

COMPONENTS OF CHINESE CULTURE AND EDUCATION

by

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The research question I explored is, *What are three of the most important components of Chinese culture and how do they influence their education system?* I have lived and taught, off and on in Mainland China, between 2003 to the present, for a total of approximately 7 years. As a result, I have quite a bit of experience in the country and have learned a lot from my own personal experiences and observations in the country in addition to my own independent reading and research over the years. I've read several books and articles about the country and its history as well as studied Mandarin and traveled extensively around the country. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that I have seen more of China than many, perhaps most, Chinese people. I decided it would be fun, and useful, to determine what some of the major differences between China and the United States would be to help a Western audience, not necessarily limited to U.S. citizens, understand what some of these differences are and how they influence education. Initially, I started out very broad and was listing several differences but started feeling a bit overwhelmed because I didn't want to leave out any useful information or interesting details. However, over time, it started to become obvious I would not be able to be quite as comprehensive as I had originally thought. After a discussion with my advisor during the spring semester of 2020 we decided it would be best for me to simply focus on three aspects of Chinese culture and then compare and contrast those with Western culture, specifically the United States. I immediately knew that I wanted to explore the concept of "face" as well as collectivism but I wasn't sure what to include as the third component. After some time, reflection and discussion with friends and colleagues who have worked in China I decided that Confucianism would be an

appropriate third component to include in my research as it is a very important part of Chinese culture.

The project I decided to create was a 3 hour video presentation about the 3 components of Chinese culture: face, collectivism and confucianism. Initially, I had some doubts about being able to make a video presentation of that length and wasn't sure how to approach it. Eventually, I decided the best way for me to create a three hour video presentation that might actually be interesting and engaging to a western audience would be to conduct interviews with other teachers who had taught in China. I think discussions and conversations are often more interesting and engaging than lectures or monologues. Many people enjoy talk radio and podcasts and listening to people discuss various topics so I wanted to create a similar experience that could engage, entertain and educate an audience. I interviewed a total of five participants for this project. three of the participants are American, like myself, and the other two are English. I recorded approximately nine hours of audio interviews and decided to use the first four interviews instead of all five because I decided that five might be excessive. At the same time, I think the fifth interview was just as insightful as the other four interviews so I have uploaded it to YouTube along with all of the other interviews uncut. The final project itself is the first seven hours of interviews edited and condensed into a three hour project. However, the entire nine hours of interviews are available should anyone be interested in listening to one or more of the discussions in their entirety.

As for the intended audience I have two different groups in mind. The first group would be teachers from Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom

or Australia who are interested in teaching in Mainland China someday in the future. I believe that watching (or listening to) my capstone project would provide them with much insight into the realities of life in China as a teacher. We discussed the three components I researched but we did not limit ourselves to those topics. We also discussed our first impressions of China, obstacles we had encountered as foreigners, advice for future teachers and pros and cons of living in China. I believe that all of this information would be very useful to future teachers.

The second group who I had in mind when I created this project was just a general western audience who doesn't necessarily work in education but is curious about China and Chinese culture. Some people might not have the opportunity or desire to travel or live and work in Mainland China, however, they still might be curious to know what the experience is like. For example, I have no interest in ever visiting North Korea but I am always interested in hearing about the experience of Westerners who have visited the country and what their impressions and experiences were.

Here is a link to the video which has been uploaded to YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbL08ubidB0&t=408s>