European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies
ISSN: 2559 - 7914
ISSN-L: 2559 - 7914
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/lit

DOI: 10.46827/ejlll.v6i2.379 Volume 6 | Issue 2 | 2022

THE WOLF AND THE TURTLE: AMERICAN OMNIPREDATORIAL AND CHINESE CIVILIZATIONAL-PROTECTIONIST TENDENCIES IN THE BICULTURAL CLASSROOM

Brant von Goble[i]
Jilin International Studies University,
People's Republic of China

Abstract:
Despite setbacks to global commerce and communication over the last three years, the United States and China remain closely bound in the areas of science, technology, and commerce. Even if their economies decouple, such is likely to take years. In the meantime, academic exchange will continue. So long as this is the case, effective cross-cultural education is bound to be essential to the peace and welfare of the American and Chinese peoples. At the heart of effective education is understanding, both of the academic content being taught and the lens through which students process instruction and student/teacher and student/student interaction. This is a matter of culture. Existing theories of American and Chinese cultural differences focus on opposing family and community values and on the individualism/collectivism spectrum. None of these theories are inherently wrong, yet they are deficient in that they fail to account for the most fundamental dissimilarity: that between the inherently slow-moving, security-oriented, and cautious nature of Chinese culture (*the turtle*) and the fast-moving, aggressive, predatorial and growth-oriented nature of American culture (*the wolf*). The *discourse du jour* of colonialism and anticolonialism proves no better, providing an inadequate means of analysis in that it only allows for the comparison of colonizer and colonized. Herein, we take a different tack and consider the previously unnamed and not fully recognized *omnipredatorial impulse* of American culture—that which drives American educational, media, and corporate organizations to expand and consume without restriction or regard for ethnicity, national background, heritage, or practicality. It is this organic, instinctive, and subconscious impulse that causes American institutions to strive for a unification of all cultures under a single banner that absorbs all that is useful from other peoples, discards all the rest, and effectively *Americanizes* everything and everyone with which it interacts. The Chinese have no comparable impulse at the global scale, being content to engage in commerce with a focus on practical, regional geopolitics. But they are intensively protective of their culture and civilization, which stands to frustrate the American instinct and complicate interaction between the nations. How these competing and conflicting behavioural patterns developed and how they function in the classroom are matters worthy of discussion and consideration. By developing and expanding upon the concept of the

[i] Correspondence: email bvongoble@jisu.edu.cn

omnipredatorial impulse, contrasting it to China's unexpansive culture, and assessing their respective influence on American and Chinese educational mindsets, this research will develop a more effective model of intercultural classroom dynamics.

Keywords: China, United States, bicultural education, expansiveness

1. The Wolf and the City on a Hill: Myths and Metaphors of the American People

Since the beginning of the post-war era, American culture has proven extraordinarily adjustable, exportable, and profitable. The American film industry now makes more money overseas than at home, meaning that international tastes and preferences are more relevant than distinctly American ones (Ross, 2020). The American fast-food industry has proven similarly adaptable, with major chains, such as KFC, extensively reformulating and redesigning their products, menu, and presentation (Stern, 2010).

Other elements of American culture—the romanticized sense of freedom, the open road, and the spirit of independence—have been adopted by Western and non-Western cultures alike, with varying degrees of fidelity and enthusiasm (Crothers, 2021). This was not an organic process. The popularity of KFC, McDonald's, and Harley Davidson is no more a product of natural law or inevitable outcomes than was the victory of the Allies in the Second World War. In both cases, deliberate efforts were made—some more successful than others—to achieve victory for a particular way of life.

A primary thesis of this paper is that American cultural growth is not primarily the result of colonialism or even neo-colonialism, with the latter being defined as "*the actions and effects of certain remnant features and agents of the colonial era in a given society*," (Afisi, n.d.). Rather, the expansiveness of American culture is driven by something broader, more inclusive, and more aspirational than that which motivated the European powers to expand their presence.

To understand this, one must turn to the foundational myths of a nation. At its heart, the American foundational myth is religious. The notion of the United States as a "*city on a hill*," a beacon of righteousness to the world predates the nation herself. In 1630—more than 150 years before the United States declared its independence from Great Britain—John Winthrop, an attorney and the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, declared that "*we shall be as a city upon a hill*," (Engen, 2020). This explicitly mystical imagery was expanded upon at least through the 1980s, when President Reagan declared that "*there was some divine plan that placed this great continent between two oceans to be sought out by those who were possessed of an abiding love of freedom and a special kind of courage*," (Engen).

Winthrop's language was that of a *colonist* but dissimilar from that of the conventional colonialist. The conventional colonialist may seek to *better* a people or place, but rarely does he seek to outright replace his homeland with something superior. The history of Britain's involvement in India was extractive, with an estimated 45 trillion United States dollars of wealth removed from India between 1765 (when the East India Company took control of much of the subcontinent) to the founding of the Indian Republic in 1950 (Bhuyan & Sharma, 2019). However much or little the individual foreign soldiers or merchants thought of India and her people, their

purpose for being on the subcontinent was to collect money and goods for the British crown and powerful British business interests.

In contrast, the United States was *home* to its settlers. That the settlers were also colonists was undeniable, but they perceived the people and nation as a *blank slate* upon which they build something that far surpassed the barbarism, *impurity*, and decadence of the old country (Hopley, 2022). Stated another way, the proto-American mindset was uniquely defined by *zealotry* more than mere profit-seeking, with the latter being primarily the case in other lands (such as India) conquered by the Europeans. It is this resounding confidence—the notion that *what we do is right*, that the American people's way of life is fundamentally *universal*—that set the American settlers apart.

This confidence makes American culture *omnipredatorial*—that which consumes all resources, cultures, and peoples in proximity, either integrating them into the larger framework of *expansive Americanness* or destroying them. The integrative aspect of American culture is semi-syncretic in that it allows for the absorption of specific elements of other cultures (in the realms of food, music, technology, and fashion) while subordinating these elements to a consistently capitalistic, consumeristic, and acquisitive values system.

The rate at which (and the extent *to which*) such incorporation of foreign elements occurs is largely contingent upon the ease by which they can be commercialized, decontextualized, and repurposed. Thus, it should surprise few that the omnipredatorial mindset developed into its modern consumerist form during the prosperity of the 1920s, was disrupted by the Great Depression, and grew considerably *after* the decline of the European colonial powers and their economic might. Nor should it surprise one that the mindset is predicated on *endless growth*—a notion widely seen as being at least semi-feasible during the post-war age of American abundance (Higgs, 2016).

Endless growth is *the* recursive engine of the omnipredatorial society in that it *can and must* be reinforced with every iteration of consumption and production. Production must rise to meet demand, which must rise to meet supply, which must rise to meet demand yet again.

Growth defines (in part) life, which might suggest that the omnipredatorial society is a mere manifestation (or logical continuation) of the impulse of all that would avoid death. The Malthusian perspective on life and structural sustainability—that the number of organisms will grow to the point of exceeding its resources—assumes that equilibrium can only be maintained by way of periodic, harsh corrections. Lensed less through a biological metaphor and more through a sociological one, it somewhat overlaps with "*the urge to grow . . . the first and supreme attribute of the crowd*" as described in Elias Canetti's classic work *Crowds and Power* (1962, p. 16).

Yet none of these constructs perfectly describes the omnipredatorial society or its origins. Malthusian theory disregards the capacity of human and animal populations to remain stable over long periods, be sensitive to *small* changes in available resources, and adjust their rate of growth without the need for periodic collapse or imminent threat of collapse. And Canetti's crowds are destructively absorptive and indiscriminate in a way that the omnipredatorial society is not. *The crowd* may incorporate and consume all, but it learns little from what it consumes. *The crowd*, stated simply, is a hungry idiot.

In contrast to this, the omnipredatorial society expands through the cultivation of *individual desires* and by *expanding* individual choice, tolerant of almost any decision, so long as that decision is to consume more of *something*, with *what* one desires to consume being of secondary importance. One cannot neglect the previously mentioned quasi-religious mythology of the United States being a *city on a hill* when considering the omnipredatorial attitude. Synthesized with this presumption—that of the United States being a beacon of values to the world—the purpose of American culture becomes clear: to promote *growth and consumption* and to promote choice, with the caveat that such choice must entail choosing to grow and consume.

The omnipredatorial society—that which must grow without limits—must *discourage* some exercises of free will, just as it encourages others. Individualism *must* be actively promoted, even if the individual would rather live in a state of greater communion with others. At the macroscale, this is evidenced in the largely American-led global fight against Communism, an endeavour that began in 1918, when thousands of American soldiers were deployed to Russia and fought against the Bolsheviks—a little-known mission known as the *Polar Bear Expedition* (Miller, 2019). And it continued at scale until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was precipitated by American military and intelligence-sector actions around the world. Such actions included the toppling of leftist governments (Iran); the capture, torture, and execution of political figures (South America); and antiunion and anti-Communist actions throughout the United States (the House un-American Activities Committee and the Communist Control Act of 1954) (Alvandi & Gasiorowski, 2019; Click, 2009; Margaritoff, 2021; Schultz, 2009). At the microscale, the educational system and social and peer pressure inculcate in students competitive and individualistic thinking from the time said students are quite young, sometimes to the confusion and consternation of those raised in more collectivistic cultures (Diamond, 2013).

Further reinforcement of this mentality of the radically independent individual is available through competitive games (particularly certain categories of video games) and popular media in which the fate of the world depends upon a singular saviour (Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Neo [of *The Matrix* film series], etc.). Such imagery is an embodiment of the earlier Christian tradition of seeing the world's fate as resting on a singular, divine hero and the decidedly Germanic (Nietzschean) replacement of the Christ with the Self.

The people of the omnipredatorial society strive together only insofar as they have overlapping objectives. One of the few exceptions to this is *warfare*, in which the commonweal is placed above the individual (if never so much as to prevent the making of profits by defence contractors) and which serves as one of the few rallying points within the omnipredatorial culture. The self-reinforcing mechanism of the omnipredatorial/individualistic mindset is evidenced by the decline in *social capital* (values and resources that allow people to work together), growing numbers of isolated individuals, and greater reliance of the power elite on *permanent emergency* as a unifying force (Beilock, 2020; Neocleous, 2006; Putnam, 2000). And as the omnipredatorial tendency further strengthens itself, militarism is almost certainly bound to increase, with it being one of the few (if not the only) way to coerce the cultivated individualists and consumers of the omnipredatorial society to work together with any degree of consistency or dedication.

The omnipredatorial mindset is *schizoid* in that it is simultaneously manically optimistic regarding the potential for growth and wealth accumulation and equally defined by a significant fear of societal collapse—the same anxiety that underpins survivalist thinking and its decades-long growth throughout the United States (Oprea, 2016). Within the omnipredatorial society, *grow or die* is both *a mandate* and *a statement* of what the members of that society have come to see as natural law. Taken together, the consumerist, technophilic, and militaristic strands of the omnipredatorial society cause the people to tend towards revering the tools and protocols of war, which offers both a compelling rationale for a common bond and an opportunity for individual growth.

It is within this context that the metaphor of the wolf is most appropriate. Wolves, powerful and efficient predators, can and do survive in isolation. The lone wolf (also called a *disperser wolf*, as it disperses from the pack into which it was born) may travel great distances in search of a mate or suitable territory, surviving harsh and dangerous conditions (Strong, 2019). Yet wolves are more successful in packs, hunting together. This—*cooperation for predation*—is not so different than that which motivates the members of the omnipredatorial society to put aside their differences and work towards a goal of resource acquisition and territorial growth.

1.1 The Omnipredatorial Society and Its Discontents

In its latter stages, the goal of the omnipredatorial society is not so much to make each man an island *in the general sense* as it is to make each man an *Alcatraz Island*—as fortified and inaccessible a place as one could find. As the omnipredator citizen is ever more deeply connected to the markets and the opportunity for individual consumer autonomy, traditional social bonds are proportionally diminished. To a degree, this is inevitable. One cannot choose freely when bound by collective or tribal norms. The individual, if to live as such, must be able to *transgress* the expectations of the group, the tribe, or (to build upon the primary metaphor of this section) *the pack*.

Yet this comes at a cost. The individual must be either hardened or organically indifferent to the desire for a *sense of belonging* with others or within a community. Endless competition necessitates as much. For those who find themselves deprived of this sense—something some very much wish to have—the path to discontentment, resentment, and destructiveness may be the only one that appears passable to them.

A principally American manifestation of this discontentment and frustration in education is the *school shooting*. The reasons that school shootings occur in the United States are complex, possibly involving (amongst other factors) everything from relatively lax gun laws to media attention to a growing adoration of antiheroes (Altheide, 2015; Gladwell, 2015; Masters, 2022; Shafer & Raney, 2012). And one should not overstate the statistical risk of death or injury from such a shooting. Less than 1% of all violent deaths or firearms-related deaths in the United States occur in schools (Walker, 2019; CDC/National Center for Health Statistics, 2022).

Yet despite the variety of motives behind school shootings and the infrequency of their occurrence (relative to other forms of firearms-related deaths in the United States), one should not dismiss their cultural significance. At a minimum, one can reasonably take as fact that most school shooters have less than singularly positive thoughts and feelings towards their targets

and intended targets. And school shootings have gone from being exceptionally rare to being common enough to garner frequent media attention—a decidedly disheartening trend (Gladwell).

Another sign of being less than entirely satisfied with life is *suicide*, most of all among the young and those in otherwise good health. In any society, some will choose to take their own lives, be it for personal, medical, psychological, or emotional reasons. The mere occurrence of suicide does not necessarily indicate a society in distress, but a significant increase very well may. From 2007 to 2018, suicide rates for those aged 10 to 24 increased by 57.4% (Curtin, 2020). The age bracket in question (10 to 24) is uniquely germane to educators as it encompasses the ordinary primary, secondary, and tertiary instructional period.

In both the case of school shootings and child/adolescent/young adult suicides, the total number of deaths and injuries may be less noteworthy than the upward trajectory of their incidence. The frequency of such unfortunate events has grown in parallel to the social isolation of young people—a point that should not be ignored (Cox, 2021). Any non-Western educator who intends to teach American students must be aware of the cultural and sociological milieu in which these students grow and learn. Just as important as this is a specific understanding of the omnipredatorial mindset, how it influences classroom engagement, classroom behaviour (and the potential for violence), student emotional engagement, and how this mindset compares to that of other peoples.

2. Seeing Inside the Turtle's Shell: Understanding China

Since at least the 1950s, when the United States Department of State *lost China*—meaning failed to correctly foresee and prevent the collapse of the Kuomintang regime—the West has demonstrated a flawed understanding of the country (Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 2013). In the realms of politics, human relations, and military actions and planning, the West has consistently failed to predict the actions of the Chinese people and government. This cannot be attributed to a simple misunderstanding of the data—the size of the Chinese population, the acreage of arable land, or the total mineral reserves—that define China. Such might well lead to *poorly timed* projections, but to be entirely off, regarding everything from the rise and fall of political parties to the Chinese long-term plans for foreign policy, suggests a matter of ignorance at the conceptual level.

The thesis of this section is simple: Westerners (Americans most of all) have failed to optimally engage with the Chinese people and government because of an inability to think outside of the expansive, individualistic, and omnipredatorial mindset. The collectivistic/ individualistic divide is not *wrong*; however, it is substantially incomplete. Herein we consider the Chinese people and nation on their own terms—hierarchical, consensus-driven, minimally interventionistic in foreign affairs, and stability-oriented.

2.1 Different Laws, Different Modes of Conflict Resolution, and Different Peoples

Legal systems affect culture, and cultures affect legal systems. This much is profoundly self-evident. With that in mind, we compare the American and Chinese legal traditions to address the matters of conflict resolution, respect for authority, and hierarchies of rights.

From its very beginning, the American common law system was adversarial. The prosecution (or plaintiff) and defendant resolve their differences by way of a battle of words, with the judge or jury supposedly serving as neutral evaluators of the evidence and arguments presented (Milgate et al., 2020). Although the system allows for *pro se* (self-represented) litigants and defendants, it is a highly professionalized system with complex and arcane terminology, heavy reliance on research to evaluate binding legal precedent, and counterintuitive procedures. Thus, the American legal system is difficult for the average citizen to navigate, with achieving legal victories being even more challenging.

Before the 20th century, the Chinese legal system differed from that of the United States (and other common law countries) in two critical ways. The first difference was that the Chinese judicial system did not function as a separate branch of government. Court cases were decided by government officials (mandarins) who were educated in the general Confucian sense but had no dedicated training in law. County magistrates, who oversaw many functions of the county government, served as investigators for crimes in their domain and adjudicators for lower-level offenses. Provincial-level bureaucrats oversaw capital cases and could modify or overturn lower rulings, and the Ministry of Punishment in Beijing reviewed and approved death sentences. The second difference was that professional legal counsel was forbidden, and all accused were expected to represent themselves (Meijer, 1984; Pan, n.d.).

The above is a distinction with a difference. The American system emphasizes combativeness, aggressive use of strategy, and pursuit of outcomes optimized for the individual. In theory, enough case law and competing arguments should lead to decisions that provide *the greatest good for the greatest number*. But this is more assumed to be a natural result of an evolutionary process than something that is explicitly sought. In contrast, the Chinese legal tradition placed considerable emphasis on harmony, with the highest mandate of the government (the emperor, more specifically) being to maintain this natural order (Ocko, 1988). Failure to do as much was seen as having consequences beyond those relevant to the individual litigants, with unjust rulings risking the punishment of the entire nation by the heavens in the forms of droughts and other natural disasters.

The law, both in how it is administered and in the actual code enforced, serves as part of a larger *matrix of values development*—that which determines how a society's values, ethics, and principles interact with each other and how they are transformed over time. The American legal tradition relentlessly promotes *adversarial legalism*, which is "*policymaking, policy implementation, and dispute resolution by means of party-and-lawyer-dominated legal contestation*" (Kagan, 2019, p. 10). In contrast, the Chinese system traditionally aimed to shape society by way of bureaucratic problem resolution, with an emphasis on individually and cumulatively considering the system-wide effects of decisions.

The American and Chinese respective matrices of values development are more than a matter of academic curiosity. They shape the way students interact with knowledge, with educators, and with the world.

The American is taught to regard victory as paramount, both as a result of the adversarial mindset that shapes so much of American discourse and because of the larger emphasis on omnipredatorial thinking. *Compete, consume, repeat.* This approach to learning is neither impractical nor bound to lead to bad outcomes; however, educators must be prepared to adjust their instructional style accordingly if they are not already acclimated to American thinking.

The Chinese are strongly encouraged to see harmony in the classroom and school as essential, being comparatively hesitant to confront and attack ideas they suspect are incorrect or questionable. *Cooperate, collaborate, comply*. This approach to learning is neither inferior nor superior to that favoured by Americans, but it does necessitate a different teaching approach, one in which the educator is more attuned to student engagement and interaction and less expectant of direct conflict.

Conflict resolution in the classroom is more than a matter of classroom discipline and the maintenance of order. It is an undeniable part of the learning process, by which students may refine their understanding of the material taught, how to engage in the learning process, and how to negotiate the complexities of life within the (almost) *total institution* that is the school. And dominant modes of conflict resolution differ greatly in China and the United States, be the conflict in the courtroom, the classroom, or in public and private life.

A more detailed analysis of the application of these concepts will be addressed in the third section of this paper.

2.2 The Turtle's Shell and the Great Wall: Education and Protecting a Civilization

Relative to an omnipredatorial society, China has historically been (and continues to be) closed culturally, demographically, and legally. More precisely, China is a nearly self-contained civilization *and* a nation-state. This alone explains certain fundamental differences in the Chinese mindset and its American omnipredatorial counterpart.

If one regards China as a *civilization* rather than a mere sovereign state, the rationale for a culturally protective educational system and the Chinese tendency to periodically seal national borders and discourse to outside influence appears neither mystifying nor unreasonable. Instead, these actions can be seen as critical to the continuation of cohesive civilization—a civilization with an extensive capacity to fuse foreign ideas with its core values and traditions, but that is better suited to cyclical than continuous foreign concept integration.

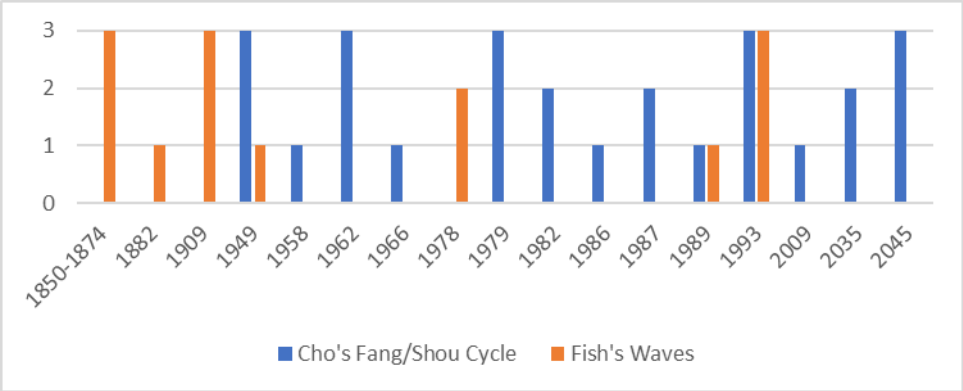
Like a curious but cautious turtle, China can be said to stick her head out of her shell only when she perceives the time to be right, and rarely long enough to place herself in danger. Cho (2020) describes the Chinese pattern of national openness and closure as the *fang-shou* (relaxing-tightening) cycle, detailing its specifics from 1949 to the present. And the cycle (with variations) likely predates the current Chinese regime by centuries.

The United States has occasionally imposed significant restrictions on immigration in both the general and national/racially specific sense, as was the case from 1920 to the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, n.d.).

Some restrictions on immigration reflected fears of cultural and ethnic adulteration of the American population, as evidenced by the long-since abolished national racial quota system that prioritized Europeans over Asians and South and Central Americans. But it is important to note that American borders never closed entirely, as though *all* foreigners were, for lack of a better term, *equally foreign*. It should also be observed that the United States implemented a massively restrictive immigration system *one time*.

In contrast, Chinese immigration and emigration policy (meaning the times during which Chinese were allowed or not allowed to leave their country) operates with a certain regularity.

Figure 1: Chinese Cycles of Openness and Closure



Note: In this chart, "1" should be taken to represent a condition of hermetic closure, "2" indicates an intermediate state, and "3" represents a state of openness. The lack of a bar indicates no change from the previous condition/no available information.

In Figure 1, Cho's fang-shou cycle is compared to a longer cycle of openness and closure documented by journalist Eric Fish (2020). Although these imperfectly overlap, they correspond more closely than not, suggesting an ease of observability and consistency over time. The Chinese cycle of openness/closure appears to average between 30 and 40 years, with the median time of openness being around five years. If the goal is to maintain a culture that is both congruous and dynamic, these numbers and this timing would be well-chosen. In effect, every generation is afforded a brief period of exposure to foreign technology and influence—long enough to come to appreciate their utility, but not so long as for that generation to be *de-Sinicized*. The subsequent periods of partial and complete closure of China allow for the ideas and engineering that enter the country to be thoroughly reformulated and adjusted to the needs of the Chinese people—to be infused with the *Chinese characteristics* that are essential to localizing foreign ideas, ideologies, and goods.

The omnipredatorial society *must* expand and consume if it is to survive, and any prolonged period of isolation is to its detriment. Inaction will be its certain (and likely *unpleasant*) death. Wolves are made to hunt, claim territory, and build bigger and better packs. Turtles are meant to survive, protect themselves, and live long and with an abundance of caution. As it is with the animals of this chosen metaphor, so it is with the United States and China.

3. Classroom Dynamics: Micro and Macro Scale

In this section, the aforementioned cultural elements and distinctions are considered in relation to four critical classroom dynamics:

1) Openness to new experiences/ideas;
2) Engagement style in the classroom;
3) Conflict management;
4) Motives for seeking education.

3.1 Openness to New Experiences/Ideas

Considering the already explored cycle of openness and closure and reviewing the trends documented in Figure 1, it would not be unreasonable to come to expect Americans (compared to the Chinese) to be more open to new ideas.

Yet culture and human nature are not readily amenable to such oversimplification. First, there is a positive correlation between openness to new experiences/ideas and intelligence, particularly among the urban Chinese (Shi et al., 2016). This suggests that more capable students will retain a desire to learn about, see, and engage with novel ideas and forms of knowledge. Second, there is an obvious division between ordinary students and those who have *volunteered* to study a foreign language or culture, either inside or outside their homeland. Even if the average Chinese and the Chinese government have demonstrated an ever-diminishing interest in international advancements, some individuals will remain exceptions.

The Chinese tendency to aggressively Sinicize technology, culture, and cuisine is consistent and has been thoroughly considered. And a national drive to Sinicize religion—meaning remove elements from religion the Chinese government deems to be destabilizing—is underway (Vermander, 2019). Superficially, this might suggest that the Chinese are largely unwilling to consider alien ideas without them being processed, repackaged, adapted, or otherwise given Chinese characteristics. This may or may not be true; however, the fact remains that any people—people within a civilization-state most of all—are more likely to appreciate knowledge and innovations if they have been adapted to their intended audience.

With this in mind, the dedicated educator hoping to teach new or foreign ideas to the Chinese would do well to search for similar concepts already part of the Chinese tradition and relate both to each other clearly and organically. The educator would also do well to take note of the steady, decades-long increase in Chinese nationalism and civilizational protectionism and revitalization (Weiss, 2019; Zhao, 2018). Foreign notions and philosophies can and are appreciated by Chinese learners. But they must be introduced with attention paid to not offending Chinese patriotic or nationalistic sensibilities.

American learners may be more likely to openly embrace new ideas than their Chinese counterparts. But the complex dynamics of the omnipredatorial mindset have combined with a growing (if narrow) reaction to the openness of thought in the form of resentment of/proposed restrictions on *cultural appropriation*—the "*use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture*," (Rogers, 2006, p. 474). To counter this, the dedicated educator must encourage American students to engage with knowledge from a foreign culture

(and possibly classmates from the culture) while actively advertising that the knowledge is part of a larger civilizational ecosphere, both contextualizing what is being learned and promoting its respectful transformation.

In all cases, whether teaching Chinese students, American students, or some mixture of the two (regardless of the origins of whatever is being taught), a light hand and a perceptive eye are key. The educator must be aware of the inevitable alteration of knowledge—the dynamic—that is part and parcel of the processes of teaching and learning, in which the content, the educator, and learner, and the environment coalesce into a pedagogical *mise en scene* that is neither replicable nor replication. It is this sui generis collaboration space that the educator must learn to improve and evolve so that students may have the confidence and the sense of intellectual safety to learn.

3.2 Engagement Style in the Classroom

Students trained in the Confucian tradition and those trained in the tradition of adversarial legalism will almost invariably interact with teachers and peers differently. Confucian thinking—which greatly influenced the Chinese legal tradition and its prioritization of harmony—also treats respect for authority (including teachers) as a given (Tan & Chee, 2005). Education is *received*, meaning that it is the duty of the teacher to teach and the duty of the learner to learn. The student should treat the authority/elder with deference, and the teacher should treat the student with benevolence.

This can be contrasted to the learning environment and relationships fostered by adversarial legalism. Not only does adversarial legalism *tolerate* argumentativeness, it sees the development of arguments as both a means of working towards the truth and as a way to advance one's agenda.

Neither of these traditions/educational styles is inherently superior to the other. However, they necessitate a different student engagement style.

When instructing students acclimated to the Chinese/Confucian tradition, the educator should expect students who are less combative, but not necessarily less engaged. Stereotypically, Chinese students overseas are described as smart and hardworking, shy and not social, and unassimilated (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). At least some of the perception of Chinese students as being shy/not social is a result of a cultural misunderstanding. *Engagement* in the learning process can be demonstrated in more than one way. In Chinese and Finnish culture, long pauses may be seen as respectful, whereas Americans are more likely to interrupt to demonstrate attention to the topic at hand (Ulijn & Li, 1995).

Effective engagement of Chinese students by a non-Chinese teacher (or in a non-Western environment) entails both adjusting the expectations of the classroom to the students and adjusting the expectations of the students to the classroom. Chinese students *can* be engaged, but the educator must understand that *engagement* and displays of engagement demonstrated *specifically in a culture of adversarial legalism* are not interchangeable. Rather, the teacher in a Chinese-dominant classroom must work to question students and to initiate dialogue between teacher and students and between Chinese students and their non-Chinese peers. And the teacher must accept that his or her role is one of presumed power and a certain respectability.

With authority and the receipt of deference comes responsibility. A dedicated educator will embrace this role, fully cognizant of the presumption of his benevolence made within the Confucian system.

Effective engagement of American students is both more and less straightforward. Americans are less likely to be intimidated by (or even respectful of) the teacher, professor, or scholar (Zhou & Li, 2015). But engaging them in classroom conversations is likely to be less of a challenge. For Chinese teachers working with Americans, the most substantial point is that respect should not be assumed. Rather, it must be earned through a series of trials—demonstrations of subject-matter competence, classroom-management skills, and professionalism under pressure. And once this respect has been earned, it must be maintained. Given the Confucian *expectatio*n of respect for an authority/educator, this process of actively earning and maintaining it may seem unnecessary to the Chinese teacher of Americans, but such does not suggest that the Chinese teacher will be incapable of mastering it.

3.3 Conflict Management

Regardless of the good intentions of teachers, students, and staff, conflict is bound to occur in the classroom. How to resolve such conflicts varies from one culture to the next.

The predominant Chinese approach to conflict management is (generally) avoidant, centred on maintaining harmony, and heavily reliant on the concepts of embarrassment and moral instruction (Chen, 2000; Doucet et al., 2009). The American approach relies more on vengefulness and hostility. The avoidant conflict-management style is acknowledged by Americans, just as it is in Chinese culture but is less likely to be seen as useful for maintaining harmony than as a sign of weakness (Doucet et al., 2009).

Transcultural educators must adapt. The Chinese teacher instructing Americans (or a classroom with a mix of Americans and other groups) will almost certainly need to adjust to the relative lack of subtlety of American discourse and educational interaction. Shame, the loss of face, and a desire to maintain harmony are almost certain to be minor influences on the behaviour of American students. This is not to say that a teacher's methods of engaging with students will be entirely different from those used with Chinese students. In hierarchical organizations, Chinese leaders may choose direct and assertive conflict resolution strategies. The *subordinates* choose to respond indirectly and with harmony-preserving strategies (Nguyen & Yang, 2012). This response to dominance cannot be expected from American students. Thus, the Chinese teacher may find that a more collaborative/non-hierarchical approach *or* a more authoritarian approach is optimal for establishing and maintaining classroom order, depending upon specific circumstances. The critical point is that the teacher must consider the possibility of pushback and resistance to demonstrations of authority in a way that would be unexpected from Chinese students.

And the American teacher educating Chinese students (or a classroom with a mix of Chinese students and other groups) may well discover that the directly confrontational American style produces confusion or withdrawal from open communication on the part of Chinese students.

Finally, there is the matter of leadership of a school. Educators working in a Chinese-run institution can expect a radically different approach to leadership and conflict management from those working at American institutions or institutions run according to American leadership and business principles.

Leadership in Chinese institutions is often defined by a top-down approach that runs from the highest levels (meaning, quite possibly, corporate headquarters or a government agency) to the lowest (meaning the teacher), with multiple layers of bureaucracy sequentially instrumentalizing and implementing commands from on high. Even if the leadership of such institutions seeks to emulate the Western model, efforts to decentralize authority in this system—to give individual teachers more decision-making power—are likely to be obstructed by mid-level managers (Lai et al., 2017).

In contrast to this, American institutions are often defined by the delegation of authority to the individual teachers. Relative to the Chinese approach, the American leadership style relies on greater levels of teacher autonomy (Zhao & Chang, 2021). This both affords the individual educator greater freedom and inevitably places upon that educator a greater cognitive and emotional burden from the effort of making decisions and accepting accountability.

3.4 Motives for Seeking Education

A critical component of effective education is motivation. Students who have no desire to learn are unlikely to do so, with *amotivation* (the lack of motivation) considerably harming the performance of Chinese and American students (Gale & Nowell, 2020). Rather than focusing purely on intrinsic learning motives (the desire to learn) or classroom-centred extrinsic motives (the desire for good grades, etc.), one might well consider the particular and culturally specific motives of Chinese and American learners.

The prosperity of the young is of great concern to the elderly in China. This is both a result of Confucian customs and traditions and the laws of the People's Republic of China. *Filial piety* (duty to one's parents), while diminishing in importance, is still a critical and widely accepted part of Chinese culture (Chow, 2006). Along with this is a related emphasis on the young providing care for their aging parents. Although this concept is not absent from Western culture, it plays far less of a role in Western culture than in its Chinese counterpart.

Chinese parents are also far more likely to be economically dependent on their adult children than Western parents. This reflects a radically different approach to social welfare in China and the West (Schwarz et al., 2010). Even in family living arrangements, there is a considerable difference between Chinese and American families. Elderly Malay, Chinese, and Indian parents expect (and often hope) to eventually live with their adult children (Alavi et al., 2011). Elderly Americans generally live either alone or in dedicated care institutions, with multigenerational families being uncommon (Kotlikoff & Morris, 1990).

These differences in expectations are reflected in the statute. Since 2013, Chinese law has mandated that children living away from their parents remain in contact with them, either by way of making visits or communicating with them through other means (Yu, 2013).

The critical role of the family to the Chinese student and the intergenerational economic relationship between young and old in China may well shape the mindset of students and the

goalsetting of students in a way Westerners might not anticipate. In Western countries, intergenerational wealth transfer is somewhat averaged by the welfare, social security/pensions, and higher education funding systems. Welfare provides care for the poor and disabled, social security/pensions provide essential income to the elderly, and the higher education funding system provides access to tuition payments to students.

To varying degrees, these programs exist in China; however, they are not as extensive or well-developed as their American counterparts. For example, the Chinese student funding system does provide low-cost tuition loans, but the system neither provides as generous payments nor the same extensiveness of access as does the highly centralized and highly subsidized American model (Wei & Wang, 2011).

Thus, Chinese students and their elders are dependent upon each other in a way Westerners are not. A young person's choice of major, choice of college, and choice of career can have economic ramifications on an entire family, not just the individual making them.

To the Chinese teacher of Americans, the high degree of individual discretion students have when selecting their majors and career paths may periodically lead to decisions that perplex the teacher with their impracticality. And to the American teacher of Chinese, the influence of family on study choices and academic behaviours may well seem no less opaque. An awareness of the differing economic and family contexts of each nation and group of students would do much to lessen this confusion and allow the teacher to motivate students more effectively by addressing students' career, family, and academic concerns.

4. Conclusion

This research provides some limited insight into what motivational and teaching strategies are most effective when working with American or Chinese students. These strategies are, as a matter of necessity, both based on an imperfect conceptual framework and relying on simplifications of a vastly more complex reality. The thoughtful educator should always be aware of the individual characteristics of students, the circumstances of the learning environment, and the relevance of the material being taught.

Such does not establish that the observations herein are without merit or utility. Rather, they should be regarded as starting points for further investigation into the fascinating matter of educating students from singularly different cultures and mindsets. The American wolf—speed and growth-oriented, expansive, and combative—and the Chinese turtle—slow-moving, security-oriented, and cautious—are as far removed from each other as vertebrates can be. But with time and effort, both animals can learn, grow, and be the better for it.

Acknowledgements
The author thanks the many students of his Issues in Bicultural Education course who contributed to the dialogues that were instrumental in the development of the constructs, understanding, perspectives, and ideas contained in this document.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Brant von Goble, Ed.D., teaches educational research methodology and cross-cultural communications at Jilin International Studies University. His professional interests include motivational theory, working memory, and second-language acquisition. He presented at the annual conferences of the American Educational Research Association (2015) and the Association for Psychological Science (2016).

References

Afisi, O. (n.d.). Neocolonialism. In *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*. https://iep.utm.edu/neocolon/

Alavi, K., Sail, R., Idris, K., Samah, A., & Omar, M. (2011). Living arrangement preference and family relationship expectation of elderly parents. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities, 19*(5), 65-73.

Altheide, D. (2015, Jul. 1). Chapter 17: Deviance and the mass media. In E. Goode (Ed.), *Wiley online library*. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ 9781118701386. ch17

Alvandi, R. & Gasiorowski, M. (2019, Oct. 30). The United States overthrew Iran's last democratic leader. *Foreign Policy*. https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/30/the-united-states-overthrew-irans-last-democratic-leader/

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (2013, Dec. 6). John S. Service—The man who "lost China." ADST. https://adst.org/2013/12/john-s-service-the-man-who-lost-china/

Beilock, S. (2020, Jul. 27). Why young Americans are lonely: And what we can do about it. *Scientific American*. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-young-americans-are-lonely/

Bhuyan, A., & Sharma, K. (2019, Oct. 30). The great loot: How Britain stole $45 trillion from India. *India Post*. https://www.indiapost.com/the-great-loot-how-britain-stole-45-trillion-from-india/

Canetti, E. (1962). *Crowds and power* (C. Stewart, Trans.). Viking Press: New York. (Original work published 1960)

CDC/National Center for Health Statistics. (2022, Sep. 6). Assault or homicide. National Center for Health Statistics. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/homicide.htm

Chen, G. (2000, Nov. 8-12). The impact of harmony on Chinese conflict management. [Paper presentation] Annual Meeting of National Communication Association, Seattle, WA.

Cho, S. (2020). The *fang-shou* cycle in Chinese politics. In A. Vuving (Ed.), *Hindsight, insight, foresight: Thinking about security in the Indo-Pacific.* Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies: Honolulu.

Chow, N. (2006). The practice of filial piety and its impact on long-term care policies for elderly people in Asian Chinese communities. *Asian Journal of Gerontology & Geriatrics, 1*(1), 31-35.

Click, K. (2009). Communist Control Act of 1954. In *The First Amendment encyclopedia*. https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1071/communist-control-act-of-1954

Cox, D. (2021, Jun. 8). The state of American friendship: Change, challenges, and loss. Survey Center on American Life. https://www.americansurveycenter.org/ research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/

Crothers, L. (2021). *Globalization and American popular culture* (5th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield: London.

Curtin, S. (2020, Sep. 11). State suicide rates among adolescents and young adults aged 10–24: United States, 2000-2018. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 69*(11). https://www. cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr69/NVSR-69-11-508.pdf

Diamond, J. (2012). *The world until yesterday: What can we learn from traditional societies?* Viking Press: New York, NY.

Doucet, D., Jehn, K., Weldon, E., Chen, X., & Wang, Z. (2009). Cross-cultural differences in conflict management: An inductive study of Chinese and American managers. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 20*(4), 355-376.

Engen, A. (2020, Winter). How America became "a city upon a hill." *Humanities, 41*(1). https://www.neh.gov/article/how-america-became-city-upon-hill

Fish, E. (2020, May 12). End of an era? A history of Chinese students in America. The China Project. https://thechinaproject.com/2020/05/12/end-of-an-era-a-history-of-chinese-students-in-america/

Gale, L., & Nowell, C. (2020). Motivation and academic performance: An inter-country comparison. *Communication, Society, and Media, 3*(3), 70-85.

Gladwell, M. (2015, Oct. 12). Thresholds of violence: How school shootings catch on. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/19/thresholds-of-violence

Higgs, K. (2016). A brief history of consumer culture. *The MIT Press Reader*. https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-history-of-consumer-culture/

Hopley, C. (2022, Sep. 02). The Puritan migration—Albion's seed sets sail. British Heritage Travel. https://britishheritage.com/history/puritan-migration-albions-sets-sail

Kagan, R. (2019). *Adversarial legalism: The American way of law* (2nd ed). Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

Kotlikoff, L., & Morris, J. (1990). Why don't the elderly live with their children? In D. Wise (ed.), *Issues in the economics of aging*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Lai, M., Wang, L., & Shen, W. (2017). Educational leadership on the Chinese mainland: A case study of two secondary schools in Beijing. *London Review of Education, 15*(2), 317-328.

Margaritoff, M. (2021, Sep. 27). Meet Félix Rodríguez, The CIA operative who captured Che Guevara and may have tortured a DEA agent. All That's Interesting. https://allthatsinteresting.com/felix-rodriguez

Masters, J. (2022, Jun. 10). U.S. gun policy: Global comparisons. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons

Meijer, M. (1984). The autumn assizes in Ch'ing law. *T'oung Pao*, *70*(1), 1-17.

Milgate, P., Le Cornu, D., Kelly, T., Dally, K., & Webster, P. (2020). *Cambridge legal studies stage 6* (5th ed.). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Miller, J. (2019). The forgotten Americans who died fighting communism. *National Review Magazine*. https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2019/04/22/the-forgotten-americans-who-died-fighting-communism/

Neocleous, M. (2006, Apr.). The problem with normality: Taking exception to "permanent emergency." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, 31*(2), 191-213. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/030437540603100204

Nguyen, H., & Yang, J. (2012). Chinese employees' interpersonal conflict management strategies. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 23*(4), 382-412.

Ocko, J. (1988, May 2). I'll take it all the way to Beijing: Capital appeals in the Qing. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 47*(2), 291-315.

Oprea, M. (2016, Mar. 20). Why America is obsessed with survivalism. *The Federalist*. https://thefederalist.com/2016/03/28/why-america-is-obsessed-with-survivalism/

Pan, Ming-te. (n.d.). "Your Honor, I am innocent": Law and society in late imperial China. State University of New York at Oswego. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/exeas/resources/pdf/your-honor.pdf

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster: New York.

Rogers, R. (2006). From cultural exchange to transculturation: A review and reconceptualization of cultural appropriation. *Communication Theory, 16*, 474-503.

Ross, D. (2020, Aug. 15). The impact of the international box office on movie making decisions. *Hollywood Insider*. https://www.hollywoodinsider.com/international- box-office-impact/

Ruble, R., & Zhang, Y. (2013). Stereotypes of Chinese international students held by American. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 37*, 202–211.

Schultz, D. (2009). House Un-American Activities Committee. In *The First Amendment encyclopedia*. https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/815/house-un-american-activities-committee

Schwarz, B., Trommsdorff, G., Zheng, G., & Shi, S. (2010). Reciprocity in intergenerational support: A comparison of Chinese and German adult daughters. *Journal of Family Issues 31*(2), 234-256.

Shafer, D., & Raney, A. (2012, Dec.). Exploring how we enjoy antihero narratives. *Journal of Communication, 62*(6), 1028-1046. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012. 01682.x

Shi, B., Dai, D., & Lu, Y. (2016). Openness to experience as a moderator of the relationship between intelligence and creative thinking: A study of Chinese children in urban and rural areas. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*:641. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/ fpsyg.2016.00641

Stern, S. (2010, Apr. 8). Fast-food chains adapt to local tastes. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/homestyle/04/08/fast.food/index.html

Strong, Z. (2019, Jun. 21). One key to national wolf recovery: Protecting 'dispersers.' Natural Resources Defense Council. https://www.nrdc.org/experts/zack-strong/one-key-national-wolf-recovery-protecting-dispersers

Tan, H., & Chee, D. (2005). Understanding interpersonal trust in a Confucian-influenced Society: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 5*(2), 197-212.

Ulijn, J., & Li, X. (1995). Is interrupting impolite? Some temporal aspects of turn-taking in Chinese-Western and other intercultural business encounters. *Text & Talk, 15*(4), 589-627.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (n.d.). Post-war years. https://www.uscis.gov/ about-us/our-history/overview-of-agency-history/post-war-years

Vermander, B. (2019). Sinicizing religions, sinicizing religious studies. *Religions, 10*(137). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020137

Walker, C. (2019). 10 years. 180 school shootings. 356 victims. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/07/us/ten-years-of-school-shootings-trnd/#storystart

Wei, J., & Wang, R. (2011). Student loan reform in China: Problems and challenges. In S. Armstrong & B. Chapman, *Financing higher education and economic development in East Asia*. ANU E-Press: Canberra.

Weiss, J. (2019). How hawkish is the Chinese public? Another look at "rising nationalism" and Chinese foreign policy. *Journal of Contemporary China, 28*(119), 679-695.

Yu, H (2013, Jul. 8). When filial piety is the law. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/opinion/yu-when-filial-piety-is-the-law.html

Zhao, C., & Chang, Z. (2021). Academic members' perceptions of educational leadership and perceived need for leadership capacity building in Chinese higher education institutions. *Chinese Education & Society, 54*:5-6, 171-189.

Zhao, F. (2018). On the educational significance of Hanfu to modern society under the background of cultural rejuvenation. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research, 1*(4), 74-80.

Zhou, W., & Li, G. (2015). Chinese language teachers' expectations and perceptions of American students' behavior: Exploring the nexus of cultural differences and classroom management. *System, 49*, 17-27.