, were beginning to be educated in private schools, or new modern schools, many of which were foreign inspired, but infused with "China's own tradition of learning and examinations for elite selection" (Pepper, 1996, p. 523). The difference between the urban and rural school experience continues to take shape and becomes further exacerbated by these changes into the 21st century.

Traditional Schooling and the Response of Reform

In the context of Chinese education, traditional school means three things. First, it means a rigid adherence to the centralized textbook system which is disseminated and administered by the Chinese national government (Zhong & Yang, 2002). This system is criticized for irrelevant, overcomplicated, and outdated material by Chinese scholars (Zhong & Yang, 2002). Traditional schooling has also meant an adherence to pedagogic ideologies which are teacher-centered, positing the teacher as the authority, and in this way, the teacher is often assessing and emphasizing cognitive gains over a student's process and development (Luo, 2012). Teaching then becomes about assessment, not process or development over time. In

addition, traditional schooling has meant an adherence to narrow, single-subject oriented course system (Zhong & Yang, 2002) which fails to make interdisciplinary, thematic, or overlapping connections.

Chinese critics and academics have long held that the Chinese education system, with its tightly structured, completely centralized, authoritarian approach to education was exactly what was responsible for the nation's lack of creativity and critical thinking (Zhao, 2014). China's Ministry of Education has responded to this with a series of reforms to the *gaokao* college entrance examination system, and edicts calling for more creative and "whole child" approaches to education (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2001). They have responded to fears that Chinese students lack the ability to be 21st century-readers, and to think for themselves—often cited as evidence is a lack of Nobel prizes, and a lack of inventions and patents held by Chinese (Zhao, 2014).

Since 1949, China has conducted eight major reform initiatives (Luo, 2012, Wu, 2005). The eighth reform effort, published in 2001, is generally known as "new curriculum reforms" (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2001, p. 1).Specifically, the document detailing new reforms, "Guidelines to Curriculum Reform in Basic Education" (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2001, p. 1), addresses the tensions between China's traditional schooling and the emergence of a globalized, connected era of information and technology (Luo, 2012; Zhong & Yang, 2002). The 2001 Guidelines mark a pedagogic shift: the impact of foreign theories and practice is hard to ignore (Che, 2010).

The Guidelines recommend that course reforms are gradual, with elementary students (from 1st grade to 6th grade) receiving more comprehensive courses, and middle school students (from 7th grade to the 9th grade) receiving a mix of comprehensive and discipline-specific

courses, and high school students (from 10th grade to the 12 grade) receiving solely discipline-specific courses (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2001). The new reforms suggest that schools phase out traditional schooling, aiming to modernize curriculum and change the role of the teacher in the classroom.

Simultaneously, reform efforts in China, in part, are increasingly marginalized as China is ensnared by the Western praise and attention garnered by the results of its international test takers (Zhao, 2014). While China may want to pull away from a centralized system, it has adeptly produced a nation of stellar test takers, and has garnered the admiration and attention of the West. Furthermore, high-stakes testing, greatly impacts educational reform, and specifically, curricular reform at the classroom-level. In China, teachers often perceive reforms aimed at student-centered teaching practices, for example, as counterproductive to "raising students' performance on current standardized tests" (Luo, 2012, p. 49) and that teachers are rarely using student-centered pedagogy when confronted with reforms connected to high-stakes accountability practices, such as merit pay (Deboer, 2002; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Luo, 2012; Passman, 2000; Pederson & Liu, 2003; Spillane & Burch, 2006). When teachers are held accountable to deliver content driven by high-stakes testing, they are compelled to abandon student-centered pedagogy for more traditional approaches to content delivery—approaches that are more teacher-centered (Passman, 2000).

Luo (2010) found that some student-centered reform policies are altogether incompatible with high-stakes testing and testing-based accountability models, both of which are widely used in rural and urban China. High-stakes, standardized testing in China was found by Luo (2010) to undermine student-centered pedagogies, and prevent the reforms outlined in the 2001 Guidelines from taking root altogether.

Urban and Rural Inequities in Post-Socialist China

In the late nineties, urban incomes were more than double those in agriculture, and a tremendous gap existed between the urban, coastal Chinese, and the rural mainlander (Postiglione, 2006; Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa, 2006, pp. 81-82; Yu and Hannum, 2006; Pepper, 1996, p. 534). These inequities will be briefly discussed in this section, to help provide a greater context to the differing research on factors that impact educational reform in urban and rural China. Despite whatever hopeful gains China has made for compulsory education, educational inequities persist, and those children who face the most disadvantages are from rural, poor families with limited access to social welfare programs.

When these children do enter school, they face weak infrastructures and less qualified teachers than do their counterparts in wealthier areas. The curriculum is often foreign to their lived experiences and teachers use a vernacular not spoken in the home. Many children quickly surpass their parents' level of schooling, and thus lack guidance at home when they face academic difficulty or become discouraged (Adams and Hannum, 2009, p. 170). In addition, the plague of increases in school fees, rising costs and decentralized financing greatly affect rural schools, rural resources and rural enrollment (Hayhoe, 1987). The socioeconomics of a Chinese village seems to determine student success (Hayhoe, 1987). Studies have also pointed to parental health as a determining factor of student school enrollment, retention and success amidst the rising cost of health care for rural Chinese (Yu, Hannum, and Sargent, 2009). The link between parental health, available healthcare, and school success, most greatly affects the children of rural China (Yu, Hannum, and Sargent, 2009).

As urban areas continued to privatize due to the economic and "opening up" reforms of the late seventies and early eighties, the education gap between urban and rural students

strengthened. These inequities were exacerbated as "China's immensity and population militate against swift diffusion of innovation" (Bastid, 1987, p.20). Reforms have taken shape to strengthen a commitment to address this gap by supporting compulsory education for poverty-stricken areas, minority regions and remote areas with the Education Law of 1995 (Hannum & Adams, 2009, p. 158). Between 1995 and 2000, the government launched a massive initiative for children living in poor areas and invested more than a billion dollars in education funding (Hannum and Adams, 2009). In 1999, the Action Plan for Revitalizing Education in the Twenty-First Century renewed China's commitment to nation-wide compulsory education (Hannum & Adams, 2009). These initiatives primed the wheel for the reform guidelines and its resulting discourse in 2001 to be discussed later in the body of this review. It is also important to note that in 2005, a national educational conference in China called for scholars to study and discuss the vast educational inequities at play in China today (Che, 2010).

Nonetheless, while the majority of Chinese live in rural China, this group is rarely studied, and often treated as an after-thought, left on the margins of educational study and debate (Paine & Delany, 2000; Che, 2010). Yi Che, in her video-cued ethnography on early childhood education in China, claims that there is little scholarship available on the complex challenges of the rural school experience for students and teachers (2010). Che suggests that this leaves many Chinese scholars to oversimplify the issue, and assume that the rural school experience is backward, lagging behind, and of poor quality (Tang, 2005; Zhou & Xie, 2004). However, this is only one story, and what we may be missing is a more nuanced view, that includes insiders' reflections, and reliable, empirical studies on the impact of reform on rural schools (Napier, 2003; Che, 2010).

This dissertation does not deal with this group, however. This study is about the students that travel (and can afford) to learn in the US. In doing so, I am aware that I am turning to study a new dimension of education in our globalized world: those that can afford to study in another country. The cost of studying abroad further reinscribes the existing social stratification in China between those who can afford to do so and those who cannot. Studying the experiences and understandings of Chinese nationals in US classrooms helps us to better understand the history of education in China from afar and the ways that these students will come to understand, and impact, school in two cultures.

The Pull of Education Migration

Western Perceptions

The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) notes that the number of international students "interested and enrolling at TABS member boarding schools have grown substantially in recent decades" and that they have become an essential source of student enrollment and revenue ((TABS, 2012). In 2011, international students represented 17% of the population of US day schools, and 30% of US boarding schools (TABS, 2012., p. 4). This number is more than twice the number of international students enrolled at TABS schools in 1994 (TABS, 2001, p. 5).

The largest and most significant increase in international populations at American boarding schools can be seen in Chinese students, who now comprise the largest group of international students in both boarding secondary and post-secondary institutions—27.4% (TABS, 2012., pp. 6-7). The fact that China has the largest number of students who study elsewhere in the world can be understood for a variety of nuanced push—pull factors (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001). While the size of the population of China itself may allow for this, it is also important to note that the number of students from a home country living in a host country

predicts student enrollment at schools in that host country—i.e. if you are Chinese and you know that there are many Chinese students studying in the US, you are more likely to travel to the US yourself to study (TABS, 2001, p.15).

Other factors that influence international student enrollment in US boarding schools may include the perception that living in another country provides great experience in our globalized world, and that living in the US also provides opportunities to improve English in written and oral forms, as well as a wide-held assumption that the quality of education in the US is better than that of the host country (TABS, 2012., p.18). Some academics and scholars have also suggested that it is a general dissatisfaction with the experience of education in China that is pushing Chinese students out of China and to the US for school. Some suggest that the *gaokao* has made Chinese students feel like educational prisoners in their own schools (Luo, 2012; Zhao, 2014). This entrance exam, the only path to college in China, dominates school life. Students fiercely compete for top spots on the exam, and the path to success comes at the loss of all freedom. Only the best students not only study all day for the test, but they also study all night and all weekend (Pine, 2012; Zhao, 2014). For those looking to study at top colleges and top US high schools, the competition for limited spots offered to international students also feeds into the test-prep frenzy of Chinese students in China. However, it is the perception of Chinese students that US students are not taking high-stakes, standardized tests, and that these tests do not dominate school life. Certainly, US students do take standardized tests in private and public schools, but the chokehold these tests have over school life and school pedagogy varies greatly.

For high school students seeking to study in the US, boarding schools offer residential solutions that most public, and private day schools do not, and it is these schools that are seeing staggering numbers of Chinese applicants and are enrolling Chinese secondary school students in

large, and ever-increasing numbers. The United States has the most international schools in the world (TABS, 2012, p. 4) and enrolls more international students than anywhere else in the world—it is the first choice destination of the majority of international students, including Chinese (TABS, 2012, p. 19). However, despite the number of international schools in the US and the number of international students that study at these schools, the US government does not involve itself in these matters, and international schools and students are rarely studied by researchers, especially at the secondary level (TABS, 2012, p. 8).

The following section situates these ideas as they play out in the landscape of American education, specifically, in private, international boarding schools in the US.

Student-Centered Pedagogy and the Response of Reform

Among the constructions of US education taken up by international students is the assumption that US classrooms employ certain methods of student-centered pedagogy (Pine, 2012; Zhao, 2014). Underlying an operational and conceptual definition of student-centered pedagogy is a democratized construct of classroom leadership (Dewey, 1938) and an understanding of its emancipatory potential (Freire, 1970). Underpinning student-centered pedagogy are also the psychological arguments for self-motivated learning (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Lepper & Green, 1978). Drawing from this social constructivist approach, student experience guides the learning process, and meaning is made in dialogue with other students (Deboer, 2002; Zhong, 2007, 2008). However, the ideas of student-centered and teacher-centered may be oversimplified, and they may exist more on a continuum than a binary (Passman, 2000). The degree to which private, international boarding schools take up student-centered, democratized, Freirian, or social contructivist approaches varies greatly. Nationally, these ideas are not emphasized, and the US government's role in education has increased.

The Clinton-Bush-Obama decades are fraught with party politics taking control over education: Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top—these new reform efforts in the US were centralized and embodied the theories and values of the body politic (Garrison, 2009). These policies, reform efforts, and (re)branding campaigns created and enforced a specific standard, made this standard mandatory, ushered in sweeping standardized testing, and held teachers and schools accountable that could not show gains in the mastery of these standards. Ultimately, these policies sought to centralize and unify all measures of this standard and rewarded those that prescribed to the social values, language, race, and class of those in power (Garrison, 2009; Giroux, 2012).

When the PISA results were announced in 2012, Arne Duncan admitted that, yet again, Shanghai led the world in reading, science, and mathematics. This was not announced as a chance to celebrate the success of the Chinese, but as a condemnation: US students were doing terribly compared to 61 other countries whose fifteen year olds take PISA tests (Ravitch, 2014) and that educationally, as a country, the US was, at best, mediocre. This rhetoric was really just a carryover from rhetoric used in 2000 and 2010; *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* both cite PISA tests as evidence of failure to educate in the United States.

In the US, teachers are rarely using student-centered pedagogy when confronted with reforms connected to high-stakes accountability practices, such as merit pay (Deboer, 2002; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Luo, 2012; Passman, 2000; Pederson & Liu, 2003; Spillane & Burch, 2006). When teachers are held accountable to deliver content driven by high-stakes testing, they are compelled to abandon student-centered pedagogy for more traditional approaches to content delivery—approaches that are more teacher-centered (Passman, 2000). Researchers found that teachers in US school districts who were facing dropping, or low scores, felt tremendous

pressure to improve and that student-centered practices wasted what precious time there was for the delivery of content geared toward high-stakes tests (Pederson & Liu, 2003). Watanabe (2007) also found that high-stakes testing narrowed curriculum and placed teacher priorities not with their students, but with testing achievement (Watanabe, 2007).

Currently, it may seem that the larger landscape of the American educational system is at odds with the possibility for student-centered practices. However, certainly there is room for exception. American private, independent, and boarding international schools, for instance, are not held to comply with the reform mandates of the federal government for a variety of reasons. However, this does not mean that these students do not take standardized tests, as international applicants to US colleges must take the ACT or SAT, and the TOEFL—all standardized tests which dictate school curriculum to varying degrees.

The next section will work to connect the history, and policy and reform debate of schools to an understanding of culture.

Cross-Cultural Resonances in Pedagogy

Culture is where "meaning is constantly produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction that takes place" (Hall, 2005, p. 297). Institutions circulate "the shared meanings and power that normalize developmental processes and knowledge produced" (Brown, 2005, p. 189). These cultural imperatives (Ogbu, 1988) are sites which work to form recognizable patterns which require certain competencies in order to take part in society. Those who are part of the same culture, share "sets of concepts, images, and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus to interpret the world, in roughly similar ways" (Hall, 2005, p. 297)—they speak the same language (Roghoff, 2003). This is essentially acknowledged in the idea of representation. Representation produces culture because culture is about shared

meaning, and language is the medium with which we make sense of things—this is how "meaning is produced and exchanged" (Hall, 1997). Language is "a representational system" Representation is central to the process of what is produced and Hall (1997) offers a visual for this, calling it a "circuit of culture"—representation, regulation, consumption, production, identity—culture is played out in a continuous loop.

Holland and Lave (2001) put forth a theory for identify formation, asserting that "pervasive, long-term, transformative struggles are telling sites for the study of "history in person"—that the "political-economic, social, and cultural structuring of social existence is constituted in the daily practices and lived experiences of subjects who both participate in it and produce cultural forms that mediate it" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 5). We must begin to see that as history is made in person, both as it is intertwined with our identities, and with our institutions, the world is formed in and against power relationships that cannot be refused and that afford privilege (Holland & Lave, 2001). In this way, the local struggles of people take up larger discourses and these enduring struggles are "carried out for and against societal institutions and discourses that disproportionately distribute symbolic and material resources to favored racial, ethnic, class, and gendered groups" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 13). Therefore, what "has been realized in local practice and brought from there into the intimate" are actually much larger constructions. If we recognize this, then we must also see that these systems are not fixed, but fluid, and dialogism insists on being "engaged-in-practice, always engaged-in-dialogue" — working in the best interests of those "in the margins of power to thicken and become more developed and so more determinant in shaping local struggles" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 19). The sites of our enduring struggles and the cultural production of identity are sites

that are rife for dialogism—as the past and the future are merely different chapters of the same story.

School is just another site where "meaning is constantly produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction that takes place" (Hall, 2005, p. 297). School is an institution which circulates "the shared meanings and power that normalize developmental processes and knowledge produced" (Brown, 2005, p. 189). An anthropological perspective helps us to understand that school is an "imperative of culture" (Ogbu, 1988) – helping to form recognizable patterns which require certain competencies which students must learn in order to take part in society. In fact, school could be considered one of the most "privileged, though often most neglected" (Hall, 2005, p. 297) sites where culture is formed and represented. The meaning making of school "regulates and organizes our conduct and practices" at schools and gives them "value and significance" (Hall, 2005, p. 297). The culture that school takes up then also seeks to govern the conduct and ideas of others. In this way, when students make meaning of their own school experiences, they are bringing to bear a formation of schooling that is cultural (Shimahara & Sakai, 1995).

While it is true that "all forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical" (Elliot, 2008, p. 4), we must not over-represent and over-generalize, but try to better understand what is part of a cultural process and what is individual development (Roghoff, 2003). It is important to understand and identify the nuance of individuals—who are they, where they are from, and how this informs their cultural constructions of the school experience as individuals, and as members of a group.

It is important to try and understand the nexus of enduring struggles and history enacted in person (Holland & Lave, 2001) that is taken up by individuals and that we take time to unpack

some of the nuance and difference within culture—and to adjust and readjust, to capture the great variance of a cultural lens. Robin Alexander (2009) makes the claim that comparative pedagogy takes up this work in schools and seeks to better understand what sets of concepts, images, and ideas enable those in one culture to "think and feel about the world, and thus to interpret the world, in roughly similar ways" (Hall, 2005, p. 297), as compared to another.

Pedagogy is both the "act of teaching and its contingent theories and debates" (Alexander, 2009, p. 2). Pedagogy is then the discourse one needs in order to both engage in teaching "intelligently and make sense of teaching" (Alexander, 2009, p. 2). In this way, teaching and pedagogy become intertwined. Pedagogy is then both the act of teaching and "its contingent theories and debates" (Alexander, 2009, p. 4). However, we are "nowhere near coming fully to grips with the themes of curriculum, pedagogic styles and evaluation as powerful message systems which form identities in specific educational sites" (Cowen, 2000, p. 340)—indeed, the thick description of this work is often insurmountable for researchers (Alexander, 2009). Robin Alexander's work, however, claims that "pedagogy is shaped by national culture and history, and by the migration of ideas and practices across national borders" (Alexander, 2009, p. 5). He developed a framework for studying this, which includes three parts: pedagogy as the observable act of teaching (pedagogy as practice), the ideas that inform it (pedagogy as ideas), and "the macro-micro relationship which links classroom transaction to national policy via curriculum" (pedagogy as the macro and micro) (Alexander, 2009, p. 5). Alexander then asserts that cultural values spill out at every point in the analysis of pedagogy (Alexander, 2009) at the macro and micro-level, and that by analyzing pedagogy we take up the culture, history and values embedded in educational thinking and practice, as well as "pedagogical diversity and commonality across geographical boundaries" (Alexander, 2009, p. 14).

Theoretical Considerations: Understanding (the Limitations of) World Culture Theory

Convergence

World culture theory is concerned with the question: are schools around the world converging and becoming more similar over time? World culture theory is a grand sociological theory associated with John Meyer and Francisco Ramirez, about modern nation states converging and becoming increasingly similar (and Western) over time (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Meyer and colleagues argue that a global model of mass schooling arose throughout the world's emerging state-building processes (Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Soysal & Strang, 1989) and then again with the forming and reforming of new nations after WWII. However, it is not to suggest that a lasting and permanent system of schooling was put in place, but rather, that over the 20th century, school systems have formed and reformed in ways that are increasingly similar over time (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000; Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). (This isomorphism can be seen in Table 1.)

Table 1. Hypothesized Common Model of Schooling

Component	*Manifestation in Model*
Ideals	Education as a universal human right Belief that education can have real and positive effects. Productivity/economic growth National development (for a growing minority, individual development)
Basic Structure	Universal increase in female participation in schooling Mass, compulsory education National education ministries (centralized educational policy) Collection of educational statistics
Educational Institutions	"The Principle of the Classroom": "egg-carton" schools with graded classes Co-education rather than separate schooling by ethnicity, class, gender
Content and Instruction	Core elementary curriculum Predominantly whole-class lecture-recitation with seatwork

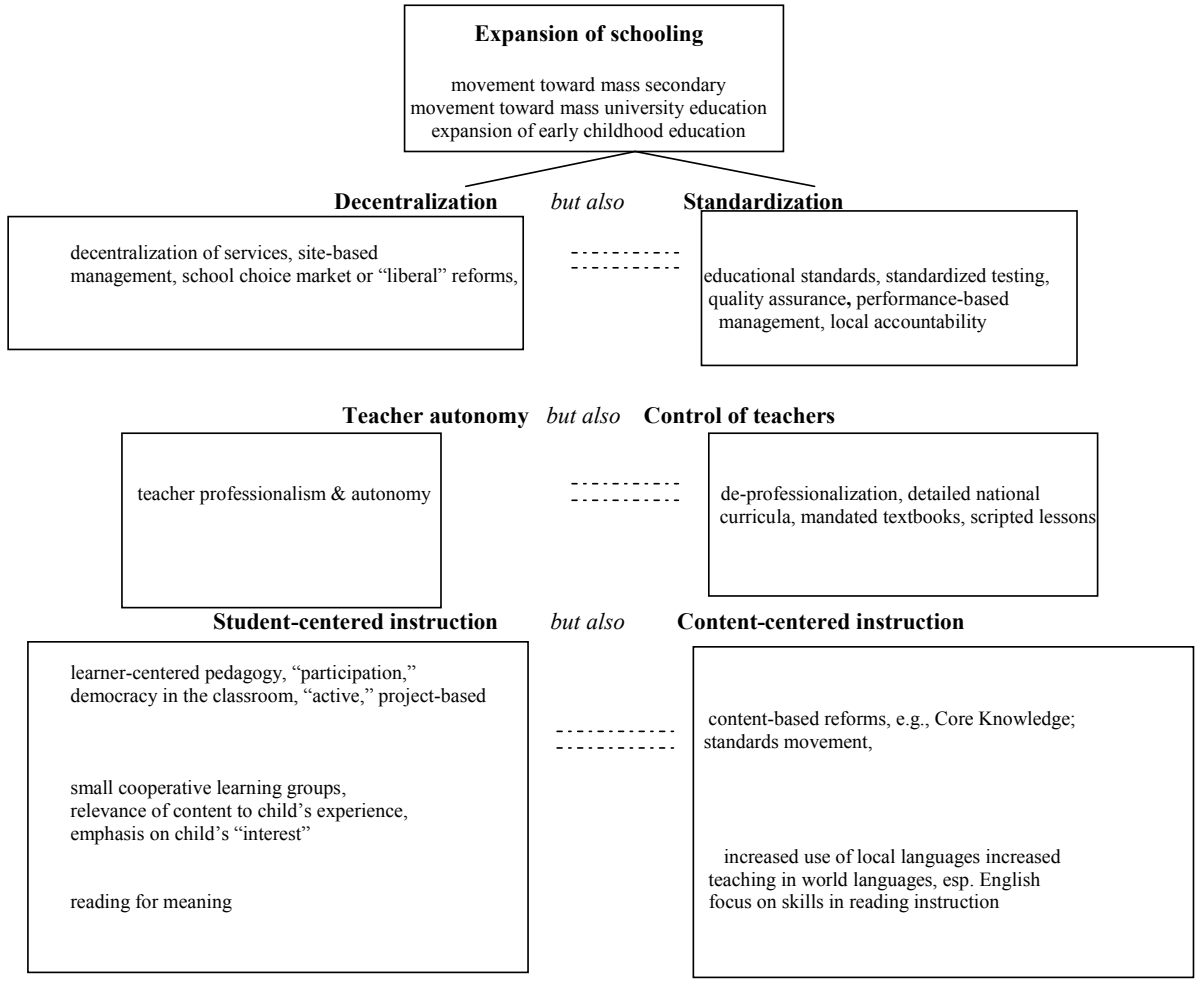
Adapted from Kathryn Anderson-Levitt (2003). "A World Culture of Schooling?" In Kathryn Anderson-Levitt (Ed.), *Local Meaning, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 5.

Some world culture theorists point to a convergence not in ideals, but practices. These theorists cite the increase in school attendance globally by females (UNDP, 2000) and the mass establishment of central education authorities who collect educational statistics (Ramirez & Ventresca, 1992). Schools are rethinking separating students by age, class and gender (Meyer and Ramirez 2000; Napier, 2003; Herz, Subbarao, Habib & Raney, 1991, p. 29), and are consistent in moving toward the "principle of the classroom" (Meyer & Ramirez 2000, p. 125), wherein students are sorted into age-graded classrooms assigned to individual teachers. Among a trend in the convergence of educational reforms, world culture theorists also point out a movement toward mass university education (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000; Meyer & Ramirez, 2000) and mass schooling extending to children below the age of six (Christina, Mehran & Mir,

1999). World culture theorists have also found convergence in a common core in world elementary curricula (Kamens, Meyer & Benavot, 1996) which includes language arts, mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, aesthetic education, and physical education. The importance of these core subjects were also found to be commensurate with the time they received in classrooms (Meyer, Kamens & Benavot, 1992). Other trends include a greater concentration on world civics education and controversial subjects in math and science (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). (These trends can be seen in Figure 1.)

However, recent work has been done to challenge the notion that these trends in reform are uniform and coherent (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). What much of the world culture theory research has pointed to is that control, standardization, assessment, accountability and performance-based manageability is what is preoccupying educational systems around the world (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003). Those who offer counterpoints to world culture theory often take up a more anthropological view, and suggest that despite a global convergence in discourse, policy and structure, there is evidence of increasing difference in the experience of school around the world. Anderson-Levitt (2003) suggests that researchers bring both the global/macro and local/micro lenses to our examination of school, educational systems, and educational phenomena in order to best understand them.

Figure 1. Transnational Reforms and Reform Debates



Divergence

Only with slim exception have world culture theorists extended themselves to teacher practice and teacher belief (LeTendre, Baker, Akiba, Goesling & Wiseman, 2001) except to point out that teachers around the world most often use whole-class lecture and individual student seatwork (Anderson, 1987; Anderson, Ryan & Shapiro, 1989). In the last decade, cultural anthropologists have pointed to the emergence not of a global culture, but a "hybrid culture," a "third culture", and an "indigenization process" wherein borrowers play an active role in adopting Western ideas and therefore, find ways to powerfully manipulate them (Anderson-Levitt & Alimasi, 2001, pp. 25-58). Furthermore, given that local practitioners are situated in their own societies, they will interpret the same national policies quite differently (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

Kathryn Anderson-Levitt (2003) suggests that world culture theorists are looking at a general abstraction, data that has been glossed over and that does not allow for nuanced analysis. She suggests that we must determine where the action is in educational reform (Anderson-Levitt, 2003), and that we must consider if it is with the national and global policy makers, or if it lies with the individual classrooms and the interworking of individual schools? Anderson-Levitt (2003) looks at where individual actors resist and subvert, appropriate and transform, and she looks at how power dynamics mistake the coercion of teachers into adopting policy mandates as voluntary. Therefore, the actual lived culture of schooling is incredibly rich and locally divergent.

Anderson-Levitt and Napier (2003) point to decentralization and site-based management as examples which run counter to world culture theory. In addition, school-choice and the privatization and "marketization" of schooling are among movements to decentralize (Hatch and

Honig, 2003; Rosen, 2003; Stambach, 2003). Anderson-Levitt (2003), Jungck (2003), Ouyang (2003), Rosen (2003), Segal-Levit, 2003 and Zeichner & Dahlström (2003) also point to the contested role of teacher autonomy and scripted lessons as another counterpoint to world culture theory. While there is evidence of content-centered reform, there is also evidence of student-centered, participatory reform (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Napier, 2003, Ouyang, 2003), again serving as a counterpoint to world culture theory and underscoring the idea that the movement of reform is continual and it takes up many ideas at the same time, which results in varying forms and meaning systems.

These movements are not oppositional, but rather, they are in dialogue with each other, as what makes culture is not only shared values, but agreements to disagree over certain, specific, shared ideologies (Spindler and Spindler, 1990). The actors involved in these dialogues are also often international world-aid organizations (Bartlett, 2003; Nagel and Snyder 1989; Rosen, 2003) as they each take up and promote competing models of education. We must also consider the potential gaps between educational policy and the actual practice of local actors (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Jungck, 2003, Ouyang, 2003) and the ability for locals to transform and reinterpret educational policy (Napier, 2003; Ouyang, 2002; Stambach, 2003). It has also been found that, indeed, schools are changing in response to the same pressures and ideas, but this does not mean that they are becoming more alike (Che, 2010).

Conclusion

These conclusions raise questions about how schooling cultures change. It also turns our attention to change agents. To a certain degree, Chinese students in US classrooms are change agents. They are bringing with them new ideas and new ways of seeing the world of school. Their stories are another micro-fiber in the complexly woven and intricately stitched story that reveals the pedagogical significance of globalization. These students have chosen to walk away

from an entire pedagogic model and educational matrix and chosen another. This means they have stories from a micro-level of school in two worlds, and they have their own understanding and sense-making of the cultural construction of education. It is useful to consider the school experiences of Chinese students. In listening to and understanding these stories we may begin to more clearly understand the nuance of the global development of education reform and the influence of globalization on pedagogy.

Chapter Three—Methods of Narrative Inquiry

In looking at the experiences of Chinese students in US classrooms, we can also look to a greater context, and make connections between participants' pedagogical experiences and a larger, global pedagogic discourse. Looking closely at micro/local-level accounts of experiences with schooling will allow us to closely engage the nuance of these experiences. We will then turn our attention to the larger issues— the enduring struggles found in this discourse at the macro/global level. In addition, student stories of comparative school-based experiences will lend greater nuance to our understanding of student perceptions of pedagogy and cross-border mobility.

Narrative Inquiry

Dewey (1938) held that all education is based on experience. Education, then, becomes experience based on experiences, leading us to other experiences. Our experiences have a history, a past, and they are playing out continually in our present lives. They also have a future and a story to be told. How do educational researchers then measure the experience of education? Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest that social scientists have turned to narrative inquiry to capture experience, and all that is constantly changing—all that we have lived, are living, and will live. For educators, this method allows us to do as Dewey (1938) did, research as "the study of experience" (p. xxii).

However, it seems impossible to capture something that is constantly changing. Clifford Geertz (1995) makes the claim that in a world that is constantly changing, the only thing to measure is "what has been altered and how" (Geertz, 1995, p. 1). While Geertz's work as a cultural anthropologist largely influenced ethnography, he posited questions which are relevant

to the purpose of narrative inquiry. How do you document change—"change in the world, change in the inquiry, change in the inquirer, change in the point of view, change in the outcomes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 6) and all of this "woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go" (Geertz, 1995, p. 3). Geertz (1995) suggests that this "grand contraption" is "lumbering, shaky, and badly-formed" (p. 20) but that it is impossible to suggest theoretical precision about things that happened, are happening, or things that will happen. Like my experiences learning and teaching in China, my stories are ambiguous, they are not easily summed up or interpreted, and they do not always have clean starts and ends.

While we have "struggled for years with more intuitive ways of coming to terms with life in classrooms, with life in schools, and other educational landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18), narrative inquiry allows for healthy approaches to documenting relationships over time that are always and forever changing. In her 1993 Nobel Lecture, Toni Morrison makes the claim that "narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created.... We know you can never do it properly - once and for all. Passion is never enough; neither is skill. But try" (Morrison, 1993, para. 28). This quote resonates with the intent of this study. As a teacher, and a researcher, I changed as I collected these stories, just as these stories change the moment they are told. The role of the inquirer is ever-present in narrative inquiry, as one is ever a student of the "school of life"—but at this school the musings of the mind are not trivialized, but studied, because after all, "our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories" (Bateson, 1994, p. 11).

As Morrison claims, it is impossible to get it right, or to do it justice, once and for all, because to share these stories with a reader as they were shared with me is impossible. After all,

it is "I" who wrote this—with all of my bias and leanings and ideological constructions. It is "I" who writes the story of our relationship, only "I" am always changing, ever learning, so even "I" am always shifting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We must acknowledge this. We also must acknowledge the effort, and that all we can really ever do, in the end, to tell the story someone told you to someone else, is try. We have to hope that in trying is learning.

I am trying to learn about the experience of Chinese nationals in US classrooms. Narrative inquiry is the best methodological approach for this study. Narrative inquiry allows us to focus on the experience of Chinese nationals in US classrooms and to pay attention to the way they make sense of school and how they create story in order to understand school. We will focus on the details required of storytelling—and the dramatics inherent in storytelling. We will look to how knowledge is embedded in our culture and created in story, and in the meaning-making of memory, and in this way we may study how Chinese nationals in US classrooms make meaning of school. In bringing these stories together, I will organize them in a way that speaks to the nature of the data collected: stories. But I will push narrative inquiry past its conventional and traditional forms, in order to further extend and develop the objectivity of narrative prose. I will explain this further in the "Data Analysis" section of this chapter.

Data Collection

In the spring of 2014, I conducted a narrative-inquiry interview-based pilot study with five Chinese nationals who had gone to high school in the US, and who were now studying at US colleges. The findings from that study greatly influenced both the data collection and analysis portions of this study. My work with these five participants made me want to expand my study to a greater number of participants, and to look to the experiences of students in high school. Many of the questions asked of participants in that study were the basis for the questions asked of participants in this study. As I turned to this dissertation, I knew I wanted to work with

double the number of participants as I did in my pilot study, and I was excited by the ways that the findings from my dissertation might further explore and explain my pilot study findings.

Studies related to narrative inquiry commonly use between three and ten participants—as it is useful to concern this work with depth and detail, rather than with generalizable results (Smith, 2008). It was my goal for this dissertation that I would interview twice as many participants as I did for the pilot study. I knew that I wanted dissertation participants to remember their Chinese school life more clearly than my college-age pilot study participants, but I also knew that I needed participants with enough US school experience so that they would avoid over generalizing about their US education. I also worked to tweak my interview guide so that participants might talk about their experiences in ways that would better help me identify the attendant discourses of pedagogy that are revealed as participants relay and share their school experiences.

Following IRB approval (see Appendix A), I found participants for this dissertation in two ways: I made a public announcement at our school's weekly morning meeting (a regularly scheduled all-school gathering for announcements), and I hung copies of a solicitation flyer throughout the school on community announcement bulletin boards that were in hallways with lots of foot traffic. Ultimately, 25 participants contacted me by email. As the school is only slightly over 400 students, and roughly 11% are Chinese nationals, participants lead me to other participants, which resulted in some snowball sampling, and an additional seven participants (Seidman, 1998), for a total of 32 participants. As per the criterion for this study, all participants were boarding/day school students at a school in the suburban Midwestern United States—a school in which I was currently teaching throughout the time I collected data for this study. All participants were born, and had gone to school, in mainland China.

All potential participants were required to contact me by email, and 32 students ultimately expressed interest to me in participating. They were emailed a recruitment letter, in English and Chinese, to be sent to their parents. This letter informed parents of the purpose of this study. The letter was addressed directly to parents, asking if they would be willing to allow their children to share their stories focused on their experiences with school, teaching, and learning. In this recruitment letter, parents or guardians were asked to sign a letter of permission for their child to participate in research, offered in both English and Chinese. Translations of these documents from English to Chinese were done by a school administrator—someone who worked officially for the school in the capacity of external relations and communication with Chinese parents, and they were then back-translated by a Chinese teacher at the school. I then approved the original English and English translation and made sure they agreed.

Thirty-two participants were asked to secure and provide evidence of signed permission from their parents and guardians by having their parents or guardians email me a signed and scanned copy of the permission form, or forward me a photo of the signed permission form. Twenty-five students returned a signed permission form and were contacted to schedule interviews. As the semester continued, fifteen students ultimately sat down for two interviews, in 45-minute intervals. At the first interview, 13-17 year old participants were asked to give their assent to participate in research, and those over 17 signed a consent form to participate in research. The study was conducted with three eighteen-year old participants, and twelve participants ranging in age from 14-17 years old. A more detailed list and explanation of participants will be given in the next chapter.

All interview questions were designed to allow participants to tell their stories. I followed an interview guide (see Appendix B). When I deviated from the guide, it was to ask for further

detail or clarification. Participants were asked to recall specific experiences with school, with teachers, and with learning in China and the US. Each question was broad enough to allow participants to offer their own meanings and interpretations of school experiences, both in China and the US. I digitally recorded the interviews and they were transcribed by a single transcriber.

Before the first interview, I had anticipated that I would ask participants to share with me stories and writing that they may have done in classroom writing projects (writing that had been assigned in my own classroom, and that of other 10th grade English teachers, as part of annual class work on memoir writing in narrative prose and graphic novel) and writing that they may have been published in the school's literary magazine. I thought that I would invite participants to submit whatever documents or photographs they would like to offer in the data collection phase of this study. These samples, I thought, would provide a multi-genre lens, and offer an interesting look at school-based experiences. However, it became clear after my first set of interviews that very few participants had this type of writing to offer, and that most photos and documents were in China and the retrieval of these things proved incredibly difficult. This was also something that I anticipated after I completed the IRB process for this study—I began to realize that the actual coding of these documents would present a challenge I was not sure was important enough to this study to further pursue.

Throughout this process, I kept a field journal. In this journal, I noted a number of ideas that come up through my daily work interviewing participants. Among these ideas were some of the informal observations I made about the Chinese student community studying at the school in which I worked. That fall and spring, most of the Chinese students I talked to about the memoir writing they were doing in their US English classes said they were planning on writing about their experiences with school in China—this writing was in the draft stage at the time of data

collection and analysis and not available for this study. I also noticed that parents of participants were eager to meet me, and in meeting them, they began to share their stories of, and connections to, education. One participant wrote to my dissertation chair directly—she said she wanted my teacher to know I was doing a good job. I felt very connected to the community that these students created at this school and connections to their various communities in China. One day, in the middle of an interview, a participant started to cry. I turned off the tape recorder. She was talking about the pressure and anxiety of studying in the US and of being, suddenly, among American teenagers. I cried with her: it had been months of listening to students, like her, who seemed so brave, so strong, and so young. Later, when I met her parents who flew to the US for parent-teacher conferences and Open House, and we talked about all of this, we cried together.

Data Analysis

After conducting interviews with fifteen participants, I decided that I would only focus on the stories and interviews of ten. The five participants that I declined to transcribe and further examine for this study had all been studying in the US for less than a month, and were all in classes at the school exclusively for English language learners. In my interviews with them, I began to realize that they had very little comparative experience. Instead, I decided to focus on participants who had been studying in the US for at least a year, and that were currently enrolled in classes with native English speakers. While the interviews conducted with these five participants were immeasurably helpful to me as I focused on the salient features of the experience of Chinese education, these interviews were neither coded nor analyzed.

In the end, the interview transcriptions of ten participants were coded inductively, and the themes and ideas of this study emerged from the data itself. I then turned to categorizing these codes into thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each quotation emerged from the data as emblematic of a larger theme.. These themes emerged after careful reading and rereading, and

coding, of my interview transcripts. Throughout the process of reading the raw interview data, and of reading the coded data, and then of categorizing these codes into themes, I asked "why" and "why not"—the essential questions of the problem posing process, and "so what?"—the ultimate question required of analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The process of finding these themes, a form of analyzing the data itself (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), was long and careful. After reading and rereading the transcripts of ten participants, and listening to the interviews conducted with an additional five participants, I began to make notes in the margins, perpetually asking myself, "what is this an example of?" In arranging my quotes, and in looking at the language of my participants, I began to realize that it was crucial that I did my best to stay out of the way of the words of my participants, and that, much like the student in China who wrote me a book of her own story, and the story of her country, and slipped it under my dorm room, I needed to listen, not talk. I worried that my voice would drown out the voices of my participants, and what they were saying. While I knew that, ultimately, I would never eliminate my own authorship, I began to search for a way to get as close to this as I possibly could, and I went back to what I knew about language and literature. I also turned to Eliot Eisner's claim that the "paradigmatic use of qualitative inquiry is found in the arts" (Eisner, 2002, p. 213).

Non-Fiction Monologues

As an undergraduate student, I majored in dramatic literature and playwriting. My fifteen years of work as a teacher of English and playwriting in secondary school has long had me searching for conflict, character, and story. In 1994, while an undergrad, I discovered the work of Anna Deveare Smith. Smith is an activist, a playwright, and an actress. She set out to write a series of plays, which she called *On the Road: A Search for American Character.* In this series,

Smith sought to develop "a radically new mode of theatrical representation" (Lyons & Lyons, 1994, p. 43) that challenges traditional forms of playwriting and "method" acting. Typically, Smith would interview participants who were involved in a critical incident or moment, and then she would perform segments of these interviews, interlacing "segments from these individual discourses into a sequence" (Lyons & Lyons, 1994, p. 44). The resulting "compound of statements" (Lyons & Lyons, 1994) provides an audience with the sense that the play, and its performance, is confronting "the social dynamics of the moment with some authenticity" (Lyons & Lyons, 1994, p. 44). Some of this authenticity is due to the fact that Smith does not write any connective tissue between these segments, and by refusing authorial commentary and personal statement she refuses to synthesize difference (Lyons & Lyons, 1994). Instead, Smith crafts her play as one creates a collage: her fragments of language are only brought together by the reader's awareness, and like collage, the fragments become more than the sum of their parts.

In *Fires in the Mirror* (1993), Smith talks about her journey to find American character, and to get to the heart of where character "lives." She maintains that every day we say things that are like poetry, and that getting at the heart of that is where character lives. Our character lives in our language and the revealing of our character is poetry. The fragments Smith presents become poems as she whittles them down, finds the essence of story and conflict in language, and in their marriage to the visual representation on the page, and these poems are then individual narratives which constitute the performance as a whole (Lyons & Lyons, 1994). In *Fires in the Mirror*, as asserted in the forward, Smith sets out to capture the natural literature of those she interviews and of the critical moment she endeavors to dramatize.

Play as Narrative Inquiry

As I sat with participants and listened to them talk, I began to think that their stories were their own natural literature and that collectively they were sharing the story of what it means to be an educational migrant from China, a group of pioneers at a critical moment in the educational history of China and the US. In 2004, I co-authored an article for *The English Journal*, asking high school students to capture the natural literature of a critical incident that impacted their daily lives. Ten years later, as I was sitting with almost one hundred hours of recordings of secondary school students, and almost two-hundred pages of transcripts, I thought about how to best represent the natural literature present in the words of my participants. I decided to partially employ the methods of Anna Deveare Smith, to borrow from her non-traditional method of playwriting, to extend the boundaries of narrative inquiry, and to present my findings dramatically in the form of a non-fiction, monologue-based play without any of my own connective tissue or authorial commentary.

This play, as it appears in this dissertation in chapters four and five is meant to be read, not performed. The quotes are offered in monologue form, and they take up purposeful space as they are transformed in the process of being included in a single aesthetic composition. The space created in the presentation allows for a backdrop on which readers may create awareness, and, like Smith's plays, are presented in this way to highlight the importance of subverting the normal way we view findings and are therefore seduced into a complicity with dominant and oppressive culture (Lyons & Lyons, 1994). In working to eliminate this, I have found that dramatic literature lends itself to the extension of narrative inquiry given that the invisibility of the playwright is a salient convention of dramatic writing.

It is imperative to note, however, my awareness that throughout the presentation of findings, I am invisible, yet I am simultaneously the single guiding hand of the construction of this data in print. Nonetheless, I am taking new and important measures in offering the natural literature of my participants at this critical moment, in considering my own authorship, and in creating the poetry, drama and significance of their story, and the larger implications of their meaning making. Simultaneously, I am exploring the implications and possibilities inherent in the position of my construction of the meaning-making of my participants.

Ethics

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To protect the identity of the participants, each chose pseudonyms, and all other details that could potentially reveal identity were deleted or replaced in interview transcriptions in order to ensure anonymity and work toward confidentiality. All school names were also removed.

Voluntary Participation

Participants came forth voluntarily and were notified that they may withdraw from the study at any time. I told them, in writing, that participating in this study, or declining to participate, would not have any consequences. Participants, who I had in the classroom at the time of data collection, were informed that their participation would not impact their grades, and all participants were informed that participating in this study would not impact their relationship with the school. All participants were notified that all data would be collected solely for the purpose of a possible contribution to the field of education. A number of sensitive issues came up throughout the data collection phase of this study. Encountering these issues, I discussed them at length with my dissertation chair, and we also discussed them with a number of leading scholars in the field of education and research in China.

Quality: Trustworthiness

Guba & Lincoln (1985; 1989) define four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are interconnected and essential to the reliability of a study and our need to take note of it. Researchers show and demonstrate their trustworthiness by explaining the process they underwent to document their study so that it may be duplicated, and so that a reader may understand the relationship between the data and the analysis offered by the study. The following paragraphs will outline the steps I took to work toward trustworthiness.

I disclosed the purpose of this study to all participants, and I made known my personal and professional connections to this work, so that participants would potentially understand not only the ethical risks involved in their participation, but the ways that my own bias might affect the outcomes of the study. All participants knew me as a teacher at their school, and some participants I had directly in class at the time of data collection. I shared with participants my own teaching ideologies and bias. Just as I disclosed the purpose of this study to all participants, it was important that I disclose that my role in the community may have an impact in some way on the quality of my data collection or analysis. It was important to me for participants to fully understand by own bias and ideas in order for me to work toward trustworthiness as a researcher. Most qualitative research does not seek to generalize from a sample to a population. Instead, we can present data in ways that enable readers to determine whether the findings of a study might be "transferable" to settings they are familiar with. This requires "thick description" (Geertz, 1995) which means that researchers quote liberally from the data and provide rich detail. I worked with a small, purposeful sample size, so as to focus on the details of their experience, allowing me to focus on how and why an experience was framed in a particular way, and for what audience. It is my hope that the thick description of this dissertation will be clear to readers,

as I worked to provide data that is quoted at length verbatim. While there may be "transferability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and others may learn from the experiences of these participants, this decision is entirely in the hands of those readers. Regardless, the participants for this study each had their own, unique experiences, and a desire to relate them.

Given the dynamic nature of story-telling, I reviewed the dependability of my transcriptions by comparing my transcripts with my tapes, listening to the tapes while reading the transcripts in order to check for accuracy. I asked participants frequent questions about what they said, and asked them to explain further any ideas or concepts I did not understand. I also asked participants to check transcriptions when I had questions, or needed more clarity.

Conclusion

This study contributes in meaningful ways to understanding the experience of Chinese nationals in US classrooms, enabling educators and policy-makers to better understand the impact of globalization on pedagogy. The gaps in the literature on the experiences of secondary school-age students coming to the US to study feeds into assumptive and misguided notions, part of the "xenophobic cancer" (Smith, 1993), around Asian scholarship in the US, and the reasons behind the consistently increasingly numbers of these students enrolling in US high schools. Our world is ever changing, and we must document the nuance of that changing experience before it is lost. I endeavor to write this story as a play—in the words of students, lending a stain to the silence.

Chapter Four—Findings, Discussion, and Analysis: Experience and Understanding

Chinese students who study in US classrooms have stories of their own. Stories they want to share. It was always striking to me that each time I turned on my handheld, digital recorder, and asked a question, and stopped talking myself—and really, really listened, my participants spoke for hours. Some of these students I have had in class, some of them I have not, and some of them I may get the chance to teach in the future. But the experience of teaching Chinese nationals in my English classroom in the US has been one in which I was constantly asking, and in some cases, cajoling, individual Chinese students to raise their hands to participate. While some students would talk in my class on a daily basis, and find me after class, and during breaks, and shower me with question-asking emails, most students rarely, if ever, participated in class discussion with frequency. Yet, when I turned on the recorder for this study, all students talked, at length.

For this study, a study they all knew was my dissertation, participants shared their stories with terrific candor, honesty, bravery, and detail. I began to wonder if it was the fact that someone was really paying attention, or if it was because they were asked to talk about themselves and their school experiences, and were given the time and space to do so, without interruption, and at length. Was it the nature of the question? Was it the act of listening? Was it the study they now knew they were part of? Was it the fact that we were one on one, and without the stigma of the classroom, and the lack of pressure that comes with speaking (in English) in front of large groups? I am not sure. But to honor their words, and to encourage readers of this study to also really listen, I will present the following findings in long block quotes taken from the interview transcripts—quotes which by volume and length hope to capture the rich detail of

the experience and understanding of my participants. As the purpose of this chapter is to present and organize the data in a coherent way, and in a way that really allows it to speak for itself, I am trying to eliminate my own narration as much as possible.

The following two chapters will present a series of block quotes/monologues from my participants, followed by more thorough discussion and analysis. These will be broken down into two categories: Experience and Understanding in Two Cultures (Chapter 4); Globalization and Pedagogical Change (Chapter 5). A full list of participants, their age and gender appear as Personae in Table 2, before the introduction of the first grouping of block quotes/monologues. Personae, a term used in playwriting has interesting significance and consequence here. Those listed in Personae are the participants in this study, and together, and as individuals, their personae takes up the discourse and are at the heart of this study, much like characters would in a play. The list of personae in this study is both a methodological and analytical position. Therefore, I have consciously chosen to list participants here in the findings, as opposed to in the previous chapter.

Following an introduction, each block quote/monologue will also appear on a single page—again as an act of honoring and really listening to, and paying attention to, the words of the participants of this study. All block quotes/monologues will also be preceded by the name of the participant by pseudonym and will be grouped by emergent theme, and organized numerically, as you would a play with acts and scenes—reminding the reader that what they are reading are a series of separate "scenes" which work together to tell a story. In keeping with the work of Anna Deveare Smith (1993) each quote will also be offered with line breaks to reflect the natural language, pauses, and speech patterns of each participant. It is my hope that is in this way that I will allow my participants to better inhabit their words. I hope to capture the character

of my participants in their own words, and that their words interlaced together create their natural literature. Therefore, block quotes/monologues have been categorized around the convergence of themes that they represent and assembled to help tell the story of this study's participants. In writing interview data as a play and in allowing participants to emerge here as characters, I am engaging with Eisner's notion of an educational imagination (2002) that is artistic, and that takes up the lens of a poet, the vision of an artist. Here we will begin to talk about what happens as a result. By removing my own authorial commentary, scholars are left questioning the purpose of what I am saying and the validity of my voice--this is because of our absolute complicity with dominant and oppressive cultures (Lyons & Lyons, 1994). To address this, the findings will be followed by a discussion section which explains how the individual block quotes/monologues are representative of a larger whole, and then an analysis section that will address what we might learn in a critique and study of that whole, and as we consider how these findings further illuminate the literature that was discussed in chapter 2.

Table 2. Personae

Meng, 16 year-old, female

Yu, 16 year-old, female

Jamie, 18 year-old, female

Sylvia, 18 year-old, female

Dylan, 16 year-old, female

Kieran, 17 year-old, male

Melody, 15 year-old, female

Veronica, 16 year-old, female

Li, 16 year-old, male

Jackie, 18 year-old, female

I. Influence

In this section, quotes/monologues will fall under the following larger themes: *Change, Busy Parents, Fitting In*, and *Parental Expectation.* Together, these themes illuminate the powerful motivators that influence the decision to study in the US, and inform this experience for Chinese students.

In creating a piece that would use monologues to paint a picture comprised of small parts which together suggest a larger whole (Lyons & Lyons, 1994), I wanted to start with a sense of setting. By setting, I mean China—the country that seems to really ground this work. However, starting in China, means starting at the epicenter of change, and consequently, the epicenter of possibility for the manifestation of our new intercultural understanding, an integral nexus of globalization and pedagogy (Zhou, 2014), the frontier on which it hangs (Pine, 2012), an ever-changing China (Pepper, 1996).

In *Change*, Jackie and Jamie talk about how this change impacted their education, and their understanding of a changing culture, history, and their place in it. Veronica, Meng, and Jackie in *Busy Parents* discuss how the economic growth of China informed their early experiences with boarding school, and in *Parental Expectation*, Dylan, Jamie, Sylvia and Kieran discuss the expectations they say their parents have for them (hard work toward absolute perfection) and the attention they receive from their parents as a result. They also discuss how this is changing, suggesting that educational change globally is manifested in the increasing level of home work that students are expected to commit to over three generations—we may claim this is a direct result of the marketization of education and our increasingly standardized and test-driven global landscape (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003). Regardless, the pressure students' experience to take up the specific career paths laid out by their parents is striking, especially as students discuss the very specific job-related

expectations their parents have for them throughout their earliest experiences with school. In some cases, this causes serious tension.

In *Fitting In,* Kieran, Dylan, and Jackie talk about the tensions they experience with their parents, and with what they perceive as the cultural norms of China around sex and gender, and even the purpose of art in high school. These ideas come together to set the scene—this is what influences these students and is part of the push to leave China (Maazzorl & Soutar, 2001) and to come to the United States to attend high school (TABS, 2012).

I.i. Change

Jackie

My dad was in the city,

like everyone else you go to elementary, middle, high school and then college.

He lives in the city the whole time.

Quite different for my mom, because she travelled around a lot. She actually...

she, I don't know if she finished elementary in [coastal China] or not.

But she moved 3 provinces north to the north part of China, the upper part. Then she moved back, then to [a northern coastal] Province.

Lived there for 4 years and then back to [coastal city], then she got into university.

I don't know a whole lot about that.

Do you know like sometimes they send....well during the Cultural Revolution they sent all the scholars to the countryside to be educated.

I think that's part of it.

Jamie

When she was little, they saw the Cultural Revolution.

My grandma had to attend the lectures about communism.

My grandma had to live outside of the house to attend the lectures for like 3 days. She couldn't be at home to look after my mom.

That's what my mom remembers about the Cultural Revolution.

There's a time when Mao died, people were forced to cry.

If you didn't cry, you were gonna get bullied or something.

My mom told me she was watching a documentary about Mao in an open outside theater, everyone had to attend.

That was her first time seeing foreigners, and she wanted to laugh for one reason. She had to pretend to cry though.

It's like you have to cry, no matter if you loved him or not.

For my grandma's family, they were once landlords.

Somebody got killed in the family during the Cultural Revolution, so I don't think they like communism much.

My grandma.

I.ii. Busy Parents

Veronica

My parents were busy, it was the beginning of their business.

So they put me in boarding school, and I was 3 years old when I started kindergarten.

I went home 3 times a week for the first year, but the later years I only went home on Friday.

For the later years too, I went home Friday-Sunday.

I didn't really mind.

It wasn't normal, there were a lot of day schools.

I was too young to go to the school in the center of [coastal city].

So I went to the boarding schools on the outskirts of the city.

The parents can't pick you up from that far distance.

Meng

My dad worked and was really busy,

and my mom's company wanted her to move to another city to work.

So my mom took me to that city.

So my two kindergartens were in that city, which was [inland city].

When I was 6, I was supposed to go to elementary school, but my mom was still in [inland city].

The company wanted my mom to come back, and my dad was still really busy.

My parents thought that the education wasn't as good in [inland city], so they wanted me to come back to [another inland city] to go to school.

But nobody could take care of me.

My grandparents are all in my hometown, so there's nobody to take care of me.

So my parents sent me to an elementary boarding school, I was 6.

I remember the first and second day there, I really missed my parents, family and friends.

I pretended to have a really bad stomachache, and I hoped my dad could come to pick me up.

He didn't come.

He called one of his friends to pick me up and take me to a really good dinner.

After that I was good, I went back to school.

One month later, I was really used to the boarding school life.

Jackie

My mom was really busy.

Both my parents had their work and my mom used to travel around the world a lot.

So neither of them had time to take care of me.

My home is kinda far away from there.

That was close to my dad's office, but they couldn't pick me up every day. Not that they couldn't pick me up every day, but they just somehow decided to keep me there.

I.iii. Parental Expectation

Dylan

All traditional parents hope their children have a good future, but the way they want that future differs.

Chinese parents force us to study.

My mom says just try your best. “I know you have the ability to do this well, so why don't you just do it well?

You can’t get an A-plus so why an A-minus?”

My dad always says just be a good person,

he cares more about morals.

Jamie

My sister went to a summer camp in America.

She stayed with a host family for two months.

She thought the people were nice, and the host family was super nice to her.

She got to go to DisneyWorld and things like that.

There's a child in their family who was in middle school, and I remember my sister telling me that the kid had a play in the school and the family would all go.

They'd bring the grandparents, the uncles, everyone's attending the play.

They like emphasized things that aren't emphasized in China.

Like everything you do, you get praise and recognition in your family.

Not like in China, where if you're interested in plays then the parents and family aren't so proud of you.

I feel like the Chinese parents are always picky with their kids, and they always compare their kids to the most successful peers.

My mom's pretty picky all the time about grades,

how I look,

how I dress.

She wants me to be perfect.

She's like, if you're really important role in the play and are really good at acting, then she'd go.

But if you're like a little nothing role,

then what's the point.

Sylvia

If you only do homework and don't do extra stuff, you won't score well [in China].

If I'm lazy and I only do stuff that the teacher will check, then that's super lazy. Just doing your homework.

But there are still some boys who only do homework and their grades aren't that good.

Most parents will ask their children to do extra work.

When my parents were young, they only did homework.

But they realize it's different now,

their children have to do extra stuff.

Kieran

It’s weird because they say they are happy as long as I'm happy and can make a living.

So I said I want to go to art school,

I'm not going to starve myself.

They still said to go do business, or do marketing.

I don't really picture a successful or failure version of myself.

I don't know where I'm going in the next few years.

I.iv. Fitting In

Kieran

My reason is, before I came to America, me and my parents didn't have a good relationship.

I was facing high school entrance exam, and that's a really big thing at the school I was at. It's a high cutoff rate, only the top 10% of middle school students can get in to the high school.

If I go to the high school, it's almost guaranteed that you go to college in America or Britain.

I know what I'm going to do.

I can get a good score, but I don't want to.

I'm more like the rebel person.

I don't know the reason why I didn't, but I didn't like the idea of going to that school.

We didn't have a good relationship back then, because my dad was always working.

He didn't care about my score, and my mom did all this extracurricular stuff. We didn't have a good relationship because my scores weren't the best.

So when they mentioned going to America for high school, I was like ok. …

They were still worried that I wouldn't have good self-management in America, like I couldn't take care of myself.

I was like I'm done with them,

I don't want to see you and I'll see how it goes.

Dylan

We had a girl named [Chinese student--name omitted][4].

She's in [name omitted] School, in [the east coast] now.

We used to be really good friends, kind of like cousins but not really.

In China, those kinds of relationships are complicated.

Really far off cousins.

I think that the Chinese system is more suitable for her.

I came here last year as a freshman, and she was already a sophomore since last year.

She didn't go back to China during her whole freshman year, and she changed a lot.

First, when she first came to US school, we have lots of Asian and Chinese people in our school.

She's an only child, so she may have had bad character habits.

She doesn't have a lot of Chinese friends in our school, they kind of bully her and don't talk to her.

Then she started hanging out with American students.

It's really hard for Asians to really stay in American social groups, so she started hanging out with some friends who are not in our school.

Most of them are from college around [US High school], or in [Midwestern US city].

[4] Rather than replace this name with a pseudonym, I have chosen to use ”name omitted” to mirror the lack of personhood that gay students are often ascribed in secondary schools by their peers, their schools, and often by their own families and society at large. Furthermore, when Chinese students study English in China, beginning in elementary school, they pick English names, or have English names assigned to them. At the US high school these participants attended, students often pick new names, or stick with the same name they used in English class in China, or some keep their Chinese names. All of these factors made choosing pseudonyms difficult, and I opted, instead, for using “name omitted” in virtually every instance where a person’s name was mentioned by participants. I also did this for the names of American teachers or students that participants mentioned.

Those college students made her change a lot.

She told everyone she was a homosexual, but she's not.

She thinks it's fashionable to be a homosexual.

She thinks she'll become popular, that's why she said she is bisexual or homosexual and started dating a girl from [US college--name omitted].

Her values changed so much, just because she studied here.

Her parents didn't communicate to her in time, and she didn't go back to China to her home, so her parents didn't know anything about her.

She changed her grades and her email address, and locked her parents out of the school account.

This kind of girl has to stay in the Chinese education system.

She has to study,

she needs to be taught what is right and wrong.

She doesn't have the ability to know what is right and what is wrong.

It's not only about being gay, it's about her wanting to be popular.

She does it to hang out, because she doesn't have friends.

It's complicated, it's not about the US system.

Chinese education at first gave her too much pressure.

When she came to a totally different place with a lot of freedom, she started getting out of control.

She couldn't get used to a different place. She used the freedom to do what's not allowed in China.

She thinks that's freedom, but it's really not.

What China doesn't allow you to do, it's the same here.

It's just people trust you more in America.

Jackie

Yeah, so my grandpa is a scientist.

He's actually an engineer.

He does research for colleges. It's more like about electromagnetic fields.

I don't know a lot about it because he died when I was five.

My dad did the same thing, but more into telecommunications. And the business side of it.

For me, it's like yeah well they've done it.

I like it as well,

I don't know where I get that.

Dylan

For Chinese students, we choose our major by like “Do we have a future? Do parents support us? Is it easy to find a job in this?”

The last consideration is if you like it.

My mom kind of is like “If you want to study History, that's fine, but you have to double-major in business in college.

Study business and I'll give you permission to study history.”

I'm like this is just college, and you're doing business with me.

Kieran

It's weird because they say they are happy as long as I'm happy and can make a living.

So I said I want to go to art school.

I'm not going to starve myself.

They still said to go do business or marketing.

Dylan

Yeah, for people studying here, some are rich and spoiled kids who can't survive in Chinese education system.

Their parents send them here, “Stay here and enjoy life. I don't care what college you go to, just go to college and study here.”

Not so much at our school though. But, I have these kinds of friends, though.

Their parents don't care about grades, just enjoy life. When you graduate, the company is yours.

Most students here are looked at as rich because they have money to come here.

Some students here still come from good high school and bad high school.

People are competitive.

Most parents send the students here so they can get to a Top 13 university,

the ones that Chinese people have heard about.

Like you want me to be at Harvard in the future?

Not possible.

Discussion: Influence

This study seems to track a change in the educational histories and possibilities for the families of all those who participated in this study. Many participants like Jackie and Jamie, discussed parents and grandparents and their relationship with communism, Mao Zedong, and the Cultural Revolution in China. This was contextualized within the story of their parents' education, why their parents or grandparents had to move and change schools, or why they did not. Participants, many of whom are the grandsons and granddaughters of landlords and scholars, discussed grandparents needing to leave, and parents who saw the extended absence of their own parents. As Jackie says, "they sent all the scholars to the countryside to be educated." Jamie also spoke about her parents and her grandparents' relationship to and personal history with communism. This seemed to be part of her sharing ways that she saw political influence in both school and everyday life. These generational experiences influenced participants. As Jamie says, "somebody got killed in the family during the Cultural Revolution," while others stridently expressed that their parents were government officials. But for each participant, it seems that each had their own, unique story of how their parents and grandparents worked together over the last forty years to be able to afford, both economically, and politically, to send their children to the US to school. Collectively, these stories document a changing China, a changing perception of the purpose and role of education, and a broadening of the conception of where in the world education can occur.

Participants discussed their busy parents and the situations which brought many of them to start boarding school very early, or to live with grandparents, or in multiple homes in order to be cared for and to attend school. For over half of the participants, boarding pre-school was a significant alternative for the Chinese family. Many participants had parents who had to "travel

the world" or parents who were "busy" (a word used by virtually every participant when describing their parents) fostering businesses, or working for major, emerging Chinese and Western companies in China, and in many cases, ushering in China's new open economy and financial boom. Veronica, Meng, and Jackie discuss this. Yet, the hard work participants saw their parents commit to was referenced by each participant—this suggested the tremendous influence it had on them. As children, many participants seemed to have parents who were working in different cities. Some participants lived with grandparents in villages while their parents worked in major business cities of various provinces, and some parents came to work in coastal cities or industrial and business centers. Many participants discussed very close relationships with their grandparents. Some participants, like Veronica, even lived with their parents in a major coastal city, but as it expanded, a daily commute proved impossible for her parents to pick her up each day. Some participants discussed how they came home on the weekends, and others did not. Most participants said two things about this experience, as noted by Meng, "I really missed my parents" and "I was really used to the boarding school life." It seems that most told the same story here, that they were very young, and it was frightening at first, but that very quickly they adjusted, and that ultimately, they look back on boarding school life with fondness. For many, the result of the long days and nights of boarding pre-K, kindergarten, and elementary schools helped to build a sense of family and community at the schools, one the participants greatly enjoyed, over time.

The participants could each offer a conception of the expectations of what they considered to be a Chinese "traditional parent"—an expectation to do things well, or as Jamie says, "to be perfect"—an example of this sort of expectation is seen in Jamie recounts her amazement that a whole family would turn out to see a family member in a school play, whereas

she would be expected to be "good at acting" or an "important role" before she could expect the same sort of support or attention. Sylvia discusses how this parental influence affects her work in school, as she recounts how, as did many participants, that while parents did not have the same pressure on schoolwork as their children do now, the reality today is that "extra work," or homework done beyond what is required by school, is a current parental, and school-based expectation.

This parental pressure may also be the reason some participants wanted to come to the US—as an act of social rebellion, or to get away from parents, and the pressure and power they exert. Some participants discussed the ways they, or their peers, seemed to not fit into the cultural logic of their parents, their schools in China, or Chinese society. Some participants, like Kieran, discussed the toll that success or failure in school seemed to take on their family, and that given the parental pressure to get into a top high school, some choose to rebel. Other participants, like Dylan, discussed peers who they believed were in active rebellion of not only their parents' control, but of racial, class, and gender norms found in the Chinese culture itself. For some participants, these "rebels" "should stay in the Chinese education system" and that "freedom" of study in the US had resulted in instances of false and forced assimilation, resulting in a compromised identity. But for others, this freedom allowed for the ability for self-expression and the exploration of identity.

Parental influence extends to the pressure parents put on their children as they study in the West and central to the expectation parents had for participants was admission to top US colleges. For virtually all participants, their parents expected that they try to gain admission to a "top 13 University,"—or as Dylan suggests, "the ones [universities] that Chinese people have heard about." However, across the board, participants did experience parents who wanted them

to be happy, and who had happiness as a primary concern. Nonetheless, while participants discussed colleagues who were wealthy, and who were bound to inherit family businesses, and therefore had little academic pressure, most suggested that this was not the case for them, that they were expected to work tremendously hard and get into the best possible school, ideally, "Harvard."

Participants perceived that parents also influenced the selection of courses of study in college and that they only supported majors that would yield tremendous job security—participants discussed business and marketing as a frequent parental choice of major. Some participants, like Kieran, discussed parents who cared that their children were both doing well, and were happy—but this happiness was contingent upon job security, or as Kieran says, "I want to go to Art school…they still said to go to business"—this push toward job security, and away from the study of art and liberal arts, seemed common for most participants. As Dylan says, "If you want to study History, that's fine, but you have to double major in business in college." It may be suggested that parents, all of whom have seen tremendous growth and change in China, feel pressured themselves to ensure that their children can continue this growth, or can continue the lifestyle in which they are now accustom, and which their parents, as children, never knew.

Analysis: Influence

Traditional schooling in China and the various reforms that have been taken up in Chinese education over time may very well reflect both a long history of refuting Western influence, and of embracing it (Pepper, 1996; Keay, 2009). Consequently, the participants in this study have grown accustom to living simultaneously with both the notion of refuting and embracing Western influence, and they are carrying this forward into their ever increasing experience with education while in the US. Here, they are able to both openly criticize

capitalism and communism, while updating Facebook and posting videos to YouTube (all censored in mainland China).[5] Here, Chinese students in the US have influence and are influenced. This is important as they become change agents--as evidenced by the long and continued (ICE, 2014) history of tightening and loosening educational mobility (Pepper, 1996; Zhao, 2014)—Chinese students in the US, historically, are a group that has been monitored and controlled.

Change has been the constant of the last thirty years of Chinese history. As participants were able to recount the rapid change they have seen in their lifetime, it is useful to note that they are as young as fourteen. In fourteen years they saw cities explode to the point that dropping off a child on one side of the city meant a boarding experience might be necessary. Therefore, it may be surmised that China has every reason to assume that massive change could continue—and they are likely to ask who should be at the forefront of ushering in that change. Their school reform policies (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2001, 2012) reflect these changes—controlling and (re)shaping the idea of what a student needs to know as a Chinese citizen. China is keenly aware of what change is possible, and they are right to continue to pay attention to the educational mobility of its citizens.

For centuries in China there is a cultural significance to the idea that if you work hard you will surely succeed, and a cultural significance to the idea that if you do not succeed it is because you did not work hard enough. It may seem that traditional teaching methods perpetuate this (Zhao, 2014). The push back here is that this is not always true—these meritocratic assumptions benefit China's wealthiest classes (Postiglione, 2006). Furthermore, even among the wealthiest, one can work hard, and still not succeed—all tests given in China are

[5] Whether or not they are doing these things, however, is the subject for other research.

about right answers, and top scores, and ultimately, rank, as they function to sort the top from the bottom. With this, perceived social mobility is tied to those who get the top test scores, and get into the top schools, and those that cannot. Again, this reinscribes China's long history of testing, and is connected to its imperialist roots, where tests are used to sort out the top few from the many (Pepper, 1996; Keay, 2009).

The participants in this study are the benefactors of the meritocratic myth of communist China: their parents worked hard, and continue to work hard, and they are where they are because of that—hard work. We know this is not true--clearly rural Chinese students work hard, and seem to succeed at gaining admission to top schools and securing top jobs in global markets far less (Che, 2010). In this way, the idiom in the title of this dissertation is taken up: a young idler, an old beggar. If you do nothing with your time as a young person, you will be nothing as an old person. This logic plays into the importance of school.

The younger school starts, the better you are able to focus on the goal of attainment in school, and the harder you are therefore able to work at that goal over time. Boarding school at two years old, therefore, makes sense. Boarding school has great benefits—a student is immersed in the life of a student, consequently forming a community of scholars with similar needs and desires is desirable for the hard work of school. The benefit of these early boarding experiences is something that US educators might consider, as community is a construction so greatly missing from US education today (Giroux, 2012). Indeed, we are often too quick to be skeptical of young students at boarding schools, but we must reconsider the powerful potential of the community connections that form, as was discussed here by participants with early boarding school experience.

Within this community, students think the harder they study, the more they will yield. Long nights and hard days at desks and in front of screens are the required toil for a good life. These ideas are extended to study in the West--that the on-slot of isolation, sadness, loneliness, or homesickness is a necessary element in the struggle for success (Zhou, 2014). The absence of clear direction and clear paths toward this hard work, and the lack of clear learning goals in Western classrooms, stymies those who believe that hard work is the clear path to success. This is part of the transitional struggle for Chinese nationals in US classrooms.

We see the attendant discourse of pedagogy in the words of the participants and what influences their understanding and experience of school manifested in the influences they experience and the ways they are understood (Alexander, 2009). Throughout all of this we see the common influence of parental pressure. Parental expectation seems to extend to study in US high schools and colleges—it is not just where you study, but what you study. For upwardly mobile parents, Harvard University is the top choice—the pinnacle of success. Educational mobility becomes connected to gaming one's chances to be put in best proximity for admission to Harvard—what influences that push is related to the narrow construction of higher education that has come as a result of a convergence around a preoccupation with Western education (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000) and the effects of a push toward not only mass university education (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000) but top-rated university education.

While in the US, the role of public ranking seems to disappear in favor of more private ranking systems, but both cultures are held to high stakes tests for admission to US colleges, like Harvard, and parents are, in the US and China, playing the role of academic coach/cheerleader/pit boss in order to get their students enrolled. Parents are also controlling a student's choice of study while at these schools; after all, if school success is tied to work ethic,

the study of anything is possible, regardless of interest. However, Chinese parents and their children experience tension as they co-negotiate a purpose for school and the ultimate course that education will take up in the US and why.

For all teenagers, fitting in, and the need for acceptance is common. A pull factor (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001) for students who want to strike out, look, act, or be different than the cultural norm they perceive in China may be the improved tolerance for difference in US schools. This is a luxury afforded by few Chinese (Postiglione, 2006), but for those that can afford it, the US offers the chance to study openly, and to make a claim for equity in difference. We may make the claim that homosexual students are better off in the US than they are in China if they intend on living openly as a homosexual. But this is just one facet of the multi-faceted ways that students who want to express difference from the cultural norm in China are better off studying in the US. While I am not suggesting that their experience is perfect, I am suggesting that it is important and powerful that US educators consider how pivotal they are in shaping what has become the educational system for the different, as well as the educational system for the possibility of the arts. Given the more recent cutbacks in programming and funding for the arts in the US (Giroux, 2012), an acknowledgement of the importance of art education for Chinese nationals in the US is crucial.

II. The Purpose of School

This section takes up the change participants experienced in the purpose of school from elementary to middle school as students in China and then in US high school classrooms. All participants discussed fond aspects of elementary school life and the sudden seriousness of school as they moved on to middle school. Participants recall the purpose of middle school as it served to prepare then to take the *zhongkao* (high school entrance exam) and how this exam kept

many of them from the ability to continue their more student-driven interests, such as art, sports, and hobbies. Most participants discussed the feeling of mandatory sameness, wearing the same school uniform, and doing the same schoolyard exercise as a further extension of the restriction of individuality they felt were suddenly placed on them. Participants also discussed the importance of math study in *zhongkao* preparation, and how it often became the purpose of school itself.

In addition, participants talked about the purpose of Chinese education in instilling traditional ideas, values, and manners. They went on to discuss curriculum in the US that discusses race, class and gender issues, all topics that they had never openly discussed in their Chinese classrooms. Some viewed these ideas as tools for living in a diverse society, ways to enhance your character, leading participants to further consider the purpose of school and the preparation of individuals for the society in which they live. In this section, findings will be organized around the following themes: *Change in Junior High, Sameness, Traditions and Manners,* and *Race, Class and Gender in the US*. These themes work together to illuminate the changes participants have experienced n the purpose of school in two cultures.

Deliberately, the section begins with *Change in Junior High*, as Sylvia and Veronica take up how standardized tests in junior high (Zhong & Yang, 2002) in China began to erode the joy and freedom they experienced as elementary school students. This section leads up to Jamie and Li, in *Sameness*, who discuss the rules and regulations they faced around personal expression, and the various expressions of conformity that they experienced as central to their junior high school education (Pepper, 1996; Zhao, 2014). In *Practice*, Jackie discusses how math practice achieves math success, and she discusses the pivotal role of math, and consequently, math practice, to Chinese culture and the logic of success in China. But in *Traditions and Manners*,

Yu and Jackie discuss how certain teachers privileged the teaching of Chinese traditions and manners over test preparation, suggesting that there is variance to an understanding of the purpose of school for Chinese teachers and students, and that to ascribe the teaching of Chinese teachers to solely preparation for tests is erroneous. Finally, in *Race, Class, and Gender in the US and China*, Meng discusses her comparative reactions to the study of these ideas in two cultures, and she discusses how the US teaches ideas and concepts she had previously never considered in her own culture.

II.i. Change in Junior High

Sylvia

So, the elementary school was so different from junior high school.

Starting in junior high, everyone just fights.

In elementary it wasn't that hard. I was a good student.

I don't know how to say it in English, but I was the leader in the classroom.

I loved that six years, I did everything I wanted.

It was the best six years when I was in school.

I can try everything.

Our school had dance class, so I went to dance class every day.

Everyone liked me, I was popular and my grades weren't like the top ones but they were top five.

So that was great.

But then, things just changed in junior high school.

Veronica

I think the critical thinking skills are cliché,

everybody says that,

all those things are just gone in China.

The teachers encouraged us to memorize the whole essay so we could use it.

It's not like plagiarism, but sometimes I read the essay off the students that were the best in the class. And I memorized it and copied it to my test to get good grades.

A lot of times it's just memorizing, memorizing, memorizing.

The teacher taught you how to do it, but it's still memorizing the format of everything.

For example, you [teacher in the US] don't give us the format then I summarize the format for myself because that's the way I learned for the last five years.

You give me the open ideas, but I still need to have a rule.

We learned to take notes for everything there too, every word was useful.

But here, if I did that in like [name omitted]'s class, I'd be overwhelmed and wouldn't know what to write.

Efficiency problems. Before, the teacher gave us the work and we did it and got the grades.

Here, you can get the work done in ten minutes, but you have to learn to study by yourself.

I need to improve that.

Chinese education didn't teach flexibility, open thought, critical thinking.

I learned how to finish work in China in a certain period of time, but that's not necessarily efficient.

You'd stay up till 5 am doing work and nobody cares.

In fact, the principal said once that you shouldn't go to bed at 9 pm because then you'll be nothing.

There's just a lot of pressure.

Especially in middle school, the specialties and advantages....

like me I can play piano and I played for eight years.

I stopped that for five years.

They don't really want you to do that [piano].

II.ii. Sameness

Jamie

Do you know what the uniforms in China look like?

It's like sports attire, they have those jackets. Like warm-ups.

They just make you look tired and not like teenagers, they make you look old.

And not nice, not pretty.

It's worse for girls, it covers everything.

Like your body and legs.

It's about everyone looking the same, even if you're super pretty or sexy.

You have to cover up.

There's a kind of equality here, everyone's ugly in the suit (laughs).

In my school, we're not even allowed to bring electronic devices to school because we are supposed to be equal.

We come from different economic backgrounds, so they don't want like one person coming with the new iPhone 6 while somebody else has like an old Nokia.

So they kind of have like compulsory equality at my school.

Li

In China, like there's a morning break and everyone goes to the playground to exercise as a whole school.

I don't know of anything like that in the US, but it's every day in China.

Everyone has to do the same thing, it's pretty boring.

It's like a policy of the government, I'm not sure.

It's kind of funny.

If a foreigner visits Chinese school, it's the morning and everybody runs to the playground to exercise, and you have to or want to do it well.

I don't know how you'd feel, but I think that's different than the US.

Enforced group exercise.

Imagine 2000 people on the playground doing the same stuff,

quite different than the US.

II.iii. Practice

Jackie

I don't know [laughs].

We just practice more than others. It's not something magical.

We're under pressure so we practice more…

First, practicing more leads you to be a good math student.

Math is more like you need to know the basics well in order to learn more sophisticated and complex things.

All based on the basics, so when you practice the basics more then you can better learn calculus and stuff as a high school student--you have a test every Friday and three or five sheets of practice problems every half a week,

you just get used to it.

You have to do it over and over again, so when you start your task you know what to do when you see a problem.

It's more like you're a robot, not a robot, not in a critical way.

Not criticizing this idea, but you're going through a detailed procedure on how to do this.

They [students] spend their weekends in classes or tutors, they spend more time on it. And time kind of equals quantity, especially in doing math problems.

They just repeat it, and that's the cycle. If you want to think about it logically.

Culturally, there's a whole system where everything is in numbers.

There are certain people in China who are good in math, and others bad in math.

It's not like they are all robots who are good at math, they have different genes.

But people practice more so they tend to do better in math.

zhongkao is like this, this number system.

So that's how middle school does it.

II.iv. Traditions and Manners

Yu

They think the most important thing isn't the grades, but more that you're polite to older people and how you respect the traditional ideas.

I don't really know about Buddhism, or traditional ideas, but for example when you sit at a roundtable you have to wait for all the older people to sit down before you sit down.

You have to stand 'til they sit.

When there's a plate, you can't be the first to take it. You wait and go around the table, and all the older people or the guests take the food and then you take.

You are in charge of taking all the bowls and chopsticks from the kitchen to the table when someone visits you, that's the kids' job.

You are supposed to clean up your own stuff after you eat.

Manners.

Jackie

My robotics teacher [in China],

he didn't really teach a lot about magnets--

or how the structures all worked and how to build robots.

Instead he teaches about how to be polite, how to talk to people. He teaches a lot of traditions,

not rules but like manners.

How to respect people.

Because there is a difference between traditional Chinese manners and the global.

For example, a traditional Chinese manner is not to stick chopsticks into a bowl of rice.

That means like your tomb, it represents dead people.

You can't point chopsticks at people.

You can't interrupt people, which applies to everyone everywhere.

No interrupting, especially older people talking.

Also, just how to respect the elders, which plays a big part in China.

At the same time, seniority is also part of the culture here. [the US].

II.v. Race, Class and Gender in China and the US

Meng

When I came to the US, I found they focus on racism and gender equality, and LGBTQ stuff.

In China, I'd never seen that stuff.

No one talks about racists,

maybe because we only have Asians in school.

But nobody talks about gender equality.

I just thought girls and boys, but I never thought about how we aren't equal.

When I came here, people said “Sometimes males are better than females.” So I thought about it sometimes, but in China I never thought about it.

Also in China, the LGBTQ.

In China, we don't really have like bi or homosexual.

People feel shame for those people.

We never talk about it or mention it, and if you do mention we shame them.

Some things I learned here, we never talked about in China.

But here we talk about that.

It teaches about human rights, and how to be in the society.

How to be a member of the society.

Discussion: The Purpose of School

Middle school marked a change for all participants. Overall, each participant described their elementary school life as one of fun, one of care-free happiness, of games, and of activities. They felt valued—in the many ways that were of value to them as individuals, and reported that they were allowed to pursue their own passions and interests. Participants all talked of how these passions and interests—from robotics, to school governance, to dance, to fashion, had to stop as they became middle school students. Again, and again, the *zhongkao*, the Chinese high school entrance exam, was cited by participants as exactly what made middle school so distinct from elementary school.

The *zhongkao* determined high school entrance. This exam was the single event driving the entire focus of middle school life, as each participant discussed their experiences with being prepared to take it as students in China. It is significant that not a single participant had a different story. All the participants recalled how their elementary school life was entirely different than their middle school life, and that the sole purpose of their lives as middle school students was to prepare for the *zhongkao*. With this change in the purpose of school, came stories of how this single focus affected day to day learning. Participants discussed that they needed to become efficient learners, a concept that will be taken up later in this chapter, who were skilled at knowing what to study, and what to not study, and when. They suggested that this became the new purpose of school—to be students efficiently and diligently preparing for the *zhongkao*.

All participants discussed how school became about control and conformity. Jamie's example explains her reaction to wearing the mandatory school uniform of her Chinese middle school—a very common feature of Chinese school life. Li also talks about middle school group

exercise and other instances of "government policy" dictating school life and requiring that "everyone has to do the same thing." These examples may speak to the purpose of Chinese education—to create a society, to create a healthy society, to create an equal society.

At times, for most participants, the purpose of school seemed tied to Math, and to the ability to practice, and to memorize—all skills which aid the study of math. As Jamie says, "practicing more leads you to be a good math student." At the heart of math study was practice, and participants asserted that there was no secret to studying math other than practice, practice, and more practice. Consequently, they shared stories of math practice, and these stories seemed to suggest that in some ways, for some Chinese students, the purpose of school itself was tied to math practice. Participants also suggested that this was in keeping with cultural logic that math study is logical, that "there is a whole system where everything is in numbers"—including the results of the *zhongkao* o itself. Participants discussed how the purpose of school was to secure a top score on weekly tests, mid-terms, finals and finally, the *zhongkao*, and that once they entered high school the purpose of school would shift to getting a top score on the *gaokao*, or college entrance exam, and that all of this was achieved through hard work and lots of practice—especially in Math, which they described as the subject at the epicenter of it all.

For a few participants, certain teachers taught and imparted lessons in a way that made them think that the purpose of school was to pass on traditional Chinese values and manners. Most participants would discuss these ideas only briefly, and then insist they knew nothing of them, only to go on and list what they are, and what they learned about them. All participants discussed having respect for elders, and valuing elders as one important, and highly stressed value. For some, the purpose of school wasn't just about grades and getting a stop score on the *zhongkao*, it was also about these values, as well as certain traditions and manners in Chinese

culture, and learning rules for these traditional discourses. It is interesting to note that in the following chapter, participants talk about the difficulty of gaining the approval of their grandparents when deciding to study abroad—another example of Chinese traditions and values at play in sense-making.

For all participants, as exemplified by Meng, learning about race, class, and issues around gender identity, equity, and equality were entirely new concepts they were introduced to in the US. For the participants, going to an international school in the US meant frequently experiencing lessons around these idea—ideas that had never been a part of their curriculum in China. Most participants suggested that beyond grades, these ideas, or how to live with multiculturalism and diversity, were specifically taught in their US classrooms and were part of what they perceived as the purpose of school in the US. This may be because teachers never saw the need for it in their more monolithic Chinese classrooms, or because it was not part of the *zhongkao* -driven middle school curriculum. It may also be because noticing difference and exception is not as valued as sameness and inclusion. Regardless, these differences made participants question their normative assumptions around race, class, and gender, and the purpose of school to prepare students for larger, global contexts.

Analysis: The Purpose of School

We see the attendant discourse of pedagogy (Alexander, 2009) in the words of the participants as they discuss the pieces of Chinese history and communist party doctrine they associated with many of the things they were asked to do in their classrooms and schools over time. This includes everything from the culturally significant importance of math, to the many culturally specific ideas around traditions and manners learned along the way. All of these things are the sites of the important pieces of cultural identity that participants received, in and

out of the classroom (Holland & Lave, 2001). Much like in the first section, it is here that we see the history of China as it is intertwined in the stories of participants.

Ultimately, the purpose of school may lie at the heart of the impetus for all of the push/pull factors that play into the educational migration of Chinese students to the US. Early on, students and their families are inundated with testing and ranking (Pine, 2012; Zhou, 2014) and it is their general dissatisfaction with this (Zhou, 2014), as it becomes the purpose of school itself, that drives families to seek new contexts for learning, and new schools in different educational systems (Zhou, 2014). As standardization and testing take over the school experience of junior high in China, and in some cases, worldwide (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003) young students and families have begun to look for alternatives (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001). The US then provides new purposes for school and these vary—the very possibility for this is why the US is seen as a solid choice for educational migrants (TABS, 2012).

Educational migrants perceive that in the US school success is valued in different ways, ways in which artistic engagement is possible, and that learning can look different depending on the subject. School is a site where resources mean a diverse engagement with diverse learning outcomes (Dewey, 1938) and where difference is explicitly taught, and in fact, used as an impetus for pedagogical change (Freire, 1970). However, the same preoccupation with testing structures seen globally (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003) is in some ways driving the push to study in the US, as many international students are gaming their chances to gain admission to US colleges, thereby ultimately gaming the global system of higher education, not subverting, but sharpening their own cultural logic of testing as they apply it to US constructs. Regardless, the ability to find new purposes for school is a luxury

afforded by few in China, and exacerbates the existing social stratification inherent in the educational structures of China today (Postiglione, 2006).

III. Standing Out

In this section, block quotes/monologues will be organized by the following themes: *Scores and Rank. The Importance of Math*, and *New Constructions of Success*. These reforms work together to tell the story of the struggle to work hard and to succeed. This section will address that struggle that was standing out, or the struggle to stand out, in schools. In *Scores and Rank,* Veronica discusses how quickly she knew her class rank, and how that rank affected the teachers and classes she would be assigned. This begins our first glimpse into the world of testing as it effects success in China, and the experience and understanding of that success. Success in China is often tied to one's relationship to math, as seen in *The Importance of Math*, as Melody and Jamie discuss the importance of math to Chinese school culture, and how math is used, both as a subject, and as a system for separating and distinguishing students from others. These students suggest that math success was what kept them from school success in China. Finally, Jamie, Melody, Kieran, and Dylan, in *New Constructions for Success*, discuss their perceptions of how success changes in the US. Jamie discusses her amazement at how students can be successful at sports and get into college, and Melody discusses the often called for need for a balanced student—one who can juggle more tasks than just school, and can demonstrate a well-roundedness. Dylan discusses how she pushes back against stereotypes of Asian scholarship, and that she locates her success in a study of the humanities. Kieran suggests that study in the US is success in and of itself, and that the idea of what US college is best may be changing for Chinese families.

III.i. Scores and Rank

Veronica

In the 2nd year in middle school, I was dropped to #400

and I had to go to the third-best class.

You wouldn't get a good teacher, or hard problems,

because the school decides that you can't accept hard teacher.

Even though you just failed one test,

or you had a fever,

then you don't get all these resources and you could've been better.

I had a good teacher who could teach me better,

all these resources,

and there were students who were as good as me who couldn't have that just because they failed one test.

III.ii. The Importance of Math

Melody

Math is very serious there. If you can't do the Olympic questions, at that level, you can't enter any good high school.

The exam in *zhongkao*, the last two problems are really difficult.

Most students in my city can't answer them.

I can't answer most of them.

It's very difficult.

It's a method to, I think, China has a very big population.

The very good high schools are limited, and all students can't get in

so math is a method to eliminate the students.

If you have a Math Olympics competition and you win a prize, you can enter any high school you want without taking *zhongkao*.

They'll invite you before *zhongkao*.

I wasn't very good in China.

Melody

Out of school, I'd have an extra three hours a week of math classes.

I have to wake up at 6 am, and every day I have nine classes and also a lot of homework.

Very little time to do sports.

They just get two PE classes a week in Chinese high school.

All Chinese, Math, English, Politics, History, all the main subjects.

The knowledge is the same, they also learn functions.

But we learn more deeply than in the US.

In the US, you just have to know the formula, or the simple questions about the function.

But in China, the problems are very difficult.

Even though I just have two problems for homework, I have to spend two hours on it.

They try to cultivate all students for the Math Olympic Games.

Especially my classmates.

They join the Math Olympics in Russia,

and they won 1st Prize.

Jamie

In elementary school, there's equal emphasis on every subject.

But then in 4th grade, suddenly everyone is super emphasized on math.

It might be influenced by what middle school you get into. If you do well in math competitions and win awards, it's easier to get into a good middle school.

It's not a standardized test for middle school.

So if you have super talents in math, then you'll get into good middle schools.

The math competition awards are like a guarantee.

If you're good at arts and dancing, it's not like that.

Math is the most important competition.

In my elementary school, at first we're pretty focused on Chinese as a subject. Which was great because I was good at Chinese.

Then in 4th or 5th grade it suddenly shifts to Math, and Chinese isn't as important.

That's when my misery began [laughs].

At first, I liked Math before that point.

Then people start taking every Math classes while I wasn't, so I felt I was falling behind.

I don't want to say I hate Math naturally, but the fact that others did better than me made me feel like they were better than me naturally.

I like Math, maybe it's because I do well. I don't know.

There's a culture in my mom's generation, like back to the 80s.

If you're smart, you should study Math or Computer Science or Physics and Chemistry. That's what smart people do.

My mom was a good high school student and she wanted to major in Chinese and Economics, which wasn't popular back then. Those were easy majors, but only the best students can get into Computer Science and Math majors.

China was developing back then, and they need more scientists and mathematicians to help technology and the economy grow overall.

That was the phenomenon back then.

III.iii. New Constructions of Success

Jamie

One thing I'm learning that's really important is that there are different possibilities for being successful.

Like here you can be a really good hockey player or a good singer or an actor, and you're really shining in your area.

I just learned how to respect different kinds of people.

Maybe the hockey player isn't great in school with grades, but it still takes a lot of determination and hard work to be great at hockey.

That's worth everyone's respect.

I just learned that academics aren't the only thing to judge from.

I'm starting to see all the possibilities in other people, including myself.

In my personal statement, I wrote about how when I first got here I was shocked by the language barrier.

I'd study and study every night.

I started to realize I should do more, but I wasn't determined to get involved in different stuff because I was concentrating on my school work.

I think part of it is me starting to participate in more things.

Volleyball and stuff, and I realized how hard it is to be a good player.

I experienced more, and then I understood how hard it is to be a good hockey player, or a singer, or an actor.

It takes practice. It's not tangential like we taught, it takes hard work.

That's just not true.

The first-hand experience I got really showed me.

The recognition that others get also is really important.

The environment in an American high school is respectful of everyone's different talents, so you behave that way as well

Melody

The balanced development.

Except for just studying,

you join many clubs or services or charities.

You have hobbies like art or music or sports.

Every part of you should be very good,

like balanced.

This type of success,

not only focused on studies

but other aspects.

Dylan

Education is the easiest and fastest way to be successful.

But, in China, I know this is a way to be successful, but still that's just what my parents want me to do.

Now, it's like I want to learn and discuss with people. I want to prove to others, to show them.

I'm still interested in literature and history,

but I want to show American people that Asians and Chinese aren't only good at Math and Science.

Like me, I'm not good at those things but good at other things.

Kieran

I think going abroad earlier is success. Some people go to middle school in the US.

In just these three years, it's changed.

Younger kids are trying to come here.

Studying in the US is the main goal for a lot of people.

It's kind of irrational because at first people are like Harvard is the best college in the world, so they want to send their kids to the best college in the world.

It isn't necessarily true, because I learned that if you want to go for engineering then you wouldn't want to go to Harvard.

If you like art, don't go to MIT.

But I remember a lot of parents thinking that Harvard, Yale, Stanford are the best colleges.

Discussion: Standing Out

For participants, success in school in China was linked to test scores, and to their class rank, to the reputations of the schools they attended, to the reputations of the schools they may have attended if they were currently studying in China, and the reputations of the schools they attend in the US. Participants recalled stories of sudden changes in rank, like Veronica who recalled her dismay at being suddenly sent to the "third-best class" and the injustice she felt at one test dictating the estimation of her success in school. Success in China, for study participants, was never perceived as something that was wasn't completely linked to test-taking success.

Math, and the participants success or failure with math, largely dictated the success they reported with school in China. Some participants suggested that math study in China gets increasing competitive, and that test-writers for national exams are constantly recalibrating and adjusting the difficulty of exams to always find a way to sort out the "best." As Melody recalls, "math is a method to eliminate the students." Students do not just study math in school, but participate in an elaborate system of math competitions. Math competition winners often gain admittance to top middle and high schools, regardless of their *zhongkao* or *gaokao* score, or as Jamie claims, "math competitions are like a guarantee" of entrance into a top school—something usually reserved exclusively for students with top test scores--which participants claimed to be, in almost all ways, the purpose of school itself.

Participants all had stories of participating in math competitions, or of colleagues participating in these competitions, and they were often quick to talk about their success at these competitions locally, nationally, and globally, or the success of their classmates, or their schools. As Melody says, "They join the Math Olympics in Russia and they won 1st prize." Overall, for

participants, “math is very serious” in China, and most discussed how they were not very good at it, in China. Participants did not make these same claims about math study in the US. Nonetheless, many participants seemed to distinguish what math they were discussing, often talking about math, and then “Chinese math.” They seemed to suggest that “Chinese math” went deeper, or was harder, or even that learning “Chinese math” required certain traditional and culturally significant approaches to logic. Some of this seemed to be a source of cultural pride, and simultaneously for many, a source of conflict in the story of their own success in school in China.

Participants discussed how art and sports did not guarantee successful admission to Chinese middle and high schools, and therefore, success at these things was not only devalued, but in some cases, completely discouraged, whereas math was encouraged not only in schools, and by families, but culturally, as well. Participants discussed how math was valued culturally, as Jamie does when she takes up how “smart people” were encouraged to study math and science—many participants spoke of how being smart was equivalent to math success, and that “smart” parents studied math or science in college. Therefore, those that were not “smart” studied other subjects—in this construction, being not “smart” may be about a perception of the efficient use of one’s time in preparing for schoolwork (i.e., “smart” people will study math and science, not art and music) or that the skills required for the work demanded of those in math and science are of a high order of thinking skills than the work demanded of those in other disciplines. Regardless, for all participants, the key to success in China meant top scores, and top scores meant math study and math success. But this study has found that in the US, this changes for participants.

In the US, participants report a more diverse sense of what it means to be successful. As Jamie claims, "academics aren't the only thing to judge from"—participants cited many examples of the diverse ways they saw possibility for success in the US. While they all made the claims that grades were important, as was admission to a top college, they acknowledged that many things seemed to round out the experience of the successful high school student in the US—i.e., art, sports, service, clubs. For participants, all of these things mattered for US college admission, and mattered to US high school students. As Jamie suggested, "like here you can be a really good hockey player"—this is striking to Jamie, as she exemplifies all of the participants in their surprise at the various ways students can be successful beyond academics in the US. For Jamie, this is significant because it represents all the various ways that she perceives that US students are recognized and appreciated in high school. For her and the other participants, having various opportunities to be successful in school, and gain recognition, is entirely different than what they perceive as possible in China. This led participants to conclude that as the US values success differently that being successful in the US is different than the construction of success in school in China.

Participants reported how these new ideas around success required tremendous adjustment to study in the US, as Jamie says, she was "shocked" at the language barrier, and the amount of study she had to do each night, but that she began to realize that she should concentrate on things other than schoolwork in the US. This seemed to add new pressure, a pressure to be balanced, or a pressure to excel at school, and excel at art, sports, and/or clubs. Participants also felt pressure to continually speak in English, and to "fit in" with "Americans," and in some cases, to not just "fit in" but to be "popular." The ways that the participants discussed having to adjust to school in the US, and the struggles they suggest about a changing

perception of success, were cited by most participants as an enduring issue, and an issue they see Chinese students in the US having to continually face. Some participants noted that this issue is largely ignored, or not understood as students prepare in China to study in the US.

Some participants, like Dylan suggested that they are working to resist stereotypes of Asian scholarship in the West by focusing on being successful in the humanities, and rejecting being labeled as successful at math and science. Participants spoke of wanting to excel in history and English in order to defy Asian stereotypes. Participants also discussed how having American friends, as well as having opinions in class and openly discussing them, are also signs of success in the US. Participants discussed trying to pursue these things in defiance of Asian stereotypes—i.e. Asian students are good at Math and Science, and Asian students are only friends with Asian students—stereotypes that they said they often perceived in the US.

Some participants also suggested that success was attending school in the US itself and that success is informed by starting that process at an earlier and earlier age. But many participants suggested how the purpose of studying in US high school, to get into a top US college, seemed at cross-purposes with what it means to be a successful student in the US. Participants often suggested that admission to Harvard was considered a certain sign of success, but that if you are talented in certain areas, Harvard may not be the top school to pursue that area of study. This seems to speak to a difference in the images of success as experienced and understood by participants studying in China and the US, as well as the struggles and tensions they are experiencing generationally around the image of success, participants suggested that these struggles and tensions may continue for students preparing now in China for eventual study in the US.

Analysis: Standing Out

The push/pull factors of education migration (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001) are motivated by the need to compete on a global stage—and it is here that we see the implications of globalization. One can now more easily travel to the country which would allow them the ability to best stand out. It is the traditional schooling practices of China, the inability for the quick diffusion of education reform in China (Luo, 2010), and the changing message of education reform in China itself (People's Republic of China's State Council, 2012) that is channeling the direction of education migration out of China and toward the US.

As students become educated in a system which increasingly ranks them, those that can afford it (Postiglione, 2006) can then decide which education system will allow them the best access to the university system they deem the best. This ranking system is then funneled through to increasingly younger and younger students, as we see an increased convergence in standardization and testing structures (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003), and as these students all seem to be working toward the same increasingly narrow, standardized goals—gaining admission to top spots and top schools. The drive to gain an advantage over others in pursuit of these goals is now felt by younger and younger students.

It is our convergence in these structures that continues to influence how we make sense of students in the US, especially as we come to see how the US educational landscape is now so fraught with ever-increasing constructions of success that are narrow, centralized, and test-driven (Garrison, 2009; Giroux, 2012). It is here that we see the attendant discourse of pedagogy in the words of the participants who see their own worth reflected in test scores, grades, and their ability to measure up to the right colleges in the right ways in both cultures.

However, we cannot ignore that while student experience in the US is becoming increasingly test-driven, we may also claim that student perceptions of success may indeed be more divergent and more frequently located in the individual talents and experiences of students themselves, as opposed to narrow and defined strictly by test scores (Pine, 2012; Zhao, 2014). It is possible that a lasting significance of globalization on pedagogy is a new definition for success—one that is related to education mobility itself—the idea that success in school is located in our experience with education in multiple cultures, or that the 21st century idea of success is to defy the notion of success held altogether by previous generations. Ultimately, this may be already happening as Chinese parents consider new possibilities for study in the west, and new possibilities for the measurement of that success. It is the glocalization (Anderson-Levitt & Alimasi, 2001) of the construction of success that implies both the pivotal role of participants as change agents and the possibility for nuanced divergence, new beginnings, and new understandings for success worldwide.

IV. Teachers and Students

In this section, block quotes/monologues will be presented around the following themes: *Symbiosis, Memorization, Interactions, Distractions, Love and Respect*, and *Western Style*. These themes work together to tell the nuanced story of teachers and students in China and the US. One of the stunning implications of globalization on pedagogy and the convergence of an obsession with testing structures worldwide (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003) is on the relationship between teachers and students. This is manifested in the way that the success and failure of teachers and students become intertwined, and their increased reliance on each other is another serious implication of globalization. In this section, in *Symbiosis*, Jackie, Yu, Veronica, and Sylvia talk about how teachers worked tirelessly

for their advancement as it was tied to the advancement of their students, and they discussed the larger cultural expectations for this, and the ways that teacher and student advancement directed the curriculum that they received. In *Memorization*, Sylvia begins to discuss the efficiency of memorization in a test-driven education system and that her relationship to her teachers was tied to her ability to memorize efficiently.

In *Interactions,* Kieran, Dylan, and Melody talk about how testing structures influence student interactions with teachers and with each other, and that the experience of teachers in the US and China are, to some participants, vastly different, overall. Yet clear convergence is seen in the language students employ to describe teachers in both cultures and with the association and perception of Western teachers with openness and approachability. Ultimately, it is here that a link is made for participants between teacher personality and attitude as the product of testing structures and class size. These factors also influence what is perceived as a distraction from the learning process. In *Distractions*, Jackie, Kieran, and Meng discuss how what constitutes as a class distraction is informed by testing structures, as they recount the teachers and students who caused, or dealt with, class distractions.

In *Love and Respect*, Meng, Jamie, and Veronica talk about the teachers they love and respect in both cultures, and how this love and respect is manifested differently by teachers and students in two cultures. In *Western Style*, Dylan and Jamie discuss what they perceive as the hallmarks of Western teaching and learning in the West—and that much of this is about learning about race and race relations in the US, and about your own racial identity in comparison. Western teaching, for these participants, is also about the experience of teachers who use positive psychological motivation strategies (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Lepper & Green, 1978), and who find ways to grade for effort.

IV.i. Symbiosis

Jackie

If you have a really good class, if their score is really high, you're going to teach a better class in the next year.

Because all the classes are ranked before you go in the school.

They divide this grade into, say, 6 classes and they rank them.

So two of the classes will be with students ranked between #1-100,

and then the middle classes they mix in kids of the same level.

And then the teacher will be assigned to different classes, so the score in your last class determines where you'll be assigned.

The correlation between last year's score and the current year's position might not directly be there,

but the correlation is strong.

It potentially could affect pay.

Yu

The teacher tries to give as much homework as possible, but they are worried about people not finishing it.

So when there's a holiday, we hate holidays.

A three-day holiday means the teacher can give us three times as much homework compared to a daily basis.

The holiday is just staying home and doing homework.

Still sitting all day doing work.

It's not like you have to study all the time, but the work is so much.

Vernoica

It was like 6 pm and everybody wanted dinner,

but the teacher kept going. It was the supplementary stuff to get higher scores.

We didn't really use a textbook at all,

everything was from the handout the teacher gave us.

The book was like for babies.

Sometimes you need a concept from it for Math, but we usually learned from the outside source.

We had extra classes and all these handouts.

Most of the students in my class, which was the first class in the whole grade, most of the students took extra classes.

Sylvia

We have eight classes every day and we have ten minutes break between each class, but usually we use the break to study.

Even though the class ends, the teacher will say they haven't finished and then will keep talking and the next class begins.

Among the eight classes, we have a PE/Sports class.

The other Math or Chinese teacher will take over that class: "Oh, the PE teacher is out today. He has something else to do, so now this class is Chinese class."

They easily change classes.

In the US, the class ends and the class ends.

You can't extend it, because students have to go to the other class.

If you don't finish, we'll talk tomorrow.

Teachers (in China) love the 8th class, because you can extend it whenever you want.

At 4:30, the class should be ended, but if he didn't finish he keeps going.

At 5 pm some parents are waiting outside, but they understand the teacher and say "keep going."

Sometimes they keep going for an hour.

[In the US] Sometimes after 8th period,

at the end,

even before the bell some people start packing up.

Some even stand up.

And there's no canceling gym.

IV.ii. Memorization

Sylvia

Mostly it's just to prepare for the test.

For the midterm, the finals, the college entrance exam. So school is for tests.

I thought it was just for tests, because we memorized a bunch of things we'd never use.

We memorized the total passage in Chinese just for the test, for you to write it down.

You can recite the Chinese book.

If you're asked the name of a writer, you know when he was born and where he lived and what he wrote.

Everything about him.

And when you talk about a math concept like “linear regression” in stats, and the student knows everything about it...even who invented it.

Mostly the memorization.

Sylvia

Whenever I asked a question [in China],

she'd say “Didn't we talk about this in class? Were you listening?”

So I was afraid to talk to her, and I feel like she looked down to me…

So, usually the Chinese students don't like to participate much in class.

In China, participation isn't like discussion.

The teacher asks a question, and if you answer it wrong then the teacher say “Oh, you're answer is wrong.”

Or if your answer was funny then all the students laughed at you, and no one was there to answer it.

When we discussed, it was only one correct answer. So everyone was afraid of raising their hand to answer.

Especially me, I don't like to talk much so I never raised my hand in China.

We had rules, my Chinese teacher set a rule that everyone must raise your hand three times a day in class.

If you don't, you're score will get worse.

She'd record every time we raised a hand. I pushed myself to raise my hand, but when the teacher wouldn't look at me I'd raise my hand real quick. Like I didn't want to answer, it'd just be a motion.

When she was looking at me, I never raised my hand.

I was a little bit afraid of the teacher.

I was always a good student, I never disobeyed.

I just kept silent,

or if they really wanted me to talk I'd speak then.

I'd only say something that I was confident was right.

I didn't want them to be disappointed in me, or think that I didn't know this answer and I wasn't smart.

If the teacher thought that trees were green, and I thought that the trees were orange, I would just memorize that trees were green and move on.

There wouldn't be talk about why trees weren't orange.

IV.iii. Interactions

Kieran

In China, they wouldn't let you talk in class.

They will pick students to talk, but you can't share your own opinion.

They have an official department in China that sends out what to cover in each semester to each teacher.

They just follow that, and if you go outside that then they say it's not important and we skip that because it's not on the list of things we need to cover.

They just want to cover everything they have to and get the test done.

A typical American teacher, they're kind of your friend.

They might be pretending, but it's a good thing that they're pretending to be good to you and listen to what you say.

“That's a good idea, or a good point.”

They'll like come back....it's more like you're having an advisor when you're learning on your own, when you have questions you can ask the advisor.

They're professionals in the field.

In America, the typical teacher is like an advisor or like a master guiding you through the way of education.

More interaction.

Dylan

My middle school class teacher [in inland China].

She was my English teacher and also my class teacher.

We had 40 kids in the class.

My class was the strongest class because of that teacher.

She's the kind of person who really wants to win, and she's kind of strict and cruel to us.

But sometimes she's nice.

She'd swear at us [laughs],

and she'd say things really directly.

She didn't care about....sometimes it's good to be like that.

She's really easy to get mad, but also easy to understand.

After she'd swear and then you explain to her the situation, she'd understand and apologize.

She's kind of a friend; she's young and a good teacher.

She's closer to like a teacher at [US school--name omitted] right now,

she knows what stuff is popular and stuff.

Melody

Teachers in China, they don't have much patience because the class is so big.

So they can't be patient with everyone. You have to answer questions quickly, you can't think about it.

Here the teachers are more patient, and they wait until you get the answers.

I think that's good, it's encouragement for us.

Chinese class in China, the teacher tells us what the main idea and what the supporting idea was.

She just teaches us this, and doesn't let you think. They emphasize some useless things.

Here the English class here, I visited with Ms. [name omitted], and we learned the *Scarlet Letter.*

She let us discuss the story by ourselves, and we could summarize and act out a play to better understand the story.

The way we learn stories is different in China than in the US.

IV.iv. Distractions

Jackie

Like thinking outside the box annoyed my teachers sometimes [in China].

People expect me to know everything and answer every question they ask.

My teacher asked everyone about a picture on the screen, and when it came to me – it's an American singer – so I stood up and said “I don't know”, with no emotions or feelings of being sorry.

So she was annoyed because I didn't feel bad about not knowing.

Who knows... oh and whenever I study something I ask questions about things that aren't always connected to that specific question.

Like in Math, I'd start moving on in my thought but the teacher would say “Focus on this question first!”

Kieran

You had to have books on the top left corner of the desk,

pencil case in the middle,

and notebooks on the top right. Or else the teacher got mad.

The teacher would check and review the lesson from yesterday.

They'd ask questions to see if you knew the work, and if you couldn't answer then you had to stay in class until everybody answered.

Usually you have four classes in morning, then a lunch break.

During a lunch break in middle school, you couldn't talk.

It's for a really obscene reason, because Westerners, my teacher said, they didn't talk while they're eating because they were educated.

That's what he told us.

But then I came here and saw that it wasn't true.

Sure you don't make a lot of noise while you're dining with somebody important or at a formal occasion,

but it's like lunch break at middle school.

We couldn't talk in class,

only during breaks.

I think it's important to have time to socialize during lunch with friends.

We started this policy after the second year of middle school.

It was tough, because if you talked the teacher would drag you out of the cafeteria.

This one kid always got dragged out because he was really social.

The teacher was like why are you disturbing others, and breaking the rules.

Meng

I remember my class principal,

I was talking to my desk mate and he's a weird person.

He always talks to himself, and he's really funny.

I'm sitting right next to him, and every time he does that I can't help but to join him. To make a conversation, because he's talking to himself and the topic is really funny.

In class he's talking to himself, and I join him. So we talk a lot, and the teacher was mad because every single class we are talking. My class principal is walking around staring at us from the hallway through the door, to see if we are paying attention to the teachers.

Other teachers don't care, they just want you to finish.

There are 60 people, how can they make sure that everybody is with them?

So the class principal is the one who walks around the building to make sure the students are paying attention from the hallway. A lot of times, me and my desk mate are talking and she saw us. She was so mad at me, and she asked me to stand in the hall for a whole day.

Other students in the school can see me, they are looking at me with their weird face.

I was kind of famous as the Chairman of student council.

Our class principal made me stand in the hallway in front of all the students, it shamed us.

The whole day. From 9 or 10, until after school.

Well, until 12 pm we have a break to go home. Then we come back at 2 pm, and I stood from 2 pm to 6 pm.

Then I had to make up class work and homework I missed.

I was in grade 10, I was 14.

That was two years ago.

Now I recall that we really break the placement of the class.

It was only us two talking.

We were a disruption.

It was an ok punishment.

In my school, the higher your position the less mistakes you should make. I was Chairman of student council, so I was supposed to do better than others.

I did something bad, so I had to get a worse punishment.

Standing in the hallway is kind of normal in the school.

My class principal was ok, but others, I remember one teacher would have like five students stand in the hallway.

It's a common punishment for some teachers.

Public shaming.

For some kids, they don't care because they don't have to go in class. They look at the people and flirt, but for me I was like “Noooo.”

[I] just stand there and look down and be upset.

Thinking about how to make my class up after missing them. Maybe a little bit of tears, but I don't want others to see me crying.

Meng

The principal of our class in elementary school, she was my Chinese teacher and she taught me from grade 1-3.

She was very famous in our city.

I heard she was the best principal teacher ever.

The principal of our elementary school tried to put me in her class because she was best in the city, finally I got in.

All the students were naughty, and their parents wanted to put them in that best class.

Me and a lot of naughty kids. Our class was the naughtiest in the whole school.

Their parents wanted to find a better teacher to manage and control them.

They heard that she was the best teacher in the city, and so their parents used their friends and gave money to the principal to put their kids in the best class…

She's really nice and good at teaching Chinese.

She really pays attention to students, taking care of us carefully and paying attention to all the students.

We had 40 people in class, so she has to take care of them all.

In China, it's not like every single teacher has their own exams.

The whole grade has one test, and all the students take that final test.

We had like 12 classes in the grade, with six Chinese teachers.

The teachers have competitions to see which class got the best grades,

the teacher whose class won got the best salaries and won.

The class principal was really good at teaching, so students in her class got better grades on the test than other students.

Both test and life, she took care of us.

IV.v. Love and Respect

Meng

In China, every single teacher, almost every teacher, who taught me, have said something like "Your class is the worst of my classes."

I understand they want to push us, but they always say that to every class.

In America, I remember Mr. [name omitted].

One day I slept in, so I went to another section of his class and he said that class was the best of all his sections.

And I went to my class the next day, and he said we were the best class. I'm like how many bests do you have.

In America, they encourage more.

In China they push more.

I understand it's like negatively push but positively influence.

But they said we were the worst.

Every single teacher says this, so the kids don't even listen or care.

After we graduate though, the teachers all say that they miss us and we were the best.

When you're in the school, they have to push you to get good grades, but when you're out they encourage you and say they miss you.

They love us,

because we lived together for three years and we had 50-60 people.

It's like a family, the teachers truly love us but when we are in school they have to discourage us to push us.

But after we graduate there's a change.

Jamie

She [Chinese teacher] was pretty obsessed with ranking,

we'd do class ranking every week.

We even got into groups, like the first and the second ranked are a group,

and the third and fourth are a group.

These groups compete with each other, she'd compare scores and tell us who won.

So students are competing like that.

There's a lot of pressure to compete.

She was a pretty hardworking and tough woman.

Even when she was sick, she'd come to work and teach us.

She pushed herself a lot, and really emphasized grades.

She's like a machine she's so tough.

Meng

There are dorm parents to walk the hallway and make sure we sleep.

Every day, we pretended to sleep, but we set an alarm for midnight when the dorm parents went to bed and then we woke up and played games, ate food, watched TV, and had fun.

We listened to our MP3s, because we didn't have iPods yet.

We couldn't turn on the light because then the parents would see, but there was a little light from the window door so we used that hallway light.

We'd sit next to the door and play cards and games.

We'd play dramas,

there are a lot of Chinese and Asian dramas.

We'd each have a role to play.

I remember I was the daughter of Emperor Li, and my friend was Emperor Li.

I had to make fun of her, and she made fun of me.

It was fun.

My boarding life is my best memory in school.

It was pretty fun…

When you live eight to a room, you become like sisters.

Veronica

I remember....they didn't really like me.

It was a bad experience.

I was good at English and Chinese, for in China

Math wasn't my strongest point.

That teacher was a middle-aged woman with a 10 year old child.

She didn't like the students who didn't do well in Math, especially me.

I'm self-conscious, so if she said I did something wrong I'd cry.

Compared with her other babies in class, she didn't really like me.

I remember once in class she asked me to stand up in class, and she asked me to answer the question and I couldn't.

She said to my face that I wouldn't be successful in the future, and that hurt.

In 7th grade, you don't want to hear your teacher saying that. It was in front of everyone.

In China, they wouldn't say it in front of your face, it's be like "someone isn't gonna be successful"....even though everyone knows who it is.

She kinda just put it out there.

In 9th grade, I had a teacher kind of like a teacher here [the US]. Except she was really good at teaching calculus,

she encouraged me to do more work, and was very clear during class.

She wasn't always trying to make more minutes....we would have 45-minute classes.

My old teacher would try to get 47 minutes if she could,

but this new teacher would give us a break to go to our other classes.

It was more efficient in her class because we had a set time.

I only had her for one year because I went to America.

I miss her.

IV.vi. Western Style

Dylan

Like the most things I want to talk about is racism.

People act real racist in society and in culture.

Like, are you kidding me that you aren't racist?

How can you say that.

Not talking about teachers, but some teachers are really racist in our school [in the US].

It's more about students.

When they say they aren't racist, they are actually doing racist things.

Like why mention that, we're all the same.

I'm racist to my roommate all the time.

She says I bully her and I'm actually racist, because when I bring it up all the time she is like

> "You're actually racist if you accuse people all the time."

Even me sometimes, I hate Asians or other type of people.

I can understand why people are kind of racist.

Some things don't depend on race, it depends on people.

That's why I'm interested in history and religion.

I'm interested in American culture, but that doesn't mean I'm going to emigrate here.

I'm still Chinese. I can't act like an American.

Some Chinese, they say they'll immigrate to America, but they're still speaking only Chinese

> and hanging out with only Chinese.

How can you improve your English?

I'm okay with hanging out with different cultures,

but I'm still Chinese.

Jamie

I really remember this one time we were in Writing class in ESL [in the US],

and I asked Ms. [name omitted] if something was right.

She asked me immediately back “I don't know, what do you think?”

I didn't know what to say, because I wasn't ever asked that back before.

In China, if I asked a teacher that, I'd always get an answer.

I think deliberately she wanted me to get used to this independence of thinking.

She looked kind of mean by saying that, but I think that's a straightforward reality about what American classes are like.

It's about what you think, not if it's right or wrong.

Jamie

Typical Western teacher is Mr. [name omitted],

he's really chill and funny.

He tries to make learning fun.

He always calls the homework “POF” for Packet of Fun, or Home Fun.

He's very funny,

he wants us to enjoy Physics for the sake of learning, not just the AP Exam.

I think he really wants to see you're working hard as well.

My boyfriend was really smart, and he could get straight As in the test with no problem.

But he didn't pay attention in class or work hard, because he already knew everything. His attitude isn't good. So on the comments [name omitted] gave him a B+ or A-, which didn't really match his grades.

He wants to make students realize that the attitude is most important.

I wasn't really smart in Physics, and I didn't do that well in tests.

Like B+,

but I really paid attention in class so he gave me an A- at the end.

He really had a focus on trying really hard, no matter what you get it doesn't matter.

Discussion: Teachers and Students

Each participant talked of teachers in China, and many suggested that teachers who produced high test scoring students were often financially rewarded or gained great reputations in schools and cities. Participants also discussed that top teachers were often assigned the classes with the top test scores, and that all students were assigned to classes based on test sores, as Jackie describes," "the scores in your last class determines where you'll be assigned." Therefore, the relationship between teacher and student becomes meshed in their ability to collectively achieve high test scores in middle and high school. This dynamic informs how teachers and students spend their time together, and the expectations they have together for what should be done outside of class. For instance, as Yu recounts, "a three-day holiday means the teacher can give us three times as much homework." Students are expected to make schoolwork their top priority, and teachers are expected to make their students' success their top priority—the manifestation of this relationship has significant financial and evaluatory consequences for teachers, and generates a series of consequences and inter-related complications for students.

Many participants spoke of the ways that classes that prepared them for the *zhongkao* could "take over" classes that didn't, that, for example, Math class would quickly replace P.E. Free-time, and class end-times, were another causality of the pressure felt by teachers and students to prepare for the *zhongkao*. Participants, like Veronica and Sylvia, talked about how classes that prepared for the *zhongkao* would extend past their scheduled end times, and that breaks between classes were quick to disappear. Sylvia talked about how parents appreciate the dedication from teachers, as they work with their students to co-create success. Veronica, along with most other participants, suggested that government-issued textbooks in middle school were just a starting point, and those teachers who really excelled, and therefore students who really

excelled, did so by using these books as basic manuals they would whole-scale supplement with ever-increasingly difficult test-prep materials.

Participants also revealed the importance of sheer memorization to success in the Chinese education system. They offered countless examples of this—and they stressed the logic of this. As Sylvia suggests, if "school is for tests" then students memorize what is on the test—studying or pursuing anything other than what is on the test was regarded as a frivolous and unimportant waste of time. This included student questions in class, and the generation of student opinion. Participants went on to discuss how class participation, discussion, and question asking are, therefore, sites of tremendous difference in US classroom. Sylvia puts it quite succinctly: "If the teacher thought the tress were green and I thought the trees were orange, I would just memorize that the trees were green and move on"—participants discussed how they learned that maintaining one's own opinion on a subject will not result in high test scores. Truth and correctness, or the articulation of original thought, was not needed for the test.

While participants also suggested that big classes in China impacted what was possible for themselves and their teachers in China, they were quite clear that they thought that the pressure for test results left little time for distraction from the memorization demanded of successful test-taking. Participants shared their stories of the consequences they faced for being distracted in school and of teachers who were to keep students on task.

Throughout the stories of teachers in China who enforced student focus and compliance, participants discussed how while many of these teachers may have punished them for being distracted in various ways in school, they were confident that this was an act of love, of caring, and of concern. All stories of teachers in China who participants felt were difficult, or who punished them in some way, were quickly qualified by how smart the teacher was, or how hard-

working, or how skilled they were at producing high test scores. It was very clear that participants saw any public shame or humiliation they faced at the hands of teachers in China as an act of love and care. It seems that for participants, the love they had for their teachers was not based solely on the treatment they received from the teacher, as much as the score they received on the test the teacher prepared them for. However, all participants talked about the community that was created in their Chinese classrooms and of their bonds with various teachers. It would seem that the amount of time teachers and students spent on schoolwork in China may also have produced extremely tight-knit learning communities with a very common purpose. Many participants greatly missed these communities and greatly missed their Chinese teachers.

These experiences seem to contrast with the participants' experiences with teachers in the US. Smaller classes sizes, group work, active and creative learning experiences seemed to inform the perception participants had of teachers in the US who they thought of as "friends" or "friendly." It may also have been how participants felt encouraged to ask questions—a site of tremendous difference and adjustment. Participants discussed their difficulty with adapting to teachers who use certain positive motivation strategies, or had many "best" students—this difficulty is exemplified by Meng. She did not quite understand how a teacher could have more than one "best" class." While participants maintained that the perception of friendly teachers in the West was largely true, many claimed to also encounter racist teachers, and fellow students, in the US, as well. As participants seemed to adjust to learning about race in the US, they also seemed to be learning first-hand, experientially, about race and racism, not only in their experiences with Americans, but in their experiences as a Chinese person, with other Chinese people, studying in the US.

For many participants, overall, the experience of classroom open-endedness, where teachers emphasized new purposes, new expectations for successful engagement, where students were given time to work on major projects and papers, and expected to ask questions, was entirely new, and required tremendous adjustment. For participants, it is an entirely new experience to be expected by teachers to "have fun" or to be graded on effort and attitude. While participants seemed to be grappling with these ideas for the first time as students in the US, many discussed how they enjoyed it.

Analysis: Teachers and Students

Changes in the relationship between teachers and students is an important development related to the educational change incurred by globalization. As testing structures converge nationally and internationally (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Ouyang, 2003; Hatch & Honig, 2003; Jungck, 2003), the relationship between teachers and students change. This confirms previous findings in the US that teachers are rarely using student-centered pedagogy when confronted with reforms connected to high-stakes accountability practices (Deboer, 2002; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Luo, 2012; Passman, 2000; Pederson & Liu, 2003; Spillane & Burch, 2006), and that when teachers are held accountable to deliver content driven by high-stakes testing they are compelled to abandon student-centered pedagogy for more traditional approaches to content delivery—approaches that are more teacher-centered (Passman, 2000).

In this study, teachers and students in China and teachers and students in the US who were influenced by testing structures and facing dropping, or low scores, felt tremendous pressure to improve. Consequently, they understood how student-centered practices wasted what precious time there was for the delivery of content geared toward high-stakes tests (Pederson & Liu, 2003). Memorization is what students' experience as the necessary component of their

education as a result. This also confirms Watanabe (2007), who found that high-stakes testing narrowed curriculum and placed teacher priorities not with their students, but with testing achievement (Watanabe, 2007). But Watanabe assumes that students do not also want this narrowness. This study suggests that students do seek a degree of narrowness, and that they understand that under a testing structure a narrowed curriculum and testing achievement are, indeed, where teacher priorities should be placed. Indeed, participants suggest that teachers demonstrate love and respect with their adherence to narrowness and test-driven achievement.

Much of this is culturally located, those who are part of the same school culture share "sets of concepts, images, and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus to interpret the world, in roughly similar ways" (Hall, 2005, p. 297). Our culture allows us to speak the same language (Rogoff, 2003). This study confirms that within school cultures dominated by high-stakes testing, we may speak the same language around teachers and students in two cultures.

Despite these similarities, western teaching, for these participants, is often experienced as teachers who use positive psychological motivation strategies (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Lepper & Green, 1978) as participants recounted teachers in the US (and on occasion, in China) who used praise liberally, and who were interested in the engagement and effort of students. Participants suggested there was a predominance of this in the US, and while it was anomaly in China, in both cultures teachers found ways to connect learning to its inherent emancipatory potential (Freire, 1970)—whether this be a rigid adherence to student success as dictated by testing structures, or a connection to larger, student-driven learning goals.

V. (Self)Assessment

Early on, the participants in this study were assessed and knew how they did in comparison to their peers, how their peers did in relation to them, and how their classes, grades, and school compared to all others in the towns, cities, and provinces in which they grew up. Participants recount early experience with being ranked, and with working to get into "good" middle schools. It is here that all participants discussed, at length, their school work in preparation for the *zhongkao*, which they explain is the sole purpose of middle school—the test which decides your high school placement. For these participants, all of whom came to the US for high school, there final year of middle school meant intense study for other high-stakes tests, like the TOEFL, or the SSAT.

Overall, preparation for the Zhongkao dictates all instruction. Participants discussed the stigma of ranking low, and the ramifications of a low rank in middle school, including a very fragile sense of self-worth. Participants discuss how successful Chinese students navigate middle school, how they develop coping strategies, and how they become masters of efficiency, as the pressure to assess and excel seems to be felt by younger and younger students. Block quotes/monologues in this section will be organized around the following themes: *Bad Grades, Zhongkao Determines Gaokao Determines Self, Public Rank, Test Preparation*, and *Learning Efficiency*. These themes work together to tell the intricate story of assessment in the school lives of participants.

The connection between a student's sense of self and sense of achievement becomes intertwined in *Bad Grades* as Jackie and Sylvia discuss how they saw their own worth in their grades or class rank. This idea continues into *Zhongkao Determines Gaokao Determines Self,* as Jamie, Meng and Yu recount the life determining connections between success in junior high school and success in high school and beyond—that ultimately, two tests shape the destiny of

Chinese students. In *Public Rank*, Jamie and Sylvia recount stories of how methods of public ranking confirm this in Chinese school culture on a daily basis. In *Test Preparation*, Kieran discuss how market-driven forces play on the connection between self-worth and tests, and suggests how this influences culture. Kieran begins to suggest the glocalization of a convergence in mass university education (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000) manifested in a new culture of test preparation. In *Learning Efficiency*, Jackie, Li, and Kieran discuss how testing structures produce modes for efficient study, and this includes a culture of achievement collaboration, otherwise known in some cultures as cheating.

V.i. Bad Grades

Jackie

Oh boy, I had one [a "bad" grade] in 2nd grade.

You couldn't pass the test, but sometimes if you even got a C it was bad.

I had to stand up in front of class for the whole period.

It was a Chinese teacher, and the teacher...they were okay after I got an A.

But when I got a C, she made me stand up in front of the whole class.

Only two of us in the class got a C, and I just sat there.

[I was in] 2nd grade, so like eight.

Sylvia

My elementary wasn't the best in the city, because it's an art school.

Not all focused on art but we had art classes.

That benefitted me, but it wasn't a very great academic school.

So when I went to junior high school my grades went down.

I wasn't as good as in elementary school. We had 50 students, and I ranked 30 or sometimes 35-40.

That was a terrible thing for me.

The worst thing is, every time we had a test we had the ranking list posted on the black board and everyone can see who got the best and the worst score.

I felt ashamed to be the in 30-somethings.

And I feel that everybody would laugh at me.

I hated those three years.

The worst thing is during the test we wouldn't sit in our regular classroom.

We'd have like six classrooms.

The first classroom is the class for the top five students,

they went there to take the test.

Number 6six classroom was the worst five students.

I don't know,

maybe they wanted the last place students to feel bad and work hard.

Once I was in the 5th classroom, and I was dying. I couldn't even go into the classroom because everybody knows that "you're a bad student and got bad scores because you're in the 5th classroom".

I hate that.

V.ii. Zhongkao Determines Gaokao Determines Self

Jamie

Most classes we have, the subjects are on the *zhongkao*: Chinese, English, Math, Science.

Other classes are considered unimportant, like History and Biology.

They are hard here, but there nobody cares because it's not on the *zhongkao*.

Students don't even listen to those teachers sometimes.

The teachers know that too, they don't even care what you do. Just don't be loud.

Like Biology, it's not on *zhongkao*.

Some students love biology and will listen to a couple lectures.

Generally, most students don't pay attention to History too.

We have some art classes, but not after the first year of middle school.

No more art classes.

We have art classes like just appearing as a title, but sometimes the Chinese teacher would just come in and take over art class.

This is after the first year of middle school.

The main subject teachers would just come in – Math, English, Chinese, Chemistry, Physics. Not Oral English though, no art, no music, no Biology, no History.

We have some History and Biology somewhat, but art and PE and Music we barely have them.

Yeah, also the students don't care as much about those classes.

Some of them want to get their homework done and use those as free periods.

They don't give us those.

They want that over the art and music.

They are pretty *zhongkao*-driven, the students.

Meng

There are three years of high school.

If in the 2nd year, you decide to study abroad, you give up the *gaokao* and sign this paperwork confirming that.

Then you have to fill out this agreement that you're going to graduate from this high school. Because the 3rd year is all review and prep for the college test.

So at the end of the second year in my school, if you say you're going abroad, you sign a paper with the school saying you aren't taking college entrance exam.

So I'm free.

After the second year, you can just study for TOEFL and SSAT and not come to school as much.

It's like if you ask for a leave, the school will say yes because those tests are more important for you.

Most students stay in school, because they don't have to focus on SSAT 24-7-365.

This is in my school, but some schools in my city don't care.

But competitive schools, like if you say you are going abroad, you aren't focused on preparing for college entrance exam.

So you must be a little worse than you used to with your grades.

They don't want the average grades of all students to suffer because of that.

Yu

In junior high, the classes start at 8 am and then you have class...it depends,

in 7th grade, school is over at 4:30 pm

but in 9th grade it depends on the teacher.

Sometimes the whole class stays till 6 pm. We don't have after-school activities, but some boys like to play soccer really late.

It's not a boarding school.

We have lunch break from 12:30 to 2 pm.

We have 10 minutes break between two classes.

You stay at one seat the whole time,

no moving from class to class.

Especially in 9th grade, because we have the senior high entrance exam that's really important, then you stay in your seat even during the break.

You could sit there the whole day. It happened to me, from 8 am to lunch, and then from 2 to 6 pm.

V.iii. Public Rank

Jamie

In China, in each grade we have like 10 classes where we go every day.

We stay as a group, not like in the US.

So there's competition between each class.

There's a ranking between the best, second-best, etc. classes in each grade.

I was in the second-best class in middle school, and the teacher was always like "this test average was behind the third-best class, and we need to catch up."

There's competition between groups,

and between individuals because you see your ranking fluctuate throughout the year.

Every paper you get has your ranking on it.

Overall, Math, Chinese, yeah.

Sylvia

Most important subjects are science, math and Chinese.

English is also important, but it wasn't as important as the math. We didn't do simple math, we did complicated math.

You will do well if you are intelligent.

If you aren't, can't solve these questions.

On weekend we had a class that was separated into two classes. One was “good” students, the other was not so good.

The teacher in the good class taught faster, and the teacher in the bad class taught slower.

I'm always in the “bad class”.

So that made me feel bad.

Sylvia

When the teacher hands back the test [in China], they just call the name and they don't even put it backwards so nobody will see it.

It's wide open.

The people who sit in front of you, they see it [the grade]. Everyone sees it.

Everyone knew-- I care about what people think of me. Sometimes, the teacher would say "Who did #3 wrong? If you did, stand up."

Then I was embarrassed to stand up when not many people stood up.

If no one knew my score, it was okay for me.

I comforted myself and said I was good at other things.

But when everyone knew your bad score, they didn't think that you were good at other things.

They just saw the moment, that you did bad at math.

Jamie

There's a thing in elementary school, where if you want to go to a good middle school there are some students who do math competitions to win awards to get them to middle school.

There were a lot of kids in the class who did this, and the teacher liked them.

He thought they were brilliant.

I was struggling, and I think he thought I was dumb.

He didn't like me because my grades weren't great,

I wasn't a math kid.

That's how he is.

One time I remember a midterm math test, and a lot of people didn't do well. So he ranked our scores from highest to lowest, and I was nearest to the end.

He made us stand up in line according to ranking.

He said just look at where you are, that's your position in the class. If you're toward the end, you're not a good student.

That really made me depressed.

I was toward the end, the last ten people in line. I was standing with the bad students.

I was a good student in elementary, so I felt like I don't belong to the bad student group.

So it made me feel bad to stand with the people I thought I was superior to.

[We stood] like ten minutes.

Enough to make everyone see where you are.

In my experience, it happened only once.

But the ranking is usual. In middle school, the teacher would rank our scores and then she'd call us up in order of our ranking to get our tests back.

It happens in different ways a lot.

Knowing your rank compared to others is normal.

It's a competitive mindset.

V.iv. Test Preparation

Kieran

My mom put me in extracurricular classes on the weekend [in China].

So that helped with getting more facts to get a higher score.

At first it was a Math class, not strictly Math but Logic too.

You weren't really using it in life, ever.

Even worse than Calculus.

It's just because people test you on it to go to school.

It's like SAT, they come up with it but it doesn't help you in life ever.

It's geared toward getting into good schools because they test you on this.

It's called *Aoshu*,

it doesn't really have a translation.

It's not more than Calculus, but it's more useless than Calculus.

It's a strictly Chinese thing I think, like Math-letes.

A good example is a famous problem we do: If a cow eats an area of grass in this amount of days, how many days would it take three cows to eat that amount of grass.

They have specific ways to solve all these word problems. Like tricks, riddles, and you have to know them.

If you don't know how to do them, you wouldn't be able to really do them.

It helps you with the entrance test for colleges and high schools.

V.v. Learning Efficiency

Jackie

First, my homework time I spent in primary school [in China] was like less than an hour or an hour tops doing homework every night.

That went to three hours of homework.

I think I was super depressed on the first day of middle school because I got so much homework.

The frequency of tests increased as well, almost every week.

One thing, the system made me learn to increase my efficiency on doing things.

Also, being more accurate in a shorter amount of time.

So I'm not really taking my time anymore to figure out something, instead I try to get it done within a minimum amount of time.

It helped a lot, since my efficiency started to increase I get more things done in life.

So the purpose of that stuff is for *zhongkao* but it also helped.

We had 55 people in my class.

Especially for Math, the teacher would write a lot of things on the board and we just take notes, and take notes, and take notes the whole class.

Test every Friday in class, and then Monday she'll grade it and we'll just like start to talk about it in class.

Li

First thing is that the method of studying really matters [in China].

Like how you do your homework.

For a little amount of homework, I can finish in 20-30 minutes.

So I learned to finish homework as fast as possible.

It helped in middle school when the pressure increases.

You have time for other stuff. Also, how you study.

At school the main reason for studying is to get a good score on the test.

So you need to know what topics will be on the test, what to remember and what not to remember.

How to study efficiently.

I remember I learned how to waste time, or not to waste time but to pass it.

You just do your other homework to pass the time.

It's very common to do that.

In the US, I don't think many people do homework in class. You won't spend a whole class period doing homework. Like in English class you won't do Math homework, but that is very common in China.

Because the class is less attractive, that might be a factor.

That's the main factor.

Some classes there, you already learned the stuff and it's like review.

If you already mastered something, you find it boring.

So you start homework in order to not waste time.

Kieran

I know all the tricks.

Say we have to recite poems for Chinese class.

We just write it on a small piece of paper and put it in the pencil case.

If you crack the pencil case just a little bit, you can transcribe it real easy.

With math you just peek at others' papers.

Cheating is really easy and widespread in China.

If you get caught, then it comes up.

But we don't talk about it.

I think the teachers know everybody cheats.

Of course the teachers say don't cheat, but it's not like it will make you get a bad score.

They just say it.

But nobody really cares.

Discussion: (Self) Assessment

The role of assessment in the lives of participants, and in their recollections of school life in China is an extremely important one. Most participants told stories of feeling the shame, fear, isolation, humiliation, and panic of early, fairly stigmatizing, failure. Participants didn't just tell stories of tests, they discussed how their success on tests because a constant self-assessment. For most participants, unsuccessful grades and tests meant they were failing as people, and failing to fulfill the expectations their parents held them to. These situations came early, and often, with participants discussing early elementary school experiences with being assessed, and recalling the stigma they felt as a result.

For some participants, these experiences undercut their ability to wholly commit themselves to art, to hobbies, to school governance, and to sports. For some, early emphasis in these areas was their perceived reason for poor middle school test scores. Participants suggested that pursuing early interests and passions that are not tested on the *zhongkao* was detrimental to success on the *zhongkao*. For many, these experiences were painful adjustments as they were forced to funnel their total energy into *zhongkao* preparation, and to choose learning experiences that would exclusively allow for test preparation. In addition, participants discussed how test prep dictated the time students spent in school on certain subjects each day. Subjects offered on the test would often replace those that did not, and even if that did not happen, students themselves restricted their daily activities to certain test preparation over others. Participants discussed how they would listen to the teachers they needed test preparation from, and not listen to the teachers they did not. For instance, they would spend time in English class on math test-prep practice. As Jamie says, the students "are pretty *zhongkao* driven" and this central focus manifested itself in many ways.

As all participants came to the US for high school, their final year of middle school meant intense study for high-stakes tests, some took the *zhongkao*, but they all prepared for the TOEFL and the SSAT. It is significant to note, however, that many were able to take months off of school in the spring in order to prepare for the TOEFL and the SSAT. It would seem that these tests—as they served to replace *zhongkao* for students seeking study elsewhere—made sense to Chinese educators and students were given time and support to prepare for them. In addition, as Meng suggests, students were asked to formally, "give up the *gaokao*" and sign paperwork to this effect—in this way, the scores of students not preparing for and taking the *gaokao* would not affect the scores of those who were. Participants suggested the ways that preserving the validity of the scores of test-taking students in China was important: educators may want to know as early as possible which students were committed to the Chinese education system, and which students were not.

These sort of early commitments to test-taking structures informed student life and student relationships. Participants discussed how this affected school friendships and friend groups, all of which were largely informed by student commitments to the test and their degree of success with tests. Tests, above all else, dictated who one was friends with in school, and who one was not. These expectations may also have been supported by parents, and by the ranking and arranging of classes according to test success. Essentially, students spent their time with other students who did as well as they did on tests, or who were committed to the same disposition around test taking and test preparation.

Given the very public nature of ranking, as evidenced by Sylvia, "Everyone knew" how you ranked, how you did on tests, and how you did compared to other classes in the grade, and even, sometimes, other schools. For many, this caused tremendous stigma and isolation, as tests

took on a role far beyond the assessment of one's academic abilities. For many participants, their rank was a total assessment of self-worth, and this worth was compared and contrasted to the worth of others very publicly. Participants, like Li discuss how tests accounted for much of a student's daily discourse in China—that peer conversations were often about tests, in ways that he found quite different in the US. Li recounts that not only did students discuss tests, they also discussed grades. As Li asserts, "asking about grades isn't impolite in China"—students openly discussed these things and shared this information with each other.

Some participants suggested that the constant ranking and assessment of school life in China sets students up for adversarial relationships with their peers, as Yu suggests "I have to be good and you have to be bad." Many participants were aware of how their success on tests came at the expense of the failure of their classmates. For many, a victory meant someone else's loss, and participants were very aware of the stigma and implications of that loss--a further relational pressure experienced by participants in their Chinese schools.

Participants discussed how assessment meant ever evaporating free-time, and the importance of taking extra classes, as young as possible, and committing to constant test-prep and practice outside of school. Evaporating free time included the ten minute breaks between classes in China, which students suggested began to universally erode throughout middle school. As more and more students used the ten minutes to stay in their seats for extra test-prep, more and more students were pressured to do the same in order to stay competitive with the rest.

All participants discussed the systems for efficient study that they developed in China. From doing homework and test prep for subjects you need extra support in during classes you do not, to sleeping through classes you do not need instruction in, in order to "rest up" for classes you do, participants developed strategies for efficient use of their time in pursuit of their test-

taking goals. Participants discussed how test success was often due to their efficiency as test preparers. For some, this included taking copious notes throughout class and writing down every word they could in order to practice and memorize test material. One participant suggested that you do not write an essay, you simply learn to memorize the best essay word for word.

Most participants also discussed the widespread use of cheating by individual students, and they cited common cheating strategies taken up by individual students. Kieran suggests that teachers are complicit in this, that they do not discuss it, but that they are very aware of wide-spread cheating. In all cases, participants suggested this cheating was born of test pressure, and the need to know information quickly. This may have also been complicated for participants because they didn't always understand, or see value in, this information. Furthermore, in some cases it seemed that they were expected to memorize information in an unreasonably short period of time. For some participants, this test pressure seems to have evoked panic in the face of being tested on information that was elusive and intentionally ever-changing, in order to sort out the very top students capable of answers beyond what may have been taught or explicitly expected.

Participants suggested that the pressure to assess and excel is now felt by younger and younger students. Participants with brothers or sisters talked about the perception that school work and homework is getting more intense for younger children. Therefore, the consequences of this central focus are also constantly shaping and informing school life for younger and younger children in China. Many of these ideas will be more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, which takes up globalization and its effect on pedagogy.

However, it is useful to note here that in the US, participants experienced instances of praise and finding self-worth and value beyond the test. They also experienced a definitive lack of ranking, and a widespread experience in the US of teachers and students not discussing

students as they compare to others. For many, this led to some initial confusion as participants had to adjust to what they perceived as a lack of clear expectation and a lack of direction. Furthermore, participants talked of the phenomena of having multiple tests in the same day in the US—an experience they discussed being entirely unaccustomed to given their experiences in China of having only one test at any given time. This led some participants to question the validity and uniformity of tests in the US.

Analysis: (Self) Assessment

The striking numbers of educational migrants coming from China to the US (Mazzorl & Soutar, 2001) may be explained in the role assessment has in informing the school life of students and the ways that their relationship to school develops as a result. As suggested earlier, teachers and students in China who were influenced by testing structures and facing dropping, or low scores, felt tremendous pressure to improve (Pederson & Liu, 2003), and this pressure was only compounded by the role of public ranking in their Chinese classrooms. It may be suggested here, then, that students who are seeking to come to the US are explicitly aware of exactly where they fall in the Chinese education system. As an obsession with testing structures continue to converge worldwide (Deboer, 2002; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Luo, 2012; Passman, 2000; Pederson & Liu, 2003; Spillane & Burch, 2006) more and more students will also be keenly aware of just exactly how they are measured and compared to their peers and globalization now allows for the educational mobility to defy these ideas and to find new contexts for success.

The modes for efficient learning discussed in this section by participants suggest that, indeed, school is an imperative of culture (Ogbu, 1988) – helping to form recognizable patterns which require certain competencies which students must learn in order to take part in society. In this way, when students make meaning of their own school experiences, they are bringing to bear

a formation of schooling that is cultural (Shimahara & Sakai, 1995). These findings confirm existing scholarship that states that the culture that school takes up then also seeks to govern the conduct and ideas of others. In schools heavily influenced by testing structures, these competencies, a shared school culture, include knowing what information to privilege, and what information to ignore, and being intuitive about the possibility for achievement collaboration—a cultural system wherein members work together toward mutually beneficial achievement outcomes. In the next chapter, we will see how achievement collaboration is also manifested in higher levels of schools and systems working together to create successful outcomes for students internationally. In the following chapter, findings, discussion, and analysis will be offered which tell the story of how and why participants came to the US, and how they are making sense of these experiences.

Chapter Five—Findings, Discussion, and Analysis: Globalization and Pedagogical Change

This chapter continues with a presentation, discussion, and analysis of the findings of this study. This chapter widens its focus, and begins to think about both globalization and pedagogical growth and change. Findings,discussion, and analysis related to both of these concepts will be presented separately in this chapter—and both will be preceded by separate introductions.

VI. Globalization

The block quotes/monologues presented in this section will be organized around the following themes: *Opportunities; Getting Ahead; Easy and Beautiful; Better Off Elsewhere; Adjustments; Generations;* and *Second Guesses*. These themes hope to illuminate the impact of globalization on pedagogy.

In *Opportunities*, Veronica, Jamie, and Li discuss the current trend of taking up study in the US, and the various factors that influence this, including the large presence of Chinese students in US schools, as well as social and business networking relationships in China. Li discusses how Chinese students use US high schools to game their chances at admission to US colleges and suggests that this trend is only growing. In *Getting Ahead*, Meng and Li discuss the global competition they faced to get into US high schools, and how their Chinese schools worked with them to achieve admission to US, as their admission to US schools also benefits the reputation of their Chinese school. Jackie discusses how, ultimately, parents seek out a competitive edge for their children, and are pressured to do so by the competitive edge they see other parents seeking out.

In *Easy and Beautiful*, Sylvia discusses how a US high school yearbook is met with shock and awe as she shares it with her friends in China, and Dylan discusses the assumptions her parents have made about the resources of US schools. Meng takes up the idea that study in the US, compared to study in China, is perceived to be more fun and more free. Dylan and Meng discuss the types of students that come to study in the US, and they suggest how this might be changing. Keiran, Meng, and Jamie talk about how Hollywood movies influenced their perception of the US, of US schools, and of American teachers and students.

In *Better Off Elsewhere*, Dylan confirms that her grades in China influenced her decision to come to the US, and that, in fact, her grades necessitated her education migration. She goes on to discuss how the US would give her the real skills she needs for what she wants to do in life. Keiran discusses how study in the US was the only possibility for him, as he acknowledges that he could never fit into Chinese high schools the ways he thinks he does in the US. Sylvia discusses how her family values happiness, and that this alone was the reason she came to the US—she has unable to be happy at her Chinese high school. Finally, Dylan takes up how the study of English in the US is necessary for those who seek international employment.

In *Adjustments*, Veronica discloses the difficulty of adjustment to life in the US, and she discusses how she copes with feeling like a "foreigner." Meng takes up how she understands why "foreigners" would not be friends with Chinese, and Keiran comes to terms with how his US school experience was different than in the movies. In *Generations*, Meng, Sylvia, and Yu talk about how their grandparents perceive the US and their reactions to the news that their grandchildren would be studying there. Finally, in *Second Guesses,* Veronica openly doubts her decision to come to study in the US.

VI.i. Opportunities

Veronica

They never had a chance to go the US, and all their clients and their bosses sent their kids there and they told them to send me to America.

I wasn't ever one of the bad kids, and they were used to me studying by myself because of the boarding school,

so it was like a really easy decision.

America has the most advanced education in the world, so I wouldn't be bad there.

I can learn critical thinking and I won't get worse there.

But when you come here, you realize that things aren't as easy as they sound.

It's tough.

Jamie

It's kind of trendy to go to the US.

It's like US high schools are the best, because they think it's easier to get a job in the US.

In terms of the high school facility, I think my mom really wanted us to see outside of China.

To get more globalized, not limiting ourselves.

Improving English is part of that.

Especially after my sister going to the US at a younger age, it's like you get more independent.

Like when I was in middle school I wasn't really independent.

I studied to get a good grade, because I had to study.

I don't know what for, but I just do it like a machine.

When I'm here though, I just push myself because I want to study.

My mom saw that behavior in my sister, my mom thinks there's some force in American high school that makes you just want to study more.

I'm like right in the middle of the trend.

There are more students in those international language schools, and it's more common in those schools.

But in my school, it's like a typical Chinese public school.

The teachers are kind of used to study abroad, but not quite.

Academically, they still required me to study with other students studying for Zhongkao.

They kind of understand that the work doesn't really matter because I'm going to America.

It's not common in my class, out of 50, like two or three did.

But I'm sure that more are going to America to study in college. That's more common.

The people start to understand that the earlier you send the kids, the more Americanized they'll be and they'll fit in the American society.

They think the American society looks fancy.

For lots of Chinese parents, America is the country of opportunities and high salaries and good chances to get a job,

you have a higher chance to be successful in America and get a higher salaries.

For my sister, she is studying at international elementary school [in China] right now.

They use the British system of teaching and they teach everything in English.

I know there's a friend of my mom, her daughters are in international schools too.

She sent her children to original Chinese public school for three years in elementary school, because they have more advanced fundamental education in Chinese and especially in Math.

They're pretty good at teaching young kids how to do Math, so they get a stable foundation of skills.

Then by 4th grade, she sends them to international school to give them better English skills.

Those kids are coming to the US for high school.

Li

High school and college in China isn't cheap.

Not as expensive as in America, but it's not small.

Most families in [a city in coastal China] can't afford that, but it's mostly about your grades.

If you go to a bad university in the US, it makes no sense.

You at least want to go to a top 100 schools.

If you're grades give you good expectations, your family supports you.

My class was a really good class.

I'm pretty sure the three that came besides me, the other girl who came here, she lives in [a city in coastal China] but came to the US before.

It's very common, especially in top middle schools or top high schools to go to the US. My school is pretty different from most in China, at least it's a top ten or top five school in [a city in coastal China].

It's still less common to go to US high school,

but the number of those going to US universities is dramatically increasing over the years.

Students wanting to go to American high school will increase because it helps with college applications.

VI.ii. Getting Ahead

Meng

Chinese students are really competitive for US boarding schools.

In our school last year, there were 200 Chinese applicants and less than 20 people got in. Like 10%.

For the better schools – Phillips, Andover, Deerfield – it's like 3%.

Like the top Chinese students want to go to the top US boarding schools.

I applied to like 10 schools.

Some did 20 schools.

You have to make sure you get in.

If we don't, you have to go to day school or wait for a year.

Chinese parents want you to go to boarding school, because day schools you don't even know who the home stays are.

In boarding school, it's much safer because the teachers take care of us.

I'd been boarding for six years in China, so my parents already knew boarding schools.

US boarding schools have a rank,

our school is like 30 or 40ish.

My dad thought it was good.

Li

But the students who go to study in America, the school looks good for that.

The people in China, they believe that your school is good if you send kids to America.

Because they think American school is better than Chinese schools.

It's pretty common if you decide to go to America, to take a month off.

TOEFL is hard for someone who's never been abroad before.

Meng

Many Chinese high schools, in order to get good reputations from students go to top schools abroad, they help you change your progress reports and improve your grades to impress the colleges.

It's like both sides benefit.

The famous school in [a city in coastal China].

Maybe it's called [coastal Chinese university] connected high school.

This one and [coastal Chinese high school] are kind of the same.

It's more famous than [coastal Chinese high school].

[Coastal Chinese high school] is just a high school, but this one is a really good college too.

That's why it's very famous.

I heard that they don't change grades for students, but a lot of schools do.

To get into high school and college.

I didn't want that, so I went to the school and asked the teachers to give me a progress report.

When I got it, I found out that I wasn't that high in the subjects.

I asked, and they told me that since I was really good already that they improved one to two points on my grades.

Some students who got 60% got 90% on progress reports.

The better reputation a school has, the better students you get.

The top middle school kids want to go to the high schools with the best reputations in terms of college placements.

No matter if they want to go abroad or take Gaokao, they are the best middle school students so why not get them?

It's a circle.

Jackie

One of my best friends is really jealous,

she wants to go abroad too but can't right now.

A lot of students when I left, they started to think about it too.

Some of them applied and came here as well.

Some just stayed…

I'm not the first one, but I'm in the first group.

Like a whole group of people thinking about coming to the US.

I'm not the first one to come from China, like [name omitted], and [name omitted], and her brother [name omitted].

They were some of the first to come.

It was normal, not weird.

It was like, "That's their choice."

It's not normal for my parents, it didn't hit me that much

but for my parents they were like that's very young.

They saw more people going, so they wondered if they should do something.

"Should we go too?"

That's how some parents react.

Like maybe they might have an edge.

VI.iii. Easy and Beautiful

Sylvia

Since I came here my parents posted some pictures on the website.

So their friends think it looks great, and they consider sending their kids over.

They get influenced by my parents, and by me.

I show my life through pictures to my friends.

If they have younger siblings, or themselves, they want to go.

I'm the first person, so everyone else was interested in my life.

So at the end of the year, I brought my yearbook and they were like “Woah.”

We don't have those in China,

so my friends came over and read through it.

They'd never seen this before.

Clubs and sports.

In my school, we cannot bring our phone to school.

We can't take pictures, so we can't record daily life.

But in the yearbook, we had all those pictures.

They want a book too now.

To let them always remember the times they had,

but they didn't have the chance because they can't bring camera phones.

Sylvia

In my junior high, I was the only person.

They were so surprised, and they were jealous.

In 9th grade, they were studying so hard for the high school entrance test *zhongkao*. I was studying TOEFL and SSAT.

Every time they saw me, they said “You're in heaven, you don't have our things. You only study English.”

They studied harder, and we didn't have much contact. Their parents took their phones and laptops, so they can't access the Internet.

Meng

I went to middle school for three years in China.

I didn't take the *zhongkao*.

After 8th grade, I decided to go to America to study.

I went to [a coastal Chinese city] to take TOEFL, SSAT, and English classes to improve my English.

I took like two months off school, and then I went back to [an inland Chinese city] to middle school, but I didn't take *zhongkao* because I didn't have to.

My friends were so jealous, like "You don't have to study hard. Have fun, you get to go to America and it's the best in the whole world."

I'm like I took TOEFL and SSAT, which is much harder than *zhongkao*.

Like I worked hard on English, and they worked hard on Math and Science, but the Math and Science they had to learn I also did.

After I took TOEFL, I had a middle school tutor at my house to catch up in Math and Science. It wasn't as easy as they thought.

The reason people think you go to America is to not take *zhongkao* in China.

Like five or ten years ago, the people who boarded were mostly those who were trying to avoid the *zhongkao*.

Now it's the best students in China:

they have rich families,

they study hard,

their English is perfect.

Those are mostly the kids who go to America.

Before, it was only the rich people.

Now it's like all the people can do it.

Dylan

Yeah, for people studying here, some are rich and spoiled kids who can't survive in Chinese education system.

Their parents send them here, “Stay here and enjoy life. I don't care what college you go to, just go to college and study here.”

Not so much at our school though.

But, I have these kinds of friends, though.

Their parents don't care about grades, just enjoy life.

When you graduate, the company is yours.

Dylan

My mom thinks that America has the best education system in the world.

Because the universities are international, and the academics are really strong.

You guys not only focus on student grades, but also on different abilities like sports and volunteering and art.

It's different.

The main reason is actually that I wasn't that good at Math and Science.

And sports.

If I stayed in China, the only sport I can do is running. But here I learned fencing and figure skating.

I can do fencing at [name omitted], but I played hockey last year.

I'm not good, but I'm getting better.

Kieran

I'd never been to the US before I came to high school.

Like never.

A lot of people had done summer camp or traveled there before.

When I came to high school, It was my first time.

I didn't know really what I expected.

Mean Girls was the movie I saw about American high school, so I expected to see the jocks and nerd and all these groups.

Bullying and stuff.

My parents said it was private school and wouldn't be like that.

Meng

My mom decided we'd go to America by ourselves.

I was still very close with my elementary classmates, because this was my first year of middle school.

We had five students – three boys and two girls – and two mothers, so seven people plus a translator and a tour guide.

The tour guide was studying in England, so he was fluent in English and helped us.

We just went to America and travelled from east to west and north to south. We visited the top colleges in Boston, so I was like "Oh, American college is so good. I have to come study here."

My mom said ok. After that, we visited some boarding high schools and day schools, and all girl high schools.

American high school was so much different: we can do art, sports, and not just study. The focus was very different.

The principals told me that going to America for high school makes it easier to get into top US universities. So I told my mom I had to go to the US for high school.

She said we'd think about it.

Every single one of the five kids wanted to study in America after we went there.

America was so pretty, not like the dirty Chinese big cities.

They sky was blue, like in the fairy tales.

In China the sky is like green and black.

We could see blue sky and white clouds.

Then we went back to China and everybody talked to their parents, and no parent said yes.

They said we were too young and naïve, and we couldn't be there without parents.

I think I'm the one who most wanted to go abroad, so I argued and begged my dad.

I went to a lot of agencies for students to go abroad to study, and asked for all the materials and examples of students.

Jamie

My sister was really enjoying American high school.

I heard a lot about her life: she played volleyball, learned French.

She was having fun compared to my gloomy middle school setting.

Just finding a new environment, like what I saw in the movies. America. Like *Gossip Girl*.

Well dressed, good looking, tall, and they're friendly.

They have fun things to do.

And then here I am and the only thing I can do is study, the subjects I like

and the subjects I hate.

VI.iv. Better Off Elsewhere

Dylan

It depends on the country you go to study, and what kind of school.

Studying at [name omitted], I'm the first to come here.

We don't have many students from [inland Chinese city].

There's a girl called "[name omitted]", who graduated two years ago.

Shana is like a Chinese-American, but she spent middle school at an international middle school in [name omitted].

I went to public school.

For me, my plan is to stay in China to learn this history major.

My PE score sucked, like a C-minus.

How could I get into a good high school?

I had like no choice, and I didn't want to do Chinese international school.

Those are for like international students, you have to be American or something else.

Chinese kids don't really go.

Then another type of international school, they get taught in English but it's all Chinese kids.

Those kids are kind of like [name omitted]. They change a lot, those students.

Dylan

I think this is a funny argument,

but it's what people always focus on: what we actually learn from Chinese education.

The education makes us kind of lack creative ability.

For people who are good at Math and Science, Chinese education really makes them have a good foundation for those subjects.

But for me, I'm not that kind of person who's good at those subjects.

So Chinese education teaches me nothing.

A good thing is, from Chinese and History, the teacher forces us to memorize lots of stuff.

It's in my memory now.

When I start it again, it's like I learn easier than other people do.

Like Americans.

Kieran

When I look back, because we have this Facebook-ish thing in China,

so I look back at my friends and we're like completely different people now.

I'm having this open-minded learning experience, and they're still in the Chinese system and the maturity of people is different completely.

I may be thinking about racial differences and sexism in America, all these issues in society and the world that I wouldn't know if I was in China.

I never encountered those in China, it was just like we're in this little world.

When I came to America, it broadens my knowledge about what's going on in the world.

Although, because I'm a creative person, if I'm in China I wouldn't even have these creative thoughts because they wouldn't be encouraged.

Definitely not my blue hair.

Also, sometimes I thought that if I never experienced American education and stayed in China the whole time not knowing about American culture, I think I'd be fine..

Sylvia

My mom always thinks happiness is the first thing.

She saw me struggling for those not-so-important things,

and she wanted her daughter to be a happy person

and have a meaningful life.

Not knowing anything about life and only about studying.

I'm the first person, so I don't know what life in America is.

So my mom worried a little bit,

but she asked some friends who already had kids in the US.

Then she thought I should go too.

Dylan

For English [in China], other schools would usually use Chinese English books.

Like Chinese people published them.

We have multiple tries and some listening, speaking exercises.

It's like two peoples' conversation and they're talking about a girl going to a party or something.

Then the question is like “Does she really want to go the party?”

Multiple choice, simple answers.

It doesn't really work,

it's okay for those who are going to stay in China. But if you want to study abroad, it doesn't really work to do it that way.

VI.v. Adjustments

Veronica

I thought that the people didn't really care about your race.

I expected that I could just get involved in the circle with no problems.

I was shy the whole time, and I couldn't fit in because it wasn't like international students hang out with the local ones.

I experienced no racism in classes.

It's not like here I can ask anything during class.

I was depressed when I got here.

I thought it was really racist.

I thought everybody would be friends with everybody, I didn't expect much difference between here and China.

I knew it was different, but not that much.

When I first came here though, I felt like an alien.

Sometimes you just feel bad looking at them having fun, and you feel like you'll never in your whole life be able to do that.

I think I'm just off track all the time, sorry.

Kieran

After a month, I was like it wasn't like the movies at all.

Maybe it's because this is private school and a small school, so everyone's really nice to everybody.

I still struggle with the same problem, I don't know if it's just me or not.

I'll look at someone and see that they play sports and categorize them as like a mean person who'll bully nerds.

I still have those kind of feelings towards some people, even though I never talked to them, just because of the movies I'd seen.

Meng

I was in some schools on my visit and everybody was friendly.

Before I came, I thought I'd easily get along with Americans and go to their parties and have fun with them.

Do a lot of activities.

But people told me it was hard too.

Some people told me it's hard to be friends with the local people.

Other international students from Korea and Japan and Europe and Africa, you can befriend though.

You're from like another world than the day students.

They don't have to stop being friends with their old friends to be a friend with you as a foreigner.

Dylan

My parents told me a lot about the dark side of the society and country.

Whenever anything happens, there's two sides.

You have to think about both sides, not just a single story.

Most of the time we have arguments in our school, people say the Chinese government is stupid, and I say something to support the Chinese government.

Yeah, sometimes I really want to be American or white.

People think about that, like Black and Asian.

Even though I have these thoughts sometimes, I still am proud to be Chinese.

Proud of my history, country, language.

Coming to the US taught me to be that, kind of.

It's a really multicultural society in America.

Meng

Even in China,

I'm in my city and kids from another city with different accents and have different ideas come,

I would feel more comfortable sitting with my friends from my town.

We have different backgrounds and pasts, and those people I don't know them and I can barely communicate with them.

I can talk to them a little bit, but I don't know if I can be very close with them.

It's not racist, I don't know why it's like that.

Like in America, maybe you're from this town and others are from other states and they came here.

People from New York are friends with people from New York,

Chicago with Chicago.

It makes sense.

VI.vi. Generations

Meng

For many grandparents, they threaten that kids can't go or else they'll die.

But my grandparents are very open, both of them went to college.

For those older people in China, not many graduated from college.

They're educated.

They know the world outside is better, even though they've never been.

In China, the information for them isn't on the internet.

They watch TV and listen to radio, and newspaper, which is from the Chinese government.

All those things say is that abroad is bad.

America is dark.

China is still not that open, and the ideas in their mind is like America is capitalistic.

China is communism and so abroad for them is a bad place to go.

They were,

because they believed in President Mao Zedong, they thought he was the best.

For my parents, they were like “We don't judge him. We think he's good, even though he did some bad things.”

But the generation now in China, we are like he has a lot of things we don't agree with but he also did some good things.

We don't think he's good or bad either,

he's so-so.

Three generations of change.

My grandparents went abroad, and they wouldn't want to go. They've never been to the US,

but they went to Singapore.

They think they are too old to go far from China.

They've never seen a foreigner.

I'm in the capital of the province, which is [an inland Chinese city], and they're in an even smaller city.

They've never seen a blondie [laughs].

In my city, foreigners are kind of common.

But I have an English friend who visited and she was on the street and people asked if they could take photos with her.

She was from England and very pretty, skinny, tall, hot. Even in my grandparents' city, it's even smaller.

Every single blondie who went there, if they're pretty or not, just be blondie and everybody would freak out.

It's not a village, but it's like a 3rd or 4th level city in China.

It's the cleanest and prettiest city in the province, but it's not developed.

No tall buildings.

Sylvia

My grandparents couldn't even believe I'm in the US studying.

My grandfather, he always forgets.

A little bit of Alzheimer's.

So every time I go to his house, he'd ask where I studied.

I said the US, and he'd say "What? You speak English?"

Five minutes later, he'd ask again and show the same shock. "How do you understand them?"

[laughs]

When he was young, nobody spoke English.

He can't imagine that one could understand another language, so he can't believe I understand English and live here.

They're 88.

They've seen huge change, it's amazing.

Back then, they owned a camera store.

Back then, he's like a hero who knows technology.

When everyone wants to take a picture, they went to my grandparents' house.

They admired my grandparents,

but now my grandparents admire me.

Because I'm so different from what he can think of.

Yu

My grandparents were strictly against it.

They thought I was too little to go on my own,

but now they're fine because I'm still alive.

My friends were like just get out of this hell.

I had a great expectation for America before I came, and all my friends thought it was cool to get out of China.

A lot of the grown-ups thought I'd have a better chance to go to US college and I can learn to be independent.

Most people were positive, except the elderly.

They were more worried about me than against the idea.

But going to America is a very positive thing in China, it means you're smart kind of.

You get the chance, and you go.

V.viii. Second Guesses

Veronica

I guess I could've stayed in China, but I went here.

It's not like I did bad in China and then came to America,

so sometimes I feel like I don't know what to do here

and I think about “What if I was in China, would I do better or feel better?”

That's something that hangs over me right now.

Even though I tried as hard as before,

but I just couldn't get the same rewarding feeling.

Discussion: Globalization

In Veronica's "Clients and Their Bosses" we see some indication of why Chinese parents are sending their students to the US. Veronica says that her parents "never had the chance to go to the US" and "their clients and their bosses sent their kids there and they told them to send me." These statements are indicative of two themes that resonated with participants, and that seemed to take up the second guiding research question in this study: what is globalizations impact on how Chinese nationals with comparative experience understand pedagogy? What seems to come out in the findings around this is that part of that impact is that Chinese nationals are able to have a comparative experience due to an open and ever-changing China. Part of an open and ever-changing China is the fact that students are coming over in record numbers, and that this trend has various class-based, political, educational, and financial ramifications. For many, studying in the US was a sign of social mobility, and of families with a global reach—it was the mandatory entry into a certain degree of global elitism, the gold standard of school. The US provides an academic experience which not only sets them up a part from those who studied in China (and who they may later compete with for jobs in China), but was emblematic of a greater proximity to international networking and well-resourced opportunities. These ideas resonated with all participants, and are emblematic in Veronica's claim that coming to the US was about knowing that others were going to the US, and that those other students were gaining a competitive edge in doing so, a competitive edge she also had to secure—a competitive edge that was denied her parents.

Many participants talked about how it was "trendy" to study in the US, and that the perception of this trend generated the trend itself. Most participants suggested they were the first in their family to study abroad, or the first in their school, or they were able to discuss the two or

three students that may have come before them, but largely, the participants were pioneers—charting the previously unexplored course that is studying in the US as a Chinese national. As in any pioneer story, this course was not without the obstacle of blazing a trail for the first time.

Participants had various suggestions for and explanations of the current trend of Chinese students coming to study in the US. They suggested that parent social groups and business networks helped to foster this trend, and that parents shared lots of information around this. Like Jamie discusses, "the earlier you send the kids, the more Americanized they'll be, and they'll fit in the American society." It seems that the perception is that the earlier you study in the US, the better your chances are at admission to a top US college, and the easier it is to adjust to American customs and culture. Furthermore, it was the perception of participants that the longer you study in the US the more "globalized" you become, or the less limited you are, which includes a knowledge of English, something study in the US also provides for. In addition, as suggested by Dylan, preparation for English to be spoken abroad is not something that can be taught in Chinese schools— there is little to no emphasis on oral English, and a heavy reliance on even conversational English assessed though multiple choice tests. Therefore, many participants concluded that the earlier you can study in the West, the earlier you are given a head start in the competition for US college admittance, a head start in your advanced English study for the global job market, or a head start for getting jobs with a higher salary.

Some participants, like Jamie also suggested that some students benefit from the skill development they gain by studying in the two countries and that early study of math and science in China lays the foundation for tremendous success in these subjects in the US. Participants claimed that families gauge the success students will have in subjects in one country versus the

other, and that they plot an educational path to accommodate for this success, navigating between school experiences in China and the US.

Given that many participants boarded, and boarded very early in China, and that boarding in high school is quite common in China, a boarding high school in the US seems to make sense to participants and their families. But all participants discussed the increasing competition for Chinese students to gain admission to top US boarding schools, and that not attending one of these top schools was counterproductive to the goal of studying in the US itself. It is perceived that if you plan to study abroad in the US, admission to its top boarding schools is key to admission to its top colleges.

According to many participants, the reputation of Chinese middle and high schools were improved by making claims that graduates attended schools abroad. To that end, middle and high schools took various measures to support the candidacy of its students wishing to pursue school abroad. Most participants took weeks or months off of school to prepare for the SSAT or TOEFL tests that secured admission to US schools. While Chinese high schools may change transcripts to make students appears to have better grades, most participants suggested this was also the case in Chinese middle schools. The pressure to gain a reputation as a school which sends students abroad may be increasing, and this reputation attracts the best Chinese students to schools, regardless of whether they stay in the Chinese education system in the long run, or not. Having the best students, as demonstrated by test scores, may mean a school gains better school resources and better teachers. As Meng suggests, "the better reputation a school has, the better students you get…it's a circle."

Participants discussed the many perceptions they had, and their teachers, families, and colleagues had in China, of study in the US. Most common was the perception that study in the

US was "easy" and "like heaven." How and where these perceptions were formed is of interest, because they informed the perceptions themselves. For instance, as Sylvia discusses in "Yearbook" that when her friends see the yearbook she brings back to China, they are "like 'Whoa'" given how different this document seems to capture school life in comparison to school life in China where "we can't take pictures…we can't record daily life." Yearbooks in the US seem to attempt to do just that—they cover the various dimensions of the school experience in US high schools, the sports, the clubs, the activities, the dances—all which are not an acceptable, or frequently encouraged, part of the school experience in China. Participants discussed how many of their friends and classmates in China were jealous of their chance to study in the US, or they assumed that studying "just English," or not studying for the *zhongkao*, or *gaokao*, was altogether easier than any study in China. Participants suggested that a lack of test-taking pressure, and the encouragement to pursue individual passions and interests, were the envy of Chinese classmates in China.

These perceptions were also exacerbated by the US film and television industry which also informed the perception of study in the US—with participants citing *Gossip Girl* and *Mean Girls* as examples of US high schools they encountered in China. Many participants said they came to the US expecting gorgeous, well-dressed, tall people, the product of "fairy tales,"—many of whom they expected to be friendly. Many participants suggested that they expected it would be easy to make new friends. They also expected terrific air quality, white clouds and blue skies; an environment that they said was in sharp contrast to the pollution they claimed they experienced, particularly in major coastal cities. They also reported coming to the US expecting bullying and relational aggression. They had hoped that these negative experiences would be

tempered by attending a private, US high school, with the assumption that US public schools had more frequent instances of bullying and aggression.

Participants were frequently very quick to discuss the perceptions held in China of students who study abroad. Many talked about how it was assumed that if you study abroad you were rich, and that therefore, studying abroad was a sign of wealth. Some discussed that many rich Chinese families sent their students to study in the US and cared little of success—that their futures were already financially secure, and that studying in the US was about happiness. Others suggested that those that studied abroad gained a reputation for dodging the *zhongkao* or *gaokao* because they could not succeed at it. Some suggested that all of this is changing, that parents have different and changing expectations for the purpose of school, and that more and more families can now afford to send students to the US for high school and college, and that these students are not dodging anything, in fact, as Meng suggests, "Now it is the best students in China, they have rich families, they study hard, their English is perfect." This may also be influenced by the increasing competition for admission to US schools—as more Chinese families choose to send students to the US, US schools become more choosey. Regardless, more and more families in China seem to now have a greater sense of control over educational choices. Studying abroad seems to have become a sign of privilege and success, a privilege and success now accessed by an increasing number of Chinese families. While this trend has been steadily growing in coastal cities, participants suggested that this change is being gradually diffused to all the provinces of inland China.

Participants discussed that in the US they were able to pursue diverse passions and interests. They were also able to choose an educational system that was perceived as suited to their individual talents. They discussed how in the US they were able to wear what they wanted

to school, take pictures with their phones, and have blue hair, if they wanted to. They were often quick to note how social media allowed for them to stay in contact with their friends and classmates studying in China, and that the difference in their school lives was extreme. Reports of school life in China seemed to confirm for participants that they made the right choice to study in the US. For some, the idea that they were granted these freedoms, that they escaped the constant assessment of skills in which they did not excel, and that they believed that in the US they were studying at the best resourced schools in the world, with the best access to the best colleges, made the choice to study in the US easy. The push and pull of education migration for participants was quite evident.

However, for many participants, actual study in the US was very different than what was portrayed by Hollywood, or what they assumed it would be like, or what their families or peers assumed it would be like. Many felt isolated, or that they did not fit in—that they possessed different language skills and cultural understandings than their American peers. Some participants discussed the pain of seeing American students having fun and surrounded by those who spoke the same language and shared the same culture. This lead Veronica to discuss how she felt like someone from a different planet, someone who stood out, and someone who, perhaps, breathed different air, in the metaphoric sense—and that consequently, she felt, "off track all the time." Feeling this way put strain on studying in the US. Some suggested that it was easiest to be friends with students from all other countries—that making friends with Americans was the most difficult, as Meng describes, high school students in the US already have friends in the US, "they don't have to stop being friends with their old friends to be a friend with you as a foreigner." For most participants, the idea of being a foreigner was entirely new, and required adjustment. Participants began to see that American students and educators had

very little reason to help with these adjustments. The idea of "foreigner" and "host" in these moments become a very interesting cultural construction.

The combination of isolation, language barriers, cultural gaps, and Americans high school students who did not include Chinese students in their friend groups, or did not include them in the gregarious fashion that was expected, created Chinese nationals studying in the US who bound together. The essence of why these students bound together, and felt compelled to be bound together, lies in some of the ideas expressed by Meng. She understands why people from a particular town, city, state, or province would feel more comfortable sitting with each other: "We have different backgrounds and pasts, and those people I don't know them and I can barely communicate with them. I can talk to them a little bit." While language is a factor in this for participants, so is a shared history. Many participants seemed to understand why Americans would not want to be friends with them, as if these ideas were mutual, natural, and universal. Part of this might be due to their emergent consciousness around their own race and the construction and issues inherent in race. Participants talked about how they solidified and retreated into their identity as Chinese nationals—that they proudly defended Chinese values and politics, and that the US helped to strengthen these ideas. Participants also discussed how they carried their understanding of US students, largely informed by film and television, with them to study in the US, and that these understandings informed the experience of meeting and interacting with students in the US, as Kieran assumes, that if he meets a jock in the USthat jock will bully nerds. These assumptions may color and inform the experience of studying in the US as Chinese students navigate the interpersonal dimensions of their school experiences and their relationships with Americans.

Jackie talks about the tremendous change in China that she has witnessed during her own lifetime. Many participants discussed the changes they have seen in China over their own lifetimes, and then discussed the changes they believe their parents and grandparents have witnessed. For some, grandparents have never travelled outside China or met foreigners. Participants suggested that their grandparents were largely informed about the US through Chinese government-controlled news media. As Meng suggests, for her grandparents, "America is dark"—a place inherently bad, or unknown. Many participants discussed the difficulty of convincing grandparents that study in the US was developmentally appropriate, safe, wise, and in some cases, even possible. These participants, most of whom are the first generation to attend school in the West, represent tremendous change in what is possible for the Chinese student—they are pioneers.

Participants also discussed anxiety around the decision they made to study in the US and what is at stake. For many, they felt that studying in the US was a gamble, and they were often in a state of determining if the gamble was the right one, or not. Failures in school, or in interpersonal relationships, or in the ability to succeed in individuals' interests, or pursue passions, or engage in American culture, or have American friends, was often seen as signs of having not made the right decision, of not succeeding. For many, these tensions were ever present, and a source of depression, sadness, doubt, and fear. As Veronica says, she is constantly asking herself "What if I was in China, would I do better, or feel better?" Participants discussed how the weight of the gamble they chose to make, and the work they took up in the US, academically done entirely in English, was tremendous—it was not easy and far from beautiful.

Analysis: Globalization

Chinese students are drawn to study in the US by the sheer volume of other Chinese students studying in the US—and this motivation is consistent with the experience of Chinese students found throughout the US at TABS member boarding schools (TABS, 2012, p.15). The growing number of Chinese students who study in the US, now a first-choice destination for Chinese students (TABS, 2012, p. 19) believe they are in better proximity to the study of English as a language and US culture—these are all things that are seen as beneficial to admission to top US colleges, which it is assumed is a direct gateway to the international job market. But these student are also often reacting to what they held was a prison-like system of standardized testing (Luo, 2012; Zhao, 2014).

The draw to the US may be the assumption that a testing system does not direct all teaching and learning and that students can find value, and be of value, in different ways. It is not exactly better resources (TABS, 2012, p. 18), indeed, these assumptions are far more nuanced. Rather, study in the US means a closer proximity to more diverse opportunities and possibilities to be and to become—the chokehold of standardized testing in China prescribes a clear, direct, and, for a growing number of Chinese students, narrow path to college (Zhong & Yang, 2002; Zhao, 2014) and to the job market. Chinese students in US classrooms have escaped this.

The assumptions that study in the US is easy, or that people in the US are beautiful is largely a product of Hollywood movies and television, and in essence it is the structures of globalization that continue and will continue to bring constructions of American life into Chinese homes and Chinese movie theatres. But these assumptions are interesting—as American yearbooks and stories of high school dances, clubs, sports, dating life, activities, and "fun"

teachers in US classrooms seems to corroborate the Hollywood model. While a long history exists of China's idolization of foreign knowledge and foreign degrees (Pepper, 1996; Keay, 2009), for Chinese high school students today the historical relationship between China and foreign knowledge seems to have transformed into an idolization of Hollywood and the construction of American life (luxury, beauty, boundless possibility, and environmental purity) that Hollywood presents.

Chinese schools are working to give students the possibility of a Hollywood life, and all the perceived opportunity and mobility that goes with it, as they reinterpret the transcripts of their students. It is the very pressure of high-stakes, standardized testing (Garrison, 2009; Giroux, 2012) that makes this achievement collaboration necessary, and as is seen most recently in the US, when school funding and teacher income are tied to high-stakes testing structures, achievement collaboration is inevitable (Aviv, 2014). As globalization structures continue to influence school change, achievement collaboration at the national and global level will only continue.

Ultimately, this study documents a generational shift wherein Chinese students seek out foreign knowledge (Bastid, 1987; Pepper, 1996) only in foreign lands in increasing numbers (ICE, 2014; TABS, 2012). The consequences of this are seen in both the emergence of foreign theories and practices in reform guidelines in China (Che, 2010), and in the findings presented here, where new foreign knowledge is valued by a new generation of Chinese students, foreign knowledge that is related to both movement and measurement. Students now know which moves to which schools, internationally, are the most advantageous. Students must also know how to measure up in these new contexts, and they must take up everything demanded by the school culture to not only measure up, but to stand out. This study finds that the knowledge of

movement and measure are new areas of global proficiency that are being taken up as globalization impacts pedagogy.

These new bodies of knowledge work together to (re)affirm existing social inequities in China (Postiglione, 2006; Yu & Hannum, 2006; Pepper, 1996), as global mobility and gaming global educational measurement is a luxury afforded by the few. Regardless, the growing number of Chinese students seeking to study in the US (ICE, 2014; TABS, 2012) also confirms the emergent value of this new foreign knowledge, the possibility for its powerful impact in both cultures, and the new key to social mobility on a global scale.

VII. Tracking Pedagogical Growth and Change

Participants discussed the changes they say are impending in education reform at the secondary and college level in China—these changes include curriculum reform that is geared toward increasing critical thinking skills and creativity in Chinese students—qualities that are of great concern to the Chinese and claim to be missing from the experience of school in China. But critical thinking and creativity is not just missing from schools in China—participants discussed a similarity in the teaching of Math and Science in both the US and China, and a push for teacher-centered curriculum and memorization in both cultures.

Participants also discussed differences between English class in China and the US—and discussed how these courses prepared students very differently. In the end, Chinese students and parents report a general happiness with the education that Chinese students receive in the US—and they suggest that they are now more likely to share opinions, problem-solve, and are generally more analytical after studying in the US. Parents are pleased with these differences, and are satisfied with the changes they see in their students.

Block quotes/monologues will be presented in this section by the following themes: *Reform; Convergence and Divergence*; and *New Ideas*. These themes will work together to highlight the direction of pedagogical change. In *Reform*, Jackie talks about how she thinks Chinese colleges are reforming their curriculum in order to retain Chinese students. In *Convergence and Divergence,* Kieran, Jackie, and Dylan discuss how the study of math and science in the US and China are similar, but how the study of English is quite different. In *New Ideas*, Jackie takes up the changes she says her parents see in her now that she has spent years studying in the US.

VII.i. Reform

Jackie

Nowadays, what I heard, that they are trying to develop this whole analytical mind and developing creativity and thinking.

They're not reforming admissions, but within the college they are reforming curriculum.

VII.ii. Convergence and Divergence

Kieran

We get into class, in English (in the US) we might chat with the teacher about what's going on.

Then we move on to the last night's reading for History or English, then we just talk.

Like what you do think about the chapter, what are your questions, and the teacher will answer your questions.

After that, we go over what we're actually gonna do in class and what tomorrow's assignment is.

For Math, it's kinda the same as Chinese school.

It's more like “Here's an equation, remember this.”

Practicing and solving problems.

The more you practice, the more you learn. It's the same.

Our Science class in China wasn't really popular, it's more about equations because we don't have lab.

So science is a completely new experience here, because we do different labs. It's more hands-on.

I'm really bad with like theoretical stuff, like equations and things.

I understand it poorly when it comes to that in science.

But when I do labs, I'm really good.

It's weird because I'd never done it before coming here.

Jackie

If it's like science or math, it's more like teacher showing you.

It's the same as in China.

But if you're talking about like English or History,

it's more like a discussion than a teaching....

well, the teachers in China they basically will teach you like this: “This sentence implies blah blah blah.”

So in order for you to do well on the test, you just take notes.

Here it's more like students themselves throwing out the ideas, but the same time there's teacher guidance.

Not how to analyze, but you just throw your analysis out in the middle of nowhere

and then you start to talk about that as a group.

Dylan

In Science, we don't have Chemistry, Bio, and Physics.

We put them all together.

In our school [in China], we can do lab. It's like [name omitted—US school].

VII.iii. New Ideas

Jackie

Analysis,

that's what my dad told me.

He's kind of the one who sees the changes in me the most, because for me it's a gradual

building part of educating.

Like I gradually change so I don't see it myself that clearly.

But when I go back home, he sees a difference.

He sees I can start to work on my own, do analysis on my own.

Like about my life and how to deal with certain things, like problem solving.

It might just be because I'm growing up also,

but I think they did help a lot on problem solving

and all the daily life problem solving.

Discussion: Tracking Pedagogical Growth and Change

This section will discuss this study's last research question: how are these experiences informed by the global movement of educational reform and reform debate as posited by world culture theorists? In some ways, this study seems to suggest that the story of education reform in China and the US is really quite complex. It is not as simple as the US is becoming increasingly test-driven, and China is becoming increasingly more concerned with creativity and critical thinking. Instead, a more nuanced argument can be made about the factors that are working together to create sameness, and to create difference, and that ultimately, the emergence of test-driven instruction in both cultures is clear. What will ultimately be discussed is that these participants, as individuals, take up different threads of the enduring struggles in the global reform debate—that their educational journeys reflect a significant point of view—beyond the numbers, they are voices of the tens of thousands coming to the US to study. Like us all, their very way of framing and understanding the schools and situations they find themselves are informed by the socio-politics of the education systems in which they come.

Participants discussed the changes they say are impending in education reform at the secondary and college level in China, as suggested by Jackie", these changes include curriculum reform that is geared toward increasing critical thinking skills and creativity in Chinese students—qualities that are of great concern to the Chinese and claim to be missing from the experience of school in China. However, most participants did not note any change, or any sign of reform to the Chinese education system in their experience, or in the experience of their classmates in China, that promoted creative or critical thinking skills. In fact, most spoke of test-driven instruction getting more intense, more difficult, and more prevalent. Only participants

from Beijing, with proximity to the government center, discussed schools that took up new approaches to teaching, learning, and assessing in China, mostly in elementary school.

Participants discussed a similarity in the teaching of Math and Science in both the US and China, and a push for teacher-centered curriculum and memorization in both cultures in Math, Science, and in some cases, history. As Kieran suggests, in both the US and China, teachers will say, "Here's an equation, remember this"—while this may be germane to the study of subjects where route memorization is necessary, it seems that the experience of school in both cultures revolves around tests and memorization in many disciplines. This may be influenced by the proliferation of tests and structures for testing in the US, another result of education reform and the ways that knowledge has been constructed for students so that they may take tests.

Without doubt, this was not the case in participant discussion of English, language, and other humanities-based courses. Participants suggested there was tremendous difference in the way these subjects were taught in China and the US. At length, they discussed how the teaching of story, of group work, of writing, of originality, creativity, and class participation experiences that differed greatly in comparison to their Chinese school experiences. It was common for participants to report that while Math and Science seemed to have few pedagogical differences; English was taught radically differently than in China, and participants suggested why.

Despite whatever teaching methods or educational ideologies participants encountered in their US classrooms, participants report that they are generally happy, as are their parents, with the education that they receive in the US—and they suggest that they are now more likely to share opinions, problem-solve, and are generally more analytical after studying in the US. All participants suggested that their parents are pleased with these differences, and are satisfied with the changes they see in their students. According to participants, this satisfaction is influencing

more students to come to study in the US. Participants suggested how this is influencing schools in China to begin to ask why, and to question the need for school reform to either prevent, or prepare for this.

The lasting contribution around the implications and significance of globalization on pedagogy that this study brings to bear is that these students, and their presence in US classrooms, influence what is possible in those classrooms, and their absence influences the same in the Chinese schools they leave behind. The sheer number of Chinese nationals studying in the US, as represented by the participants in this study, will surely influence middle school, high school, and college educators in both cultures to consider reform that might better accommodate these students, either to keep them in China, or to better serve them in the US. How these participants, educated in two cultures, pioneers of education migration, fare in gaining admission to US colleges, and on the job market, is not yet clear. One thing is for certain, they not sitting idly by, instead they are major movers, representing collectively, and as individuals, tremendous change and tremendous possibility for supranational educational change.

Analysis: Tracking Pedagogical Growth and Change

In many ways, the history of China's high-stakes standardized tests (Pepper, 1996) pose a cautionary tale to the United Stated (Zhao, 2014) as we see the narrowing effect it has on student possibility and school culture. However, it is not be said that this narrowing effect has not already been take up in US schools—this study demonstrates how students experience the study of many subjects as very much the same in both cultures. This may also be explained by a world-wide fascination with PISA test data, and an acknowledgment that Chinese math students have consistently remained the very best PISA test takers (OECD, 2012). It is impossible to know exactly who influenced who in the convergence of methodology for teaching math

worldwide, and this finding affirms that the movement of reform is continual and it takes up many ideas at the same time (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Napier, 2003; Ouyang, 2003), all of which result in varying forms and meaning systems manifesting our various cultures of school.

School cultures are the manifestation of shared values and ideologies (Spindler & Spindler, 1990) as they take up and promote their specific models of education. These models of education are then put in dialogue with new knowledge, and new ways of seeing and thinking about the possibilities for education, and for meaning making, as Chinese students study in US classrooms. At the very heart of intercultural education lies cultural transformation. The possibilities for this in China, the US, and around the world, are endless.

Chapter Six—Conclusion: (Re)Shaping Global Players

Academics have begun to really pay attention to Chinese nationals in US classrooms, but too often, this discussion is purely quantitative. The story and rich detail of Chinese students gives way to statistics, as academics point to the tremendous increase in the numbers of Chinese students with global mobility. It is true that these numbers just keep growing, but it is also true that just discussing these numbers tells us very little about how to better understand and serve this population.

Ultimately, this study examines cross-border mobility in education, and the ramifications of such mobility in the experiences and meaning-making of individuals, families, and educational institutions in two cultures. The findings have potential implications for decision-making, programming, services, student satisfaction and engagement at American schools with growing populations of these international students. This study also has some of these same implications for Chinese students, families, and educators considering education in the US. This chapter will directly address my research questions,, and conclude with a discussion of implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Returning to Research Questions

Chinese students experience pedagogy as radically different in the US. While they are not always sure how or why teachers do what they do, they often have carried with them from China ideas and understandings of school which are challenged by American school life. Some of these ideas are related to the very purpose of school itself—what is the use of school and how should it prepare students. School success is a construction that is culturally significant, and a construction that changes over time. School success in China seems different than school

success in the US. These differences can become generational struggles between parents and children. Ultimately, the role of the teacher and the role of the student is experienced as being very different in the US and China. While traditional and progressive labels get thrown around without nuance, creating erroneous dichotomies, students experience these pedagogical ideologies as being very dichotomous in the language they employ to explain them. It is the role of assessment that seems to loom large here, as students suggest that this is what controls the very nature of school culture itself.

Globalization now allows for students to choose where they want to travel to go to school, and to choose the educational system that they think will best suit them, and prepare them for an international job market. However, it seems that schools are lagging behind in supporting the transition to school in the US for Chinese students—many of whom come to the US with tremendous assumptions about American teenagers and an easy school life. In the absence of these support services, students question their decision to study abroad, and struggle with the difficulty of both being a foreigner in the US, and the need to not be a foreigner in the US, to assimilate, to make American friends, and take part in American culture.

Ultimately, market forces will determine if education in the US is worth the investment to Chinese nationals. Educational migration, however, does have the potential to influence the curriculum, programming, and services offered, as schools compete for enrollment dollars. This competition will ultimately be seen at all levels of education, from universities to pre-schools, as the business of education can be lucrative. Furthermore, this competition will germinate into more institutionalized modes of achievement collaboration. The potential, however, for Chinese nationals now in US classrooms to be conduits of change, and to create new dimensions for education in China, and the US, are boundless.

Implications for Practice

The participants for this study were minors—14-17 year old high school students. Chinese nationals in higher education have been studied in the US (Ma, 2014). These studies do not take on the difference between studying in the US as minors, versus as adults. There is a total absence of government policies governing the study of international students, who are minors, at the US schools willing to take them. This number is growing, and students are willing to come younger and younger, just as schools are willing to admit them at a younger age. Given that these students are far away from home, most of them attend US boarding schools, although some US public and private day schools have began to find ways to provide boarding opportunities, and therefore become able to accept the Chinese students that want to attend their schools.. No policies then govern the experience of these students at these schools. They are full paying students, whose families absorb significant travel costs, school fees, and international tuition. They come alone—and often for the first time—to the US. No one, other than the schools that admit them, is ensuring that they are supported and are receiving a quality education. The nuanced experiences of these students matter to how we understand how to better serve these students, and underscore the critical importance of new policies that respond to the impact of globalization on schools in the US and in China.

It is important that I take up the ideas of xenophobia as they play out here in US education. It is widely assumed by US educators and policy makers that all those that attend US schools are either US citizens, or children of parents who are looking to establish US citizenship. The educational migrant who is looking to study in the US, but not gain US citizenship, is then ignored. This study also challenges the "model minority" stereotype and suggests that the assumption that Asian or Chinese students are clearly adapting and succeeding in US schools just actually hides, masks, and substantiates what is truly neglectful and racist actions on the part of

policy makers and schools, as they entirely under-serve and misunderstand a population they have come to depend on for significant, full-paying enrollment dollars. International organizations may also be profiting from the admission frenzy of Chinese students, while also under-serving this clientele.

In ignoring the needs of Chinese nationals in US secondary classrooms we are then casting these children to schools whose practices around how to serve these children goes unmonitored. Often, Chinese students in US classrooms have language needs that often go unmet—meaning that in only some cases are they able to access English language learning curriculum. While this was not the case at the school in which this study was conducted, not all schools that accept Chinese nationals have the recourses to provide English language learning support. In many schools, the parents of these students are also often not communicated with in their native language. Student support services are often not tailored to these populations, leaving them little to no guidance as they transition to US classrooms. As their school lives in China are often not understood, there is little connection, understanding, or acknowledgement of how their school histories impact their school lives in the US.

The gap between what US educators and policy makers know about the school histories of Chinese nationals in US secondary classrooms keeps them from better contextualizing and responding to the rhetorical strategies (orally and in writing), in and out of class interactions, class participation dynamics, and the general meaning-making of US secondary school pedagogical practices that Chinese high school students in the US take up. This group is understudied and underserved. Consequently, what is also not understood is the manifestation of success and failure as represented by their high school transcripts and their involvement in sports and extra-curricular in the US. These transcripts and high school resumes are often sent to US

colleges, and US colleges may also be unequipped to really understand the school story and college-readiness of their Chinese applicants.

To aid educators in clearly seeing these implications for practice, I have assembled a bullet-point list which draws on and expands the ideas mentioned above:

- US and Chinese educators must understand how culture informs the school history of Chinese students in US classrooms. Just as US educators must better understand the school histories of their Chinese students, Chinese educators, parents, and families who support Chinese students who study in the US, must understand the culture and history behind US systems of education.
- US and Chinese educators must insist that ELL programs are essential throughout the study of advanced, academic English at the secondary level in the US—this support will both assist in college readiness. Schools might consider developing new language to label the varying levels of pre-TOEFL, advanced language acquisition, so that continued association with ELL programs are stigma-free for Chinese students in the US.
- US and Chinese educators must work to provide more socialization and mainstreaming opportunities and combat the factors that lead to the isolation of Chinese students in US schools.
- US and Chinese educators must understand how culture informs the values behind rhetoric-based grading practices, and how culture informs our idea of the aesthetic as it pertains to the values behind our grading practices.
- US and Chinese educators must understand that American issues around race, class, and gender are culturally and socially located—Chinese students may have little to

no experience with these ideas, or the basis of more diverse or multi-cultural curriculum. Therefore, US educators must provide curriculum that addresses the gaps in what Chinese students may not know about race, class, and gender in the US.

- US and Chinese educators must develop strategies to aid in skill acquisition for Chinese students around class participation, critical thinking, creative and artistic thought, intellectual and artistic risk taking, and the development and articulation of original ideas.
- US and Chinese educators must provide parent and family communication in English and Chinese—as we consider how recent the change has been in educational mobility in China, and the new volume of Chinese students studying in the US, this becomes necessary.
- US and Chinese educators must provide parent and family communication around the multiple ways that students can be successful (and get into US colleges.) Parents and families should also learn about the narrowness of our current systems of US college ranking, and they should be encouraged to develop more nuanced ways of understanding the larger landscape of US higher education—i.e., Harvard University is not for everyone.
- US and Chinese educators should provide support services to help students better understand and then transition to studying in the US—this includes ideas around American teenage culture (not media constructions around this idea), American teacher communication, American philosophies of error correction, strategies for active learning and class participation, American figures of speech, American

rhetorical standards, the history of pedagogy in the US (why American teachers might do what they do), and American ideas and rules around cheating and plagiarism.

- US and Chinese educators must plan opportunities for sustainable professional development and cultural exchange for teachers and students.

Future Research

My continued correspondence with pilot study participants has suggested that they are now focused on internships—internships that they hoped would extend themselves to future employment and acquiring employment. Many are deciding between internships that might lead to jobs in the US and internships that might lead to jobs in China. What is looming large for these participants is whether they will stay and work in the US, or whether they will return to, and work in, China. What seems complicated here is what their US education has prepared them for. Pilot study participants suggested that a bigger concern is obtaining a visa, which may dictate what Chinese nationals study in the US, and for how long, as they find ways to game their chances with the visa lottery. Ultimately, this lottery decides who can stay and who must leave after, in some cases, decades of study and work in the US. Wrongly, many may assume that choice is always involved in deciding between living and working in the US and living and working in China for those that have studied in the US.

For some, there seems to be a disconnect between what they thought a US education would mean for their future job security, and what it actually means as they face a global job market, employment migration restrictions, and the realities of family back home in China, as well as raising their own children in the US. Some suggested that staying in the US was only possible for those pursuing terminal degrees in the US—that the length of time needed to obtain these degrees supported better chances for obtaining visas. Regardless, many question their

usefulness, and ability, to work in Chinese companies after having studied so long in the US. Some face the inevitability of returning to China for employment and for proximity to family they have often been separated from since they were fourteen years old. Future research might extend the ideas inherent in this very study, by examining how Chinese nationals, who have studied in US high schools and colleges, understand, and make use of, their education upon the completion of their degrees and their emergence into a global workforce.

To aid in clearly seeing the next direction for this research agenda, I have assembled a short bullet-point list which draws on and expands the ideas mentioned above:

- The impact of globalization on pedagogy in China and the US at the micro level, over time, and the consequential shifts and (re)shaping of school culture.
- The school-based stories of Chinese families, or the story of a single Chinese family, would be rife for continued study.
- Micro accounts could also take up the school stories of educators at a school, or schools, over time (Alexander, Tobin, et al., 2002).
- The impact of globalization on pedagogy in China and the US at the macro level, over time.
- The consequential shifts and (re)shaping of school culture as evidenced in school policy and educational reform.

Final Reflection

The counterpoints offered here to world culture theory underscore that indeed, students are not interested in standardization and accountability. It seems that the participants in this study wanted to get away from the testing structures of the Chinese education system. They also wanted to acquire skills to be competitive on the global market. The sheer numbers of Chinese

nationals studying in the US do not support the idea that there is a global convergence around standardized testing, in fact, these numbers support the opposite. Chinese nationals are coming to the US to escape standardized testing in China, and are compelled to do so by, among other things, the chokehold of standardized testing—the same chokehold that has produced consistently high PISA test scores for Chinese test takers.

The ideas, however, that the US provides an escape from standardized testing seems erroneous and contrary to what we know about the current trends that dominate the educational landscape of public education in the US. While private schools are not necessarily affected by public school mandates, private schools do participate in AP and IB testing, and students posed for admission to US colleges generally must take the ACT, or SAT, and if they are non-native speakers, the TOEFL.

The participants for this study carry with them lots of literal and figurative" 'baggage" as they come from China to study in the US for years at a time. We are all carrying out the enduring, cultural struggles of the countries from which we come when we travel to teach and learn (Alexander, 2009; Frkovich, 2015; Shimahara & Sakai, 1995). In this study, I was interested in looking at the ways Chinese students carry out these enduring struggles when they travel to the US for school. I wanted to know more about what they take with them, figuratively, when they travel for school, and how the lens acquired in school in one country effects what is seen and experienced in another. The implications for better understanding how culture intersects with pedagogy are limitless and so rarely taken up as we prepare educators for work in 21st century schools—schools which are culture reproducers, and which must more readily acknowledge and prepare for the impact of globalization.

One of the most important impacts of globalization on pedagogy is a shift in values. As these values undergird pedagogy, then we must account for the idea that the ways we make meaning of school, and the purpose of school, are also shifting. Therefore, our baggage, the enduring cultural struggles we bring with us when we teach and learn abroad, are forever shifting and reshaping. In this way, new visions for intercultural education are born.

I have been fortunate to travel to China to meet the parents and grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters, brothers, friends, principals, and teachers of many of the participants of this study. I have often thought that it would be a site for future research to focus on a few of these participants, and to examine their perceptions and understandings of their experience with education in two cultures longitudinally over time. It would also be illuminating to look at their family histories with education over time—grandparents, parents, children. China is changing—and these stories need telling and this research needs attention. In June of 2015, I will travel throughout China to begin some of this work, meeting, interviewing, and listening to the stories of education as told by the parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents of the participants for this dissertation, in the hopes that I may learn and write about family histories and the intersection and emergent nature of school and culture over time.

My great-grandmother was a one room schoolhouse teacher in Wisconsin in 1914—the daughter of a German immigrant. Nearly one hundred years later, I told kids to just "keep reading" on the morning of September 11th, from my own Wisconsin classroom. This dissertation is about both Chinese students and my own sense-making of globalization as a teacher and researcher. In listening to the stories of teachers, we see the stories of countries shaping and shifting. We see these (re)formations as educators (re)figure out what to teach, and how to teach it, and as they decide who should learn, and who should not. We must capture this,

like a billion linguistic time capsules, a world that now has limitless possibilities for cultural shift, intercultural appropriation, exchange, beginnings, and simultaneous endings.

Appendix A—IRB Approval

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Services
Institutional Review Board
1 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604-2201
312-362-7593
Fax: 312-362-7574

Research Involving Human Subjects
NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

To: Ann Frkovich, M.A., Graduate Student, School of Education

Date: August 21, 2014

Re: Research Protocol # AF071014EDU
"(A Young Idler, An Old Beggar): The Comparative Experiences of Chinese Nationals in US Classrooms and the Movement of Education Reform"

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details
This submission is an initial submission.

Your research project meets the criteria for Expedited review under 45 CFR 45 CFR 46.110 under the following categories:

> *"(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes."*
>
> *"(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies."*

Approval Details
Your research was originally reviewed on July 16, 2014 and revisions were requested. The revisions you submitted on July 28, 2014 were reviewed and approved on August 20, 2014.

Approval Period: August 20, 2014 – August 19, 2015

Approved Consent, Parent/Guardian Permission, or Assent Materials:
1) Assent 14-17, V. 7/28/2014 (attached)
2) Parent/Legal Guardian Permission, V. 7/28/2014 (attached)
   Alteration of Informed Consent approved under 45 CFR 46.116(d), no face-to-face interaction with parents.
3) Adult Consent, V. 7/28/2014 (attached)

Other approved study documents:
1) Recruitment Email, V.7/28/2014 (attached)
2) Recruitment Letter, V. 7/28/2014 (attached)

Number of approved participants: 50 Total
You should not exceed this total number of subjects without prospectively submitting an amendment to the IRB requesting an increase in subject number.

Funding Source: 1) None

Approved Performance sites: 1) [redacted]

The Board determined that the research satisfies 45 CFR 46.404; it is not involving greater than minimal risk, therefore children may participate in this research project. The Board determined that according to 45 CFR 46.408 one parent must sign the permission document, as one parent's signature is sufficient, and age appropriate assent will be obtained from each child.

Reminders

- Only the most recent IRB-approved versions of consent, parent/guardian permission, or assent forms may be used in association with this project.
- Any changes to the funding source or funding status must be sent to the IRB as an amendment.
- Prior to implementing revisions to project materials or procedures, you must submit an amendment application detailing the changes to the IRB for review and receive notification of approval.
- You must promptly report any problems that have occurred involving research participants to the IRB in writing.
- If your project will continue beyond the approval period indicated above, you are responsible for submitting a continuing review report at least 3 weeks prior to the expiration date. The continuing review form can be downloaded from the IRB web page.
- **Once the research is completed, you must send a final closure report for the research to the IRB.**

The Board would like to thank you for your efforts and cooperation and wishes you the best of luck on your research. If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (312) 362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu or jbloom8@depaul.edu and 312-362-6168.

For the Board,

Jessica Bloom

Jessica Bloom, MPH
Research Protections Coordinator
Office of Research Services

Appendix B—Interview Guide

Before the interview begins, I will say this to the subject:

> "This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. We are here today because I want to learn about your experience in education. We will conduct this interview chronologically, asking you questions about your school experience. We will start, to provide context, with questions about with your parents. Any information you can recall, or any stories you can share, that they have shared with you, would be helpful."

Questions for the first interview session:

Participant's school experiences in China:

1. What are your earliest memories of school?

2. What teachers do you clearly remember?

3. What is a typical class in China like?

4. What was a good day in school like, what was a bad day in school like?

5. What did school teach you?

6. What did you learn?

7. How did you learn what you learned?

8. What does school success look like? What does it mean to be the best in China?

9. What does school failure look like? What does it mean to not succeed in China?

10. How did you decide to study in the US?

11. What did you expect school to be like in the US?

12. Could you discuss any other options you might have had to attend school elsewhere?

13. How was your decision to study in the US received by your family, friends, schoolmates, teachers, community?

Background:

14. What do your parents think is the purpose of school?

a. How do they define school success?

b. How do they define school failure?

c. What should you be studying?

d. How should you be studying?

e. How do they view teachers?

f. How do they view the role of the student?

15. Where do you think your mother got these ideas—what stories of her experience with school has she shared with you?

a. How do you imagine her school life?

b. What did she study?

c. How did she study?

16. Where do you think your father got these ideas—what stories of his experience with school has he shared with you?

a. How do you imagine his school life?

b. What did he study?

c. How did he study?

Questions for the second interview session:

Before the interview begins, I will say this to the subject:

"This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time."

Participants school experiences in the US:

17. What is a typical class in the US like?

18. Do any teachers stand out? What stands out to you?

19. What is a good day in school like, what is a bad day in school like?

20. What are you learning?

21. How are you learning what you are learning?

22. So far, what has this school taught you?

23. What does school success look like? What does it mean to be the best in the US?

24. What does school failure look like? What does it mean to not succeed in the US?

Comparative Questions:

25. Can you give me an example of a typical teacher in China and a typical teacher in the US—what makes them different, what makes them the same?

26. Can you give me a typical example of the school experience in China, and a typical example of the school experience in the US—from your experience?

27. How do you think your high school experience would be different if you stayed in China?

28. Has your perception of education in the US or China changed? Can you explain this?

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