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A Qualitative Exploration of ESL Chinese Student Experiences at a North American Institution of Higher Education

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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A Qualitative Exploration of ESL Chinese Student Experiences

at a North American Institution of Higher Education

(TITLE)

BY

Kelly Anne Kawa

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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YEAR

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Michael H. Kawa and Colleen M. Russell Kawa who have been supportive of my decision to pursue a Master of Science degree in College Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University. I want to thank and dedicate this work to Daniel J. Hajek who has been through the hard times and the good times with me throughout this process. I also want to thank Dr. Charles Eberly, with whom I would not be able to complete my master's degree. Thank you for your insight and patience.

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Abstract

The present qualitative study explored the educational and cultural experiences of English as a Second Language Chinese international students while studying abroad at a North American institution of higher education. The research focused on the experiences of three Chinese students who were currently in their first semester at a Midwestern mid-sized comprehensive university comprised of nearly 12,000 students. A review of literature revealed that there has been a steady rise in international education abroad since the implementation of China's open door policy in 1978. The United States is the leading country to admit international students into their colleges and universities. The vast majority of these students hail from Asian countries such as China. However, an English language barrier is the biggest issue that most international students face. Combined with cultural differences and learning styles, research must be done in order to help students and universities prepare to accommodate students from non-English speaking countries.

Findings indicated that the students experienced learning shock due to the American learning style that required open discussions and participation in the classroom, a custom they had not experienced in China. The participants indicated that their education was a major focus, yet they were interested in learning American culture and building friendships with American students. However, the biggest issue they faced when trying to meet their goals was due to their lack of English language skills. The participants faced problems with expressing themselves, relating to their American peers, and understanding classroom material. The Chinese international students

indicated that had it not been for a language barrier their studies in America would be easier than the higher education they experienced in China.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As higher education continues to grow and becomes more globalized, American institutions are seeing an increase in international student enrollment. When international students study in American institutions they provide many benefits for the United States. They increase the diversity of student populations, add new perspectives to classroom conversations, and increase our awareness and appreciation for other countries, cultures, and languages (Lee & Rice, 2007). For many of these international students, English is their second language. It is important to understand the background, culture, and struggles these students face while seeking a degree from an American university or college. More and more students from China have come to the universities and colleges of the United States for their academic degrees since the initiation of China's open door policy in the 1980s. According to annual data reported from the Institute of International Education (2003, 2004, and 2005), Chinese students have made up the second largest international student body next to students from India in the U.S. since the beginning of the 21st century (Zhao, 2009). Each international culture and individual student experiences should be examined separately, as student learning styles and lifestyles vary throughout the world. Drawing upon evidence from an extensive review of literature on the internationalization of higher education and Chinese educational culture, the present study explored the nature of English as a Second Language (ESL) Chinese international students' experiences at a North American institution of higher education.

Purpose of the Study

“With world markets shudder, higher education remains one of the few bright spots in a gloomy global economic landscape, prompting already stiff competition for international students to become even more heated,” (Labi, Birchard, & Overland, 2008, p. 22). It is important to student affairs professionals to be aware of the growth in international education and the new culture that is brought to the college and university. These international students have different needs and concerns than American students, which is why this study aimed to heighten awareness of the international student experience.

Specifically, the current study explored the experiences of English as a Second Language for students from China who attended a mid-sized, North American institution of higher education at the time of the interviews. The students’ current knowledge of the English language, cultural barriers, perceptions of American colleges and universities, and the struggles they face were examined and explored.

The great importance of international students receiving universities has been commonly recognized. In addition to financial contributions to universities’ development, international students’ distinct demand from home students for various courses (such as mathematics and engineering) helps the receiving universities to maintain a diverse range subjects (Li & Stodolska, 2010, p. 390). The increasing reliance on overseas students has become inevitable and international students are no longer an optional extra for colleges and universities. “Therefore, how to improve international students’ study experience is a strategic issue faced by most universities given the growing competition between each other,” (Li et al., 2010, p. 390).

This study aimed to find suggestions and solutions that would enhance the student's personal international educational experience as well as the institution's international knowledge and programs.

There is limited current research in the area of English as a Second Language and student perceptions and struggles in higher education. "Despite popular clamor for more diversity and diversity sensitivity in the classroom, little research exists regarding how cultural differences and student perceptions affect learning, particularly with respect to ESL students," (Tan, Nabb, Asgard & Kim, 2010, p. 10). More specifically, there is little research on Chinese students and their experiences learning in America. Regardless of the common perception that English is a global language, little methodical information has been gathered on its impact on educational policies and practices around the world (Nunan, 2003).

Research Questions

The following qualitative research questions were used for the purposes of this study. See Appendix A for a full list of individual interview questions.

1. What struggles did you perceive you would have when studying at an American institution?
2. What was your reasoning for studying at an American institution and learning English?
3. What major cultural differences between your host country and America have you experienced?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the present study included the researcher's lack of English as a Second Language teaching experience. There may be some missed important topics and questions that a skilled teacher would recognize to include. Another limitation is the small number of subjects interviewed in this research. Each participant's life experiences in learning and culture will be unique to themselves; therefore, caution must be used in making generalizations from this data to other ESL students. Qualitative researchers work to understand the present moment among respondents, and no attempt is made to apply findings beyond the persons interviewed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2000).

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The History of International Education: China's Open Door Policy

In 1978 the Chinese government adopted a new policy that, to Westerners, is referred to as the Open Door Policy. "This policy has altered China's development strategy from one based on self-sufficiency to one of active participation in the world market," (Huan, 1986, p.45). Under the policy, Chinese students are able to study abroad in Western countries and foreign scholars are welcome to give lectures and seminars on various academic subjects in China. The Chinese government has made it easier for Chinese citizens to leave the country and for non-citizens to visit, increasing tourism, due to the Open Door Policy.

The Open Door Policy represented a continuation of China's efforts to modernize itself by learning from the West while maintaining China's traditional cultural values. The main goal was to import Western technology as a method for developing China's economic and military power. According to Huan (1986), during the beginning stages of the Open Door Policy, there was much apprehension to adopting the new policy due to China's long history of internal political and economic crises, its strong sense of nationalism and cultural tradition and its lack of international relationships. The Open Door Policy gradually changed China's political, trade and industry structure. It mixed traditional Chinese culture with Western culture and promoted the process of the country's modernization and internationalization.

Other than the increase in technology use, the attraction of foreign direct investment in China, and the billions of dollars in foreign trade, another positive outcome of the Open Door Policy was the increase of Chinese students and scholars.

A new generation of Western-trained scholars, managers and policy-makers is gradually growing up and playing an increasingly important role in various governmental, business and academic institutions. In the long run, this development will strongly influence the future direction in which China will move. The Open Door Policy has changed the Chinese leadership establishment. Today's Chinese leaders and high-level officials visit industrialized countries more frequently than their predecessors (Huan, 1986, p. 56).

These leaders are not only better informed on economic, political, and international developments in the West, but their behavior, mannerisms and customs have become more acceptable in the global community.

The Growth of International Education in the United States

In the past two decades, the multicultural environment of higher education has seen phenomenal growth. The countries with the highest numbers of international students are the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. It is estimated that global flows of students studying abroad will increase from the 2.1 million in 2003 to approximately 5.8 million by 2020 (Li & Stodolska, 2010). About 45 percent of these international students, roughly 2.6 million, will choose to study abroad in one of the top five major English-speaking countries including the United

States. The Asian countries of China, India, and Malaysia are the most dominate among countries sending their students overseas (Li & Stodolska, 2010).

No other country attracts as many international students as the United States. The United States hosts over 20,000 more international students than the United Kingdom, the next leading country, and more than double the number in Germany, France, or Australia who are among the next lead hosts (Lipson, 2008). The Chronicle of Higher Education 2008 report stated that in 2007 the United States hosted 623,805 foreign students (Labi et al., 2008). This was a seven percent increase from 2006. The majority of international student flow is from developing countries, particularly from China. The impact of globalization on education has increased the global market for higher education (Kumar, 2008). According to numbers based on research by the Division of American and Oceanian Affairs, Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, and the 2006 Ministry of Education of China, there have been over 200,000 Chinese students and scholars studying abroad in the United States since 1979 (Zhao, 2009).

The adaption of international education to China has greatly decreased the culture gap and conflict for Chinese students studying in Western society. China has made every effort to connect its educational system and curriculum with the world to make it easier for students to continue their academics abroad (Zhao, 2009). The higher education reform in China has adopted the American higher education's model, and all changes in China's system are done with globalization and internationalization as the main focus (Ma, 2006). The curriculum policy that once went from uniform textbooks nation-wide has changed to one syllabus and multiple textbooks, similar to that of Western culture (Wei & Thomas, 2004). For all of these reasons, Chinese international students enrolled

in universities and colleges in the United States can more easily adapt to American campus culture and can collaborate with their peers in their teaching and learning.

English as a Second Language: International Student's Experience Abroad

English has become recognized as a universal language worldwide. A language achieves a global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. Such a role will be most evident in countries where large numbers of the people speak the language as a mother tongue. In the case of English, this would mean the USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, several Caribbean countries and a sprinkling of other territories (Crystal, 2003). In business, education, industry, and government, employees are increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English (Nunan, 2003). English language barriers are a huge challenge, both academically and personally, that ESL Chinese students face.

When students study abroad, they move into a new academic and social environment. They have to deal with challenges that they did not face at home as well as challenges that do not face the country's native students. International students must read, write, and negotiate everyday life in a foreign language. They must cope with a new and unfamiliar educational system that might emphasize different values from those they know at home, whether that home is in China, India, or Spain (Lipson, 2008).

Due to the lifestyle changes that the students face, there are some big issues that could stand in the way of their academic success. According to Lipson (2008), "international students face three big issues in their academic work; mastering English, expressing their own viewpoints in papers, class discussions, and research, and learning

the rules of the academic honesty, as they are understood in the United States,” (p.21). International students are confronted with unique personal, interpersonal, academic, and cultural issues. Some of the challenges include financial concerns, language barriers and misunderstanding in communication, racial discrimination, lack of social support networks, culture shock, changes in classroom culture, and difficulty in establishing meaningful friendships with locals.

Wang (2004) indicated that Asian students’ experience could be best described as a series of challenges that were inextricably linked to the use of English language. ESL students are often traumatized by their new educational experiences while attending a foreign institution (Alberta, 2006). While struggling to make social and economic adjustments, Chinese immigrants frequently experience alienation in a foreign culture (Wason-Ellam, 2001). English literacy while studying in the United States is fundamental to academic success for Chinese international students.

It usually takes an English as a Second Language learner two years to become fluent in conversation and to gain reading comprehension skills somewhat comparable to that of a native American student. However, according to Black (2005), a minimum of five years is required for the student to acquire academic English or cognitive academic language and reading proficiency for college. Unfortunately, the English language barrier is seldom addressed in educational planning prior to studying abroad. As a result, the ESL learner is at a disadvantage. The lack of awareness of this issue by the student and their parents further aggravates the problem. The family, as well as host institution, may be misled by a student’s conversational fluency as academic competence. Furthermore,

the lack of immediate success at an English speaking institution is often mistaken as poor student effort (Kwan, 2006).

China, Culture, and American Institutions of Higher Education

An interest in what constitutes culture has increased over recent years as ‘sojourning’ – taking up temporary residence in another culture – has become more common (Gu & Maley, 2008). “Culture includes elements such as acquired knowledge, learned patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals and rules, a sense of identity and of history,” (Li et al., 2010, p. 392). For international students whose first language is not English, their proficiency in the language plays a crucial role in successfully completing their studies in an English-speaking country.

In addition to language barriers, there are many culture-specific factors associated with academic behavior and achievement. A number of studies have suggested that the amount of effort and hard work are emphasized in the Chinese culture. Chinese learners measure their academic success more by their effort than their ability. Meaning the effort to learn the material put forth by the student is more valued than the actual amount of information obtained. A large body of literature has focused on cross-cultural comparisons between Asian (particularly Chinese) and Western (principally American, Australian, and British) student learning styles. The studies support the view that Asian students have difficulty in adjustment to an educational atmosphere that requires more independent learning and less instructor supervision and guidance (Li et al., 2010).

“China is an integral part of the global community through international trade, technology, industrial and other economic ventures, and through collaborative research,”

(Zhao, 2009, p.1). Due to the increase in enrollment of international students from China, current research in higher education has focused on characteristics that highlight Chinese students' uniqueness. Much of the current research has been focused on understanding the motivation Asian students have for studying in the U.S., to identify the difficulties they encounter in the American educational system, and to explore the ways they cope with the struggles they face (Li & Stodolska, 2006). The pressure to succeed academically, compounded with the struggle to adjust to American campus life, can be overwhelming for Asian students. Chinese students adhere to the concepts of collectivism, interpersonal harmony, interdependence, cooperation, conformity and self-sacrifice for the good of the greater society (Kim & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Moy, 1992; Wang, 2001), while American students are considered to model individualism, independence, personal achievement and self-advancement as equally important to any contribution they may make to their field of study or to society (Kodama, McEwen, & Liang 2002; Krumm, 1988; Hofstede, 1980).

According to Pye (2000), Chinese social identities are based on particularistic relationships that radiate out from immediate family to extended kin to shared identities based on hometown or university. Chinese culture not only has an impact on the social identities of international students, but it also impacts their academic learning styles and level of comprehension. These ESL students believe that vocabulary, listening, previewing and rereading of the text are important to their understanding of the course material. They tend to rely on their notes and memory in order to recall what was learned in class. The student's beliefs reflect traditional Chinese learning strategies that differ from the metacognitive approach established for literacy immersion. As a result, Chinese

international students may lack engagement in classroom discussion skills and their learning may stay mainly at a factual recall level (Kwan, 2006).

A 1995 U.S. study found that 100 percent of Chinese parents surveyed did not actively participate in their children's schooling (Xue, 1995). Other findings indicated that Chinese parents placed high expectations on their children to succeed in school (Roessingh, 2006). Chinese parents strongly supported bilingual language acquisition to preserve their Chinese cultural identity as well as for career advancement (Lao, 2004). Due to the lack of family involvement and English communication with family members, international students may feel more pressure and alienation, hindering the ability to flourish while studying abroad. Education is viewed as a means to improve socioeconomic status. "Lack of effective communication impacts the efforts of school and family to provide collaborative support for the student to adjust," (Kwan, 2006, p. 3). School-based concerns with ESL programming include the lack of professional training for teachers, disruptions from pullout programs, and the lack of practice in English in the student's home life. The pressure for academic achievement in conjunction with the amount of language learning may become overwhelming for a struggling international student.

When college faculty and advisers are asked what academic issues are most pressing for international students, they often begin by saying how important it is to master English in order to succeed (Lipson, 2008). Comprehensive knowledge of the English language is a major criterion for academic success on a North American campus. It is just as important inside the classroom as it is for the students' life off and around campus. The question in English as a Second Language classrooms is not whether a

teaching method is good or not, but whether the teacher knows how, for what purpose, for what kind of students, and in what language situation a particular method is used to enhance learning effectively. In teaching Chinese students, a teacher must consider age, level of English proficiency, native ideals, motivation, and educational background, when choosing teaching methods (Xu, 1993).

Culture is not the only determinant of teaching and learning practices, preference and experience. It is easy to falsely stereotype students based on their culture. The phrase 'the Chinese learner' implies that this group of learners is homogeneous and that their needs for and responses to education and life are culturally predetermined (Watkins & Briggs, 2001). There are other influential factors such as the background of the students, their aspirations and ambition to learn, the learning environment, and the type of relationship they have with their professors and peers. These past studies present evidence of how ESL learning is restricted for the Chinese students. "Teacher training in second language instructional strategies is only one piece to the puzzle" (Kwan, 2006, p. 6). Intercultural communication amongst the student's American peers, relationship building, and cultural as well as institutional awareness must also be taken into account while looking to improve an ESL program and international student's experience abroad. Understanding the learning styles and classroom culture of Chinese students can assist in the provision of ESL and education abroad programming.

Summary

As a result of the adoption of China's Open Door Policy, the number of international students studying abroad in the United States has increased significantly.

Enrollment numbers continue to grow at American institutions of higher education. Many of the Chinese students partaking in overseas studies face adjustment issues at the host country due to English language barriers, cultural differences, and with the establishment of social networks.

Chapter III will specify the methodology used in this research to examine and discuss the experience of three current international students from China studying at a mid-sized North American university. The methods and data discussed will then be used in Chapter IV to identify results and common themes. Chapter V will draw conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research as well as university and college international offices.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research methodology was determined to be the most appropriate form of collecting data because it allowed research participants the freedom to share information about their personal experiences. The principal investigator (PI) analyzed data gathered through in-depth interviews with three international students from China to shed light on their experience as a student studying abroad in the United States. This present study was conducted by an investigator who experienced the role of an international student in Australia, and allowed the researcher to have a better insight into which questions to ask Chinese students to understand their personal experiences.

Participants

Three international students who were studying abroad at a mid-sized North American university at the time of the study were interviewed. Each participant was a Chinese citizen taking courses in the United States for the first time. The participants were interviewed individually and were able to choose the time and location when they felt most comfortable. The researcher worked with the International Office at the site university in order to gather a list of current international students from China. Out of the eight student names given, three students volunteered to participate. Each participant indicated that they have been learning English in school beginning at a young age.

Participant 1

- Had been learning English since he was 7 years old.
- Is a Graduate student.
- Is in his first semester abroad in America.

Participant 2

- Had been learning English since he was 11 years old.
- Is an Undergraduate student.
- Is in his first semester abroad in America.

Participant 3

- Had been learning English since he was 9 years old.
- Is an Undergraduate student.
- Is in his first semester abroad in America.

Research Site

The present study took place at a mid-sized North American university located in the United States. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant at a meeting room located on the campus of the university. Times, dates, and specific room locations were determined according to the availability of the campus meeting rooms as well as the participant's schedule and their comfort level with the interview site.

Data Collection

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted that consisted of open-ended and semi-structured in-depth questions in order to guide the interview process (Appendix

A). During each individual interview with the Chinese ESL students, two audiotape voice recorders were present for coding and reference purposes. Audio recording the interviews helped to ensure a clear understanding of the participant's experience. Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, participants were e-mailed the interview protocol (Appendix A) so each individual potential participant could have time to reflect on their experience as an international student in the United States. Participants were emailed protocol questions ahead of time since, as English as a Second Language students, cognitive processing from their native language into English would not hinder the progress of the interview nearly as much. Before each interview took place, a description of the interview process, purpose, and explanation of volunteerism to participate in the research was explained using an Informed Consent to Participate form (Appendix B).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Post-interview, the conversations held with each participant were transcribed by the PI for coding purposes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim so as to stay true to the English language skills and experience of each participant. The transcription allowed the PI to code the discussion and organize codes into categories that resulted in themes. In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are simultaneous processes (Creswell, 2003). By coding line-by-line, the researcher was able to stay attuned to the participants' views of their realities and educational experience. The data were analyzed immediately after the interviews took place. The themes were then organized in an easily readable manner and compiled into related categories.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The findings from a qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2003) of in-depth interviews of three Chinese international students currently attending a midsized North American comprehensive university were put into related themes and ideas. At the time of the study, each student attended an American institution of higher education in their first semester of enrollment. No participant had prior educational or cultural experience in the United States. The students shared their reasons for studying in the United States and for learning English; compared their experience at their host institution to their educational experience in China, and voiced their struggles due to language barriers. Four main themes were found amongst the results. The participants shared their experience learning English and the decision to come to the United States, the campus culture in America compared to China, their interactions with American students and involvement on campus, and the reasons why language was a huge struggle for them. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to stay true to the students' experiences and their English language proficiency level.

Learning English and the Reason for Choosing America

The participants each spoke about their experience learning English and preparing to study in America. They also discussed why they chose to continue their education in the United States. Participant 1 shared some background information on learning English in China.

We learn English in when we are in Elementary school. We start in grade 3, 4.

We start to learn English. Normally in Chinese school, we just listen to the teacher. They taught how to read and how to write; more kind of things. But as far as speaking, most Chinese students do not want to speak in class. So speaking English at University, when I want to go abroad I start to speak English more.

English is taught as part of the curriculum in China yet is not utilized in the schools and at home. It is up to the individual student to practice when they feel as though they will need to use the language more often. Most Chinese students have focused on their reading and writing skills. The students are not as well versed in their English speaking skills because they have fewer opportunities to practice at home or in the classroom before attending an American institution. The lack of opportunities to practice is in part due to the fact that most of the participants' family members do not know English, or know very little. According to Participant 2, his family only knows basic words such as 'Hello' and 'Goodbye.' Learning and using English, as well as choosing to study abroad in America, is a generational trend. The parents and grandparents of these international students know very little English yet encourage their children and grandchildren to participate in a study abroad program in America and to take English courses.

None of the participants attended a dedicated English as a Second Language program or school because English was already included in their day school's curriculum at a young age. It was when they chose to study abroad that their study of the English language became much more important to them.

Participant 1:

About 1 year before coming to America I start to study to take the TOEFL test. So in class we are not prepared to take the TOEFL test so we have to study off campus some kind of English. Specific training classes so we have more opportunity to speak and prepare the TOEFL test.

Participant 3:

We just try, try to pass it and the score is very hard to meet the requirements of this school. So we came here [to America].

According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an English proficiency test that is recognized by more than 7,500 individual institutions worldwide (<http://www.ets.org/toefl/>). TOEFL is required by most English speaking countries in order for foreign students to study abroad there. Students are tested on four levels of English comprehension; Reading, listening, speaking, and writing. TOEFL results are used as only one component of admission to a university or college in the United States. The test is internet-based (iBT) or paper-based (PBT). Both versions are scored differently. The iBT version of the TOEFL test is scored on a scale of 0 to 120 points while the final score for the PBT version ranges from 310 to 677. Each school has a different minimum score in order to be considered for admission. The Midwestern comprehensive university involved in this research required the following (Table 1) information to be supplied by international applicants.

Table 1**TOEFL Minimum Scores for Admission**

| | Undergraduate Students | Graduate Students |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Internet Test (iBT) | 61 | 79 |
| Paper Test (PBT) | 500 | 550 |

The participants were asked if studying for the TOEFL test helped them prepare for taking classes in America.

Participant 3:

It's helpful. If we come to America we need to lesson, we need to have class here in English and talk in English so we need to improve our English abilities.

Participant 1:

In order to pass the TOEFL I take three times because I'm in graduate school and the requirement is higher. I have to say that the English 'period' is really difficult. It is help for study but hard. Before I took the TOEFL, my career was very limited. Sometimes I still do not know which words to use. I started to recite the Dictionary. It improved my reading.

Preparing for the TOEFL examination was a challenge, but the participants stated that it helped to understand where they were with their English skills. The test is an important requirement in order to predict the level of success an ESL international student will have at an English speaking institution of higher education (<http://www.ets.org/toefl/>).

When asked how involved, academically or financially, the students' parents were in their education, they responded by saying that the family was in charge of financially supporting them while academic performance was their responsibility.

Participant 1:

The America students graduate or continue they have to find a job and they can pay the fees themselves. But in China, students, we just, our parents just need us to focus on our study and they have the ability to pay the tuition and fees for us. We only want to study and they will support us.

Participant 2:

Study is very heavy so we have no time to work. If you want to work outside you have few time to study then you can't attend to college.

Academics are very important to Chinese students. This is a mentality that has been passed down for generations. Participant 3 stated that it is after a student graduates that they can begin to support themselves financially. For a Chinese student, the focus should be on studying and the educational aspect of attending college. It is their family's responsibility to worry about finances while the student must take this time to grow educationally. They do not and should not have time to work because that time should be spent reviewing class notes and reading the course material. According to these students, studying and a strong academic performance are the most important values when attending college.

The native Chinese students were also asked why they chose America and what interested them in studying abroad. Two of the participants gave personal reasons why they wanted to study internationally, specifically in the United States.

Participant 3:

It's totally different experience. Totally different lifestyle. It's a challenge in my life. It's a wonderful trip to travel. Long travel. You will see many different views in America and meet different people.

Participant 2:

It is an International world so we need to experience different culture and you know, China and America have many trade... How you say, economic activities. I think there will be an advantage with our future careers.

Participant 1 re-enforced the idea of travelling and studying abroad in an English speaking country. He pointed out the trend he has seen amongst his peers. He found it important for students to broaden their horizons.

Participant 1:

In the last couple of years in China, coming to America to study is one of the most popular things. Even in my class, my high school class, there were five to six students who come to America and study in America. It's a very high percentage I think.

Campus Culture: Differences Between China and America

The participants discussed the cultural differences between China and America that they observed in the classroom, amongst their peers, on campus, and during holidays that are usually celebrated in their country. This discussion began with a question about learning what it is they heard about college in the United States before they attended.

Participant 3:

I thought that students in American college they have more freedom. They have more time do what they like. There are lot of parties at weekend. I think that when I came here it's, it's almost the same as I thought.

Participant 1:

Of course before I came to American I think that the class, the college here, here as more advantages than disadvantages. Some things are not as I thought. But most problem is the language problem. We cannot communicate with our professor on the lecture. We can only get 60 and 70% so it is very tough. And after class we have to read textbooks and it really is a lot of time. One chapter even takes me one day. Reading it once is not enough to understand meaning. I have to read it twice, maybe three times. It is really tough.

Participant 1 in particular shared his struggles with the language in the classroom. He was happy to be in the United States taking courses, but found the language barrier to be a bigger issue than he anticipated. He spent more time than the average American student would studying and reading for one class. It is very time consuming to have to read the same chapter two or three times that would take a native U.S. student minutes to read.

Participant 1 spent hours studying for class discussions and tests but will earn grades that are below what he would normally expect to earn in China. He stated that this experience is similar for other ESL international students.

Participant 2:

I think that American college is maybe is trying student to explore new things and creativity. But what we study, the knowledge we study, is maybe easier than

China. So the biggest problem is language. Even we learn these knowledge before but we need to spend some time to understand these kinds [of classes because of language].

Freedom to study and explore new subjects and experiences during college was a common theme among the participants. According to these students, although preparing for a class and studying for a test may take more time in America than it would in China, it is not because of the course material. The English language barrier is what is holding them back from performing academically as well as they wish they could achieve. The participant's thoughts and ideas about classes in America were slightly confirmed because they thought that American students had more freedom in class. Indeed American students are free to discuss with their peers and question the teaching. This was a new classroom practice that the Chinese students had to get used to in America.

Chinese students can experience a learning shock when placed into an institution with a different classroom and campus dynamic. "Learning shock refers to some unpleasant feelings and difficult experiences that learners encounter when they are exposed to a new learning environment," (Gu & Maley, 2008, p. 229). Participant 3 stated that the classes are smaller (the number of students) in the U.S. but that is not the only difference.

Participant 3:

In American college they will discuss more they will ask question to professor more directly. In China, they will ask question maybe after class also because there are so many students in China college class so if everyone has questions to ask the teacher won't finish the class.

Becoming more active in class discussions is a significant change in Chinese students' approaches to learning. "It requires their conscious effort to overcome the potential 'danger' of losing face in front of their peers if they fail to speak in perfectly accurate English," (Gu & Maley, 2008, p. 237). This also required the student to alter their classroom habits that they have long lived by while studying in China.

Researchers have found that the primary concern of many international students from Asia was their academic performance (Li & Stodolska, 2005). Having to discuss with their peers and even question the professor is a foreign practice to Chinese students.

Participant 1 shared his feelings of nervousness when his class participated in discussions. In China, not many students will discuss or talk to the professor during class because they are afraid to say the wrong thing. This is a sign of the pride Chinese people have and how important knowledge is to them.

Participant 1:

It is very, very different. In China, when we have classes only a few students are interested in what the professor say. Mostly we just listen and do our own things. Our only task is to prepare for the final test. The final test is the only thing to judge a student. So we can prepare on our own and read books after class. We might not need to hear what the professor say [in China]. But here the test is maybe ten percent to judge the students and the student's participation is very important to judge a student.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 reiterated the ease of the course material in the United States to them, but emphasized the difficulty in understanding the language that is used to learn the material.

Participant 2:

The class here [in the U.S.] is open but I think we take general classes. General Physics or Chemistry. We have taken these classes when we were in high school. So I think it's a little bit easier [in America]. But here we need to some discuss or presentation so it's hard.

Participant 1:

You know in China in middle school and high school we learn a lot. Really learn a lot. Just like you learn here in college. Even as a graduate. I am a graduate student and I take Statistics. It's a graduate class but if there was no language barrier I think I would handle it very easy. Something I have learned in college or in high school.

Holding discussions in class was a new concept for these Chinese international students. Participation is an important factor for their grades in America while in China they need to worry only about the final test. It seems as though it is not as important to attend class and listen to the professor in China; that China has a more personal approach to teaching. It is the students' responsibility to learn the material in both countries; however, in America the topics are discussed more in detail to help the students retain the information for projects, presentations, and tests.

Participant 2:

We learn that our language is not as good as a lot of people so we do presentation and discussion and know little about these things in China. So we need to adjust and find a way how to how to presentation or just like discuss.

Not only are these international students learning new material, they are learning a new way to share information and enhance their knowledge. Changing one's learning habits is enough of a challenge, but the transition is made more difficult when a language issue is thrown into the mix.

Participant 1:

I think that the discussion part and team work part is most important thing that I want to study in America. Presently, in Chinese college they also have a team work thing or discussion part but we do not get accustomed to this type of way to study. Here everyone actively participate in discussion and the team work. So it's different.

Interactions With American Students: Events On and Off Campus

When a student arrives at college for the first time, their main source of peer interaction is with their roommate. Many times, the roommates are randomly assigned. In most cases, the random roommate is the first new friend a student makes in college. The participants discussed their living and roommate situation and what experiences they were seeking. The three participants were living together in a three bedroom residence hall suite that included a common living area.

Participant 2:

We prefer to live with American students. But we live in a hall in a three room with one dorm. So we each have our own room. No other people live in.

At this particular institution, the residence hall that is highlighted can hold up to six students, with two in each room. However, our participants were the only ones present in

their residence hall, meaning that three international students from China were placed together without any American students or other students with strong English skills or past experience with the university to model both English language skills and / or typical American college culture.

Participant 1:

At first we thought, we told them (the university) we want to live separately because we want to move faster into American culture so we want to live with a local. But the situation is not so. Usually six people share our dorm, with a living room. Indeed we live separately but we still live together. We have no other roommate.

The participants shared their disappointment with the situation, although they each got along with one another. Their housing assignment reduced their interaction with American students, making it more difficult to make friends with students from the host university and leaving the Chinese students with a sense of loneliness and exclusion from American social activities. Having a randomly assigned roommate from the United States could help these students learn more about the culture, help improve their English language skills, and allow them to meet more American students and learn about local social events.

The participants expressed that they have had difficulty making American friends due to their lack of familiarity with American student culture and the English / Chinese language barrier.

Participant 2:

When we talk about some movies or stars, it's hard to express ourselves. We talk to American students, we don't have many topic to talk.

It is a challenge of international students to find topics to talk about in order to relate to American students. "The language barrier and a lack of knowledge of the target culture may be key reasons for this failure in communication," (Gu & Maley, 2008, p. 231).

There are differences across the cultures in what movies and music is popular, as well as with other social media topics. Adaptation to a new culture is a process of maintaining the best part of one's own culture while absorbing the essence of the second culture (Zhao, 2009). The students were interested in sharing the pop culture of their country while learning more about their host country, but this has proven to be no easy task. Even when the perfect discussion topic is found, Participant 3 shared that expressing himself and what he wants to say was a frustrating additional challenge.

Participant 3:

Sometimes I can't find the right words to say but here some Chinese student were already here and they introduce some American friend to us. So we have made some American friends.

Thankfully for these students in particular, there have already been Chinese students studying abroad at the same university the semester before that have been able to introduce the new students to friends and activities on and around campus. It was important for these students to have interactions with native American students in a social environment rather than a forced academic environment. They must do this in order to foster quality friendships and relationships with students of a different culture. The

quality of interactions, such as sharing celebrations, shopping, and other entertainment with host national students rather than only superficial and forced interactions, such as in the classroom, is an important predictor of positive relationships between cultures (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). However, Participant 1 said that they still spend most of their time with other Chinese students even though he would like to have more interactions with American students. Yu and Berryman (1996) found that the Chinese often preferred spending their free time alone and that they tended to be spectators rather than participants in group activities. However, this study has found that although academics are very important to Chinese international students, they looked forward to social interactions and events with other students.

The university the research took place at offers opportunities for international students to attend events and celebrations that are also open to local students. Some of these activities focused on helping the international students improve their English skills and learn more about American culture. According to the participants, Conversation Partners was a program put in place by the participants' American university where they were assigned an American student to meet with a few times a week in order to work on their English skills and learn more about the university. "Positive participation in the activities of the host community may give Chinese students greater opportunities to foster positive relationships" (Zhang & Brunton, 2007, p. 128). Participant 1 signed up to take part in this program but has not yet been assigned an American student partner. That no American partner was assigned was due to the lack of interest in the program among American students and the low number of volunteers compared to the high volume of international students who were interested in joining Conversation Partners.

Celebration of the Chinese New Year is a major holiday in China. It is the American version of a Christmas according to the students. The Chinese New Year took place at the time the participants were studying abroad in the United States. They have experienced a bit of a culture shock due to the lack of celebration of this important event.

Participant 1:

Holiday is totally different [in America]. Like Chinese New Year. No one has class off or celebrates so we cannot go home. Like Christmas break we have off but it is not celebrated as big in China.

The students were, however, able to celebrate the holiday and share their traditions amongst other international students and students from China.

Participant 2:

We cooked some dishes and make dumplings with some Chinese students. In China we meet with our friends and have a big meal.

Ethnic food is a central feature in most cultures. Cooking and consuming it has more than just nutritional value. Cooking ethnic food, especially in a group, can bring the student positive feelings of home and give them a sense of cultural identity in an otherwise unfamiliar location.

The Language: Struggles and Suggestions

One source of stress for ESL students is the language barrier. Specific concerns included being misunderstood by others, misunderstanding others, and being unable to fully express their thoughts and feelings (Marilyn & Renne, 2000). Chinese students who have never had to adjust to a new learning style and environment face more opportunities

for misunderstanding, stress, and failure. The participants shared more of their study abroad experience relative to the English language barrier. Participant 1 found it difficult to understand a university administrator who also has English as a Second Language experience and who is not originally from the United States.

Participant 1:

My academic advisor, he is, he is from I don't know maybe India. He has a very strong accent. When he talks to me normally, I cannot understand him. He will write down very important things.

Participant 1 explained that reading and writing English is easier than understanding the language through conversation. He shared an additional negative experience he faced on campus due to being an ESL student.

Participant 1:

When we want some food, we cannot understand the names of the food especially with the sauce so we just pick this one or this one.

He was speaking of his experience understanding the new foods in the dining halls. He continued by saying that when he asks for an explanation of a food, it is difficult for the staff to describe it in terms that he can understand and relate to directly. Not only was understanding the language an issue, but the rate at which many students and professors spoke continued to make this barrier even more challenging. During classroom discussions, the international students find it hard to understand their peer's opinions and to participate in the discussion because of the speed at which statements are made.

Participant 2:

Some students speak faster than the professor so it is very hard to understand but some people speak very clear so it is easy. The people are very kind and they help us understand.

Although these students faced issues with understanding the language on and around campus, they pointed out that many people have been very helpful and patient with them. The understanding community has helped the students feel more at ease with the university and with the issues they currently faced being an ESL international student from China.

The experience of a different living style with contrasting traditions and values can be emotionally and psychologically challenging. The better the language skills are, spoken skills in particular, the better the social interactions with native students tend to be. For example, Zheng and Berry's (1991) study of Chinese students studying abroad in Canada found that the international students experienced lower English fluency, difficulty making friends, and more adaptation to college life problems compared to non-Chinese Canadian students.

The participants shared additional thoughts on the differences they noticed while studying in the United States compared to their schooling in China. Participant 2 pointed out that in China people do not need to have a car, yet in America it seems as though it is very important in order to go to the store or anywhere off campus. In China, students can easily access public transportation such as the bus or subway. The university that they were attending at the time of the research is a small town made up of about 30,000 people. As a result, there are not many public transportation options or stores and

restaurants. When asked if they would have preferred a large city to study in, like they had in China, Participant 1 shared his preference.

Participant 1:

I like the small town. It's quiet and good for study.

His response reinforced the importance of studying and education to Chinese students.

They do not mind that there are little entertainment options because they are more concerned with what environment will help them to learn.

The participants were happy to share their advice to future international students from China when preparing to study abroad in an English speaking country.

Participant 1:

There is a language problem so you have to study language well when you are in China. When you come here you need to try your best to spend your time with locals, not Chinese or people who have the same language as you.

They were also willing to include their suggestions and opinions of the international office that has helped give them the opportunity to study in America. Participant 1 believed that the office provided a convenience for the international students and that when he first arrived that they were very helpful. However, he thought that the office should provide more opportunities for international students to meet American students. There were a few events that he heard about through his academic advisor, but he would have liked the international office to share the information about campus events and activities instead of hearing it from another source. Participant 2 thought the same way and added that he too would like to see the university create more opportunities that

allowed international students to communicate with natives. He would also like to attend events that highlighted American culture such as a trip to a museum.

Summary

Chapter IV explored four themes that were found through analysis and comparison of three Chinese international student interviews of their experience at a Midwestern comprehensive university. The first theme focused on the requirements and motivation to study abroad in the United States. The second theme highlighted the cultural differences on campus in the United States compared to China, which found that courses in America are highly focused on active participation. The next theme discussed heavily on the English language barrier issue, which was found to be the main concern of international students from China. Lastly, the participants shared additional experiences with language barriers and suggestions for future study abroad students from China. Chapter V will provide a summary of the previous chapters and include recommendations for future research as well as suggestions for university international offices based on the experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of Chinese English as a Second Language international students who are studying abroad in the United States. The research took place at a mid-sized North American comprehensive university made up of roughly 12,000 students. Each year, the university welcomed around 10 students from China, all of whom are required to take an English language comprehension exam prior to admission. Three volunteers were interviewed on their experience taking courses in the United States during their first semester abroad.

Common themes were found among the interview transcriptions which highlighted the students' reasons for studying abroad in America, cultural differences they had noticed on and off campus, experiences with the English language barrier, and suggestions for future ESL study abroad students. The PI found that although the study of English is included in the Chinese academic curriculum, that the language is not practiced or used often, especially in the home. The families of the participants are not well versed in English and therefore cannot help their children improve their skills in order to prepare for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. One participant in particular pointed out that he used the dictionary in order to study for the exam and enhance his English language skills.

The differences in campus culture in America compared to China was examined and the study found that overall, the international student participants experienced a bit of learning shock. They were not accustomed to holding discussions with their peers and

professors. In China, the students tended to keep to themselves and focus on studying for the big exam at the end of the semester. However, in the United States, the students noticed that a large portion of their grades were assigned to participation in class, group discussions, and presentations. The students agreed that this was a new challenge for them and that it made the language barrier more of an issue.

Although studying is an important value for the participants, the PI found that the students were also looking to build a social network of American friends in order to learn more about American culture. However, because these students were assigned to live only with other international students, there was a barrier to learning about social events on and off campus with their American peers. The participants noticed a lack of participation in a holiday that was common to them, yet to them it was not well recognized by their university. This caused the students to experience a bit of culture shock.

The students all agreed that the biggest challenge and struggle they faced while studying abroad in the United States was their use of the English language. The students noticed their lack of English skills and would become frustrated when they were unable to express themselves or ask questions that would result in an explanation they could understand or relate to clearly. They pointed out that Chinese students must prepare to use English while studying abroad and that they must practice their skills before coming. The participants felt that if it had not been for a language barrier that their classes in America would be easier than in China and they would be able to build friendships with American students more easily.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

After reviewing the results and the previous research, there are a number of small steps that could be taken to improve an ESL international students' experience abroad in the United States. The university has implemented a program in order to pair up international students with American students to help them improve their language skills and learn more about American culture. However, there is a lack of American student volunteers, leaving many international students without a conversation partner. A suggestion to increase these numbers is to market the program to on-campus organizations such as residence hall governments, fraternities and sororities. The activity can be viewed as a philanthropy event for sororities and fraternities while meeting people from those groups would be a great way for international students to get involved and learn more about American campus culture.

The participants expressed their thoughts and preferences for a living situation on campus. Each participant agreed that they would prefer to be assigned to live with an American student and be split up from other international students from the same country. However, the students who participated in the present study were paired to live together without other American students assigned to the same residence hall room. They expressed a clear sense of isolation as a result. A suggestion to allow international students to have the interactions with American students that they are looking for is to not pair international students together as roommates and instead pair them with a local student who has attended the university for at least a semester. This experience would allow an international student to work on their English language skills, learn about American culture and customs, and help them meet other American students as well as

find out more about on and off campus events. Language is the biggest barrier for these students so any program offered by a college or university that focuses on improving those skills would help ease the stress and frustration of many international students who speak English as a second language.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recognizing the limitations of the present study, the following is a list of recommendations for future studies focusing on international education and student experiences.

1. The present study focused on international student struggles and experiences as students entered their first semester at an American university. A richer understanding of international student experiences would be better served by focusing on a particular aspect of the college experience such as international students and roommate experiences, international students and experiences with food, or international students and the affects of language in working on group projects with American students.
2. The current study was limited to one university with very few international students from China. The sample size was three participants who volunteered to be interviewed from a population of eight Chinese students at a midsized university. A cross-institutional study of larger or similar sized universities would make the findings more generalized in order to assist international offices in program planning geared towards international students.

3. The study focused solely on the experiences of international students from China. In order to generalize the experiences of international students, a cross-cultural study must be conducted to compare the experiences of students from China versus students from Australia compared to students from Germany and so on.
4. In order to simplify the results, a quantitative study could be conducted to compare the experiences of many international students who are studying abroad in America. The questionnaire could reach out to many students at once, thus increasing participant numbers.

Conclusion

There has been limited research on the experiences of Chinese international students who study abroad in the United States that has focused on the barriers they faced due to learning English as a second language. As the United States continues to see an increase in international student enrollment at colleges and universities, institutions must listen to the struggles and concerns of these students in order to ensure that they have a positive educational experience. The present study found that Chinese international students are seeking hands on experience with American culture. They are also concerned with the learning styles in American classrooms and are aiming to gain interpersonal and presentation skills. However, these students face challenges when they cannot find the correct English words to express themselves or understand their peers and professors. It is important for international students to possess English speaking and writing skills prior to studying abroad in America. Although they may be able to pass a TOEFL exam, they

may still face frustration when trying to hold a conversation. The participants of this study stated that it was easier to write English than it was to speak it. Therefore, more practice of the language must focus on holding conversations and learning to express oneself. Practice prior to study abroad in the United States as well as during the duration of their time abroad is important. ESL students must continuously practice the language to improve their discussion skills. The best way to do this is through interactions with American students. It can be a frustrating and nerve-wrecking challenge for an international student to meet American students to learn more about the culture; therefore, colleges and universities should have programs in place to help these students overcome the problem. Internationalization in higher education is rapidly growing. More students are studying abroad and more students are studying in the United States from foreign countries. International offices are constantly working to improve their programs in order to assist international students and help them get accustomed to campus. The time studying in America has been an overall positive experience for the participants despite some bumps in the road. The offices on campus, the professors, and American peers have had a great influence on the students and will continue to do so for many years to come.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Main Questions

1. What struggles did you perceive you would have when studying at an American institution?
2. What was your reasoning for studying at an American institution and learning English?
3. What major cultural differences between the two have you noticed so far?

Reasons to Learn English/Background

1. Why did you decide to learn English?
2. At what age did you beginning learning English?
3. How long have you been speaking English?
4. Does your family know English as well?

Cultural Differences on Campus

1. Is your family invested in your education? How so?
2. Do you have a roommate? If so, are they native to America?
 - a. If yes, have you noticed any cultural, lifestyle, or language differences between the two of you?
3. Have you faced any struggles with understanding the administrative support (academic advisor) or your professors?

4. What are some differences you have noticed between the dynamic in the classroom in America versus the dynamic in China/home country?
5. Have you found it difficult to make friends due to the language barriers?
6. What are some struggles you face off-campus due to language barriers?
7. If you did not experience problems due to language, why do you think that is?
8. What cultural differences have you observed from your classes here compared to your classes at your home institution?

Education in America

9. What interested you to study abroad in America?
10. What did you hear about college in America before you attended?
11. How does what you have heard before attending compare to what you have noticed? Did what you hear prove to be true or false?
12. Did you feel well prepared to take classes at an American institution (i.e. training, well-informed by both universities)?
13. Have you used any of the on-campus resources? If so, why?
14. Have the on-campus resources been helpful to you as an international student?
 - a. Kind & friendly staff? Understanding
 - b.

Suggestions

1. Do you have any suggestions as to how the institution can assist international students, particularly from China better?

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**A Qualitative Exploration of ESL Chinese Student Experiences at a
North American Institution of Higher Education**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kelly Kawa, master's candidate in college student affairs, and Dr. Charles Eberly, Professor, from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. Your name and personal information will in no way be published or go on a public record.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are currently a native Chinese English as a Second Language student seeking higher education credit from a North American institution.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The proposed of this activity is to gain a better understanding of the educational and cultural struggles ESL Chinese students face while attending a North American institution of Higher Education. The information from this research can help assist international offices in creating programs geared to help ESL students ease the struggles discussed in the project.

- **PROCEDURES**

Personal stories of the current international students from China studying at a mid-sized comprehensive Mid-Western institution will be shared and explored. You will be given a number, therefore no actual names will be used in the research. Individual interviews will take place at a site on-campus chosen according to your availability and comfort level. The interviews will be video and audio recorded. All video and audio recordings will be kept and stored by the principal investigator in a hard drive up to three years, then shredded and destroyed.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

No long-term physical, psychological, or social risks are foreseeable with this research as participants are asked to share his/her educational and cultural experiences.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Telling stories, by way of capturing influential voices of professional pioneers, can serve as a powerful teaching and learning tool. Shared experiences of international students, can serve as a building block to enhance the profession of student affairs, the departments, and the students themselves.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION**

N/A

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping the notes, digital audio and video recordings, and transcriptions only on the principal investigator's personal password protected laptop, as well as a USB drive to create a back-up. The principal investigator and her faculty advisor will be the only ones to have access to the notes, digital audio and video recordings, and transcriptions. This is so that the faculty advisor can aid the student in data analysis. The digital audio and video recordings, notes, and transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's personal laptop and the USB format for three years then deleted. If a subject chooses to leave the study during or after the interview all data and hard copy will be destroyed. Digital data will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded three years after the Principal Investigator has completed the research. YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE USED IN THE FINAL PRODUCT, THESIS, OF THE RESEARCH OR SHARED WITH ANYONE BUT THE PI & HER ADVISOR.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering and still complete the interview.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Kelly Kawa
Principal Investigator
Blair Hall Rm. 1207
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL. 61920
Telephone : (847) 636-7133
Email : kakawa@eiu.edu

or

Dr. Charles Eberly
Faculty Sponsor
Buzzard Hall Rm. 2107
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-7235
Email: cgeberly@eiu.edu

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiurb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the

University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date