WEISS

WESTERN AND EASTERN IDENTITIES SEEN AND SEARCHED

20 YEARS OLD. Three Months.

ONE UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURE.

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What happens when you combine American and Chinese students for a semester?

Find out on page 6.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE: See what two professors say about the different cultures. Page 8





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

To WEISS Magazine Readers,

The adventures you are about to read all began with my trip to China during the summer of 2016. If it were not for those unbelievable three months, I would not have fallen for this fascination that is the Chinese culture. Although I lived in a smaller town, when I returned to stateside, I was able to learn about other cities and how others knew their culture. While working with students from Beijing and Shenzhen, as well as interviewing two professors from Jilin and Xi'an, I have gathered a large collection of information about the eastern culture. As a result, I have created this magazine to share the knowledge that I have gained over the past year. So step into this new culture and travel across the globe with me.

Safe travels,

Emily Weiss
WEISS Magazine Editor
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LITTLE TRAVELER. BIG CHINA.

IMAGINE IF YOU WILL...

You have just turned twenty years old and are asked to teach English in a foreign country for the summer. The thing is: you are not an ESL (English as a Second Language) major, you do not know the country's language and have never been out of the country by yourself before. That twenty-year-old was me just last year.

Last summer, I was living in Jiaozhou, China teaching English for first-graders to adult learners.

For three months, I was immersed in a completely new culture. Although teaching was my main focus, this experience was more than I could have ever expected. From trying cicadas and silkworms to staying with two different families to learning what the eastern culture knew about the western culture, this was the best summer of my life.

During this adventure, I had no idea how much our cultures



were so similar. It is easy to set cultures apart through differences, but it is a real challenge to figure out and understand the similarities. Everyone tends to see the Chinese culture as a more traditional, collectivistic society. Although that may be true, the Chinese are taking ideas from the western culture and changing their ways to become more similar to us. In the city that I called home, the Qingdaonese maintained more of their original culture, but you could definitely see the western influences.

Through pictures and stories, I am bringing the comparisons that I experienced and noticed from this trip to life. Addressing topics such as: society pressures, authentic Chinese food, school dress codes and even areas that you would never think of, is what you will read in this article. So join me as I take you on this adventure across the world and into the culture of Jiaozhou, China.

SOCIETY AND THE PUBLIC

☼ Seeing People You Know Appear polite with a casual greeting of, "Hi, how are you?"

★ Eating Out

You do not tip or throw your own trash away. The lines are more like mobs of peope surrounding the frontcounters.

On Lunch Break

This two hour-break includes a nap for both the students and teachers.

⊗ Society Pressures

Especially for the women, they are pressured by family to get married and have kids by a certain age.

Having paler skin, being thin and tall are seen as beautiful. Most Chinese, both genders, have dark hair and dark eyes.





Time for Tea

Unless you want something stronger, tea is the fan favorite.

Whether it is McDonalds or KFC, the fast food appears to be less processed.

Save Room for Dessert

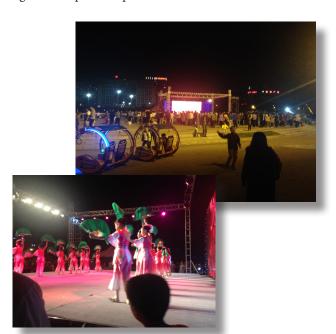
A sweet treat is almost rare, especially after lunch or dinner. Once you see the watermelon, you know that the meal is done.

Formal Meal

Just like we have the extended place setting for more a formal dining experience, a giant Lazy Susan is the focal point of the meal.

W Utensils

Along with chopsticks, spoons are also used for most meals.



TIME FOR SCHOOL

W Uniform is Key

Whether you are in first grade or twelfth grade, uniforms are required for school. Sometimes more than one a week.

☼ Dating in High School

Teachers are allowed to prohibit dating in high school.

No matter the age, phones are to be left at home and not to be brought to school.

For the younger grades, most assignments are oral-based. As you grow older, you have less and less free time due to the focus on studying for the final graduation test.



Fun Times

⇔ Playing at the Park

When you think of a park, you usually think of grass and trees, right? For this town, a concrete jungle is where families spend their time outside.

★ Taste in Music

Along with more traditional Chinese music, some popular western artists, such as Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift, blast through the speakers of local restaurants and supermarkets.

☼ Dancing the Night Away

Just like their music, dancing is more conservative. This applies to exercising as well. They also have Square Dancing, but not as country as we make it to be.

GOVERNMENT RULES

⊗ Social Media

Unless you have a VPN, good luck updating your Instagram account or checking your Facebook news feed.

& Let's Drink

You do not have to wait until you are 21 to drink alcohol. In China, you are able to drink at the age of 18.

⊗ E is for Everyone

Over here, you can pretty much watch whatever you want at whatever age, unlike us with our rated R and PG-13 movies.



Miscellaneous

☼ Let the Air Take Care of it

Once the washing machine is done, it is time to air dry.

Umbrella Use

You can see people using their umbrellas to protect themselves from rain and sun rays.

₩ Handwriting is an Art

It is more than just lines on a page. Each symbol represents different sounds.

Counting With One Hand

Similar to American Sign Language, numbers six through ten have their own hand signs. Instead of using all ten fingers, you can count to ten on one hand.



Driving and On the Roads

Impatient when it comes to waiting at traffic lights? Do not worry, they have a countdown for you.

No, There is No Traffic Jam

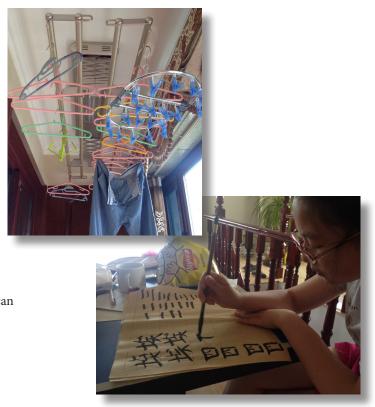
If you think driving in New York is insane, take a drive down the roads here with their U-turns and frequent honking.

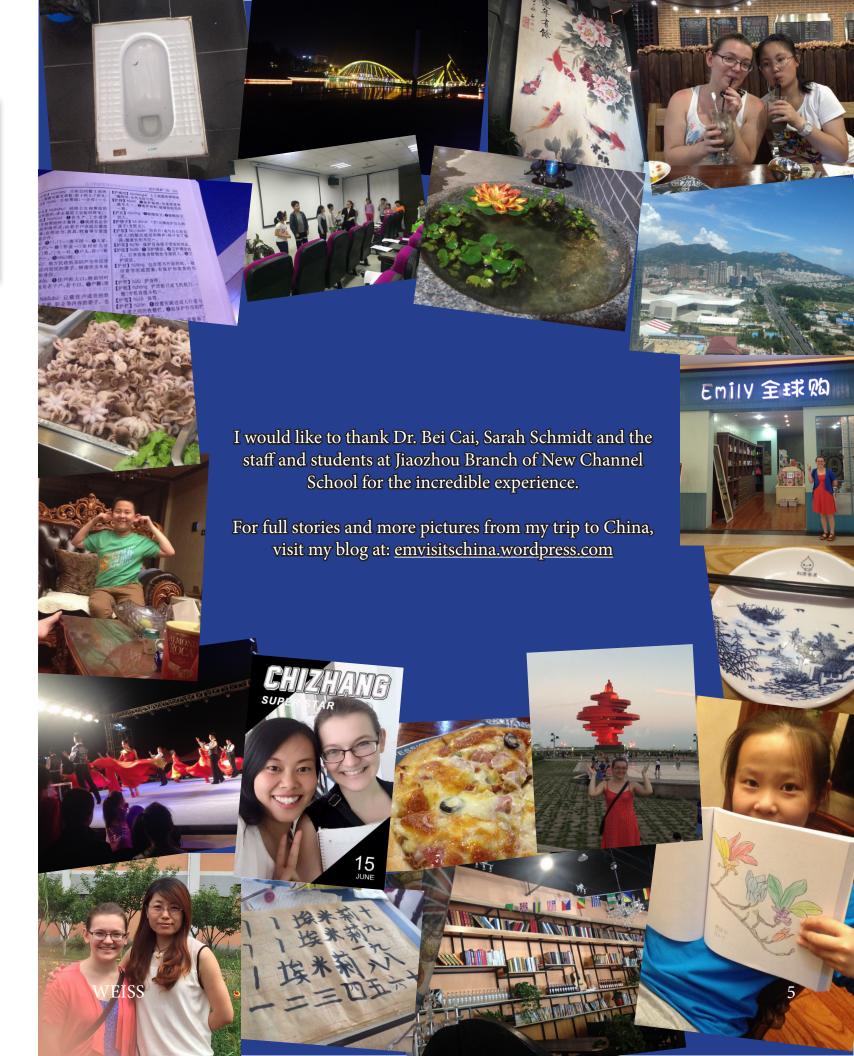
☼ Driving Later in Life

Now that you can drink, you can also drive once you become 18.

Safety Firs

Feel free to move around the vehicle, unless you are driving or in the passenger seat.





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THROUGH THEIR EYES

DURING THE FALL SEMESTER OF 2016, Kent State University at Stark was home to 27 Chinese students. Traveling from Shenzhen Polytechnic and Beijing Wuzi University, these students had the chance to connect and be a part of the



western college experience. Through this experience, they were split up into groups and were assigned to Conversations Partners from the campus' Honors Program and other interested students. Meeting at least once a week for ten weeks, these students had the opportunity to try to learn and understand each other's cultures. From exploring First Friday and carving pumpkins to celebrating birthdays and trying cheeseburgers, it was intriguing to watch them get accustomed to our culture.

The American and Beijing students were in charge of keeping track each week of

what they did when they met with their Conversation Partners. Working with another Honors Program student, Brielle Black, my group consisted of four girls from Shenzhen Polytechnic. Due to how their room situations were set up at the hotel, our group ended up with a few tag-a-longs on our adventures. Our group included: Roring, Tonya, Judy and Elise, with the occasional appearances of Bowie and Annabelle. This article is going to give you insight into our weekly meetings and also what the rest of the groups thought about the experience.







Upon the first introduction, we all could feel that awkwardness. We were not sure what to talk about about or how to even start a conversation. The easiest way to begin was to start with names. From there, we had a more natural transition into other topics, such as: favorte colors, foods and free time activities. Since the girls had not been in America for long, their only real experiences included: shopping at Macy's, trying cake (which was too sweet) and watching American movies on YouTube (for easier translation). This led to an invitation to their hotel for a Chinese-style dinner.

™ MEETING #2:

Since we did not get to talk for very long, this was the chance to explore more topics. When Brielle and I arrived, the girls were hard at work preparing dinner. Everything from chicken legs

and eggs with tomatoes to corn and carrot soup and pork with peppers; it was all delicious. After dinner, there was an exchange of gifts. We gave the girls just a little taste of America and they surprised

us with
Chinese cat
key chains,
pencils and
calligraphy
brushes. The
topics for
the evening
varied from
siblings and
college life



to languages and birthdays. One of the interesting facts was that they found college easier since they did not have the final examination that they had to focus on during high school.

The next week, most of our topics focused on upcoming events. Our university's annual Halloween event, Boo U!, was coming up, so we discussed what they were going to dress up as. The topic of weekend plans led to what they could do around here (and being close to Belden, The Strip and even Downtown Canton - they had plenty). Some of the girls were also planning on going on the Cedar Point trip that was planned for the international students. We then got into a little more cultural topics. The first was the hand symbols for numbers six to ten. Since I already knew them, the girls wanted to teach Brielle. The other was the idea of saying "Bless you" after someone sneezes. We talked about the two myths that we knew about and the girls were beyond fascinated.



⊗ Meeting #4:



Since we tend to meet during the end of each week, weekend plans tend to be popular topics. Judy and Elise were going to Cedar Point, while Tonya and Roring were planning on going shopping. Now that we were

about a third of the way complete with the semester, we wanted to find out how they felt. The girls said that they were enjoying their classes, as well as their professors. Next week, we had to make the meeting special since it was going to be Roring's birthday.

™ MEETING #5:

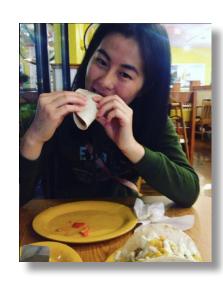
Happy Birthday Roring! Brielle and I brought a cookie cake to the meeting, since we knew everyone liked chocolate chip cookies. It turned out that the girls celebrated last night with dancing and karaoke



in their hotel room. This morning, Roring's boyfriend and family called to wish her a happy birthday. The majority of the topics focused on travelling. Elise was planning on heading to Michigan to visit a friend. We then asked which of the fifty states, they all have been to. This led to the subject of weather in the different parts of the states and how China compared. (It turned out that Shenzhen was very similar to Ohio.)

There was a lot going on during our meeting today.

The Major Minor
Fair and Cultural
Café were creating
a bust scene in the
Campus Center.
One of the
countries that the
café focused on
what China, so the
girls tried it out.
Judy and Roring
said it even tasted
like home. While
enjoying lunch,
Tonya asked us



questions about our favorite superheroes for her American Culture homework. The rest of the meeting was chaotic, but we knew we wanted to take them roller skating and bowling during their time here.



Welcome to First
Friday in Downtown
Canton! There was
so much to do in so
little time, but the girls
seemed to have
enjoyed this new
adventure. We first
made our way to
Napoli's for dinner.

The majority chose pizza since it did not have as much cheese as most of the options. During the hour-long wait, we had time to explore more in-depth topics. A majority of our conversation was about boys, dating, marriage and everything about relationships. Apparently, boys are the more immature gender there just like they tend to be here. For them, having a boyfriend was a secret and their parents would get very upset if they found out. Then in a similar manner to our culture, the man must get approval from the parents before proposing. While visting some local shops, we ended up meeting an American woman who was studying a degree in Chinese. The girls were

estastic after a brief conversation with her. As the time was getting late, we asked the girls if they missed home and, surprisingly, none of them did.



As our meetings were coming to an

end, this one was unique. Mike Rich, our campus photographer, had come by to take photos of the Chinese students while we had our meeting. We tried to get as many of them as we could to join us and were able to round up a decent amount of both the Shenzhen and Beijing students. In observing the various interactions, each school only spoke to those in the same group. Even in the group picture, they remained loyal to their friends. After the photoshoot, Brielle and I decided

that we were meeting at the hotel next week to watch "Hairspray Live!" and all were invited.

Instead of the usual meeting taking place in either their hotel room or at the Campus Center, we held the viewing party in the hotel lobby. Everyone brought snacks



and treats to share throughout the evening. Most of the students came and went as they wished, but the night was full of entertainment. A few did end up staying almost to the end and said they liked the show. (I'm sure they were just being polite and probably thought it was weird especially with Brielle and I singing along.) All in all, the night was a success.

※ Final Meetings:

There were a few times where either Brielle or I could not attend a meeting, so we made the most of it. When I was absent, Brielle met the girls at an asian cuisine retaurant to enjoy the food and more topics. My solo meeting involved taking a few of the girls to see "Finding Dory" and trying Baja West Coast Kitchen. The topics discussed certaintly changed, not only because of the different activities, but due to the people they were most comfortable

communicating with. Since I have had a connection with the culture before, I was able to explore beyond the general questions. Either way, Brielle and I learned so much from being around these girls. From their responses and graduation ceremony, it sounded like we influenced them as well.







WHY BECOME A CONVERSATION PARTNER?



Think about anytime you have travelled to another country or even another state. In visiting new places, we tend to explore the tourist locations or the places that are well known. For New York, there's Central Park. For California, there's Hollywood. For Florida, there's Disney World. Taking that to an international level, every country has special cities and landmarks to visit. In Paris, it's the Eiffel Tower. In London, it's Big Ben. In Rome, it's the Coliseum.



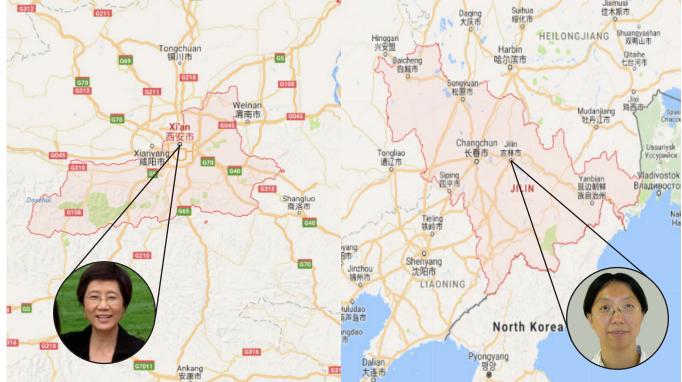
Traveling and experiencing other cultures is more than just staying at a hotel and going into town for a couple of hours. You have to become connected with the people and see their culture from their perspective. For these students, most had never left China, let alone come to America, before. Spending these ten weeks with them was not nearly enough time to have them experience the American culture. Some students were able to visit Cleveland and even other states during their stay, but most of their adventures stayed nearby. Everything from trying cheeseburgers and carving pumpkins to exploring First Friday and seeing the first snow fall; watching them experience these events was unlike anything I had ever seen.

The students had such kind responses to working with us. One student said, "Being alone with them, they are friendly people. They made all those things easy to do." Another said, "I made two good friends and I learned a lot of things about America from them which I can not learn



in class." Not only have we made an impact in their lives, but they made our lives all the more richer. Reading comments such as these are why we want to make this an annual experience and continue that connection with the culture. Keep an eye out this coming fall for new international students on campus because they will definitely want to meet you!

DR. BEI CAI is an Associate Professor in communication studies here at Kent State University at Stark. Most people know here hometown, Xi'an, China, as the home of the Terra Cotta Soldiers. Coming from the eight million-person city, she moved here in 1993. Dr. Cai wanted to take her career to the next level. After completing her undergraduate degree in English-Linguistics back home, she travelled to the United States to finish her graduate program. She expected a high quality graduate studies program when coming to the United States and that was just what she got. Dr. Cai then went on to obtain her Masters and Ph.D. in Communication Studies. With both of her parents being teachers, she said that if she had not moved to America, she would have chosen a different career than teaching.



DR. RAN LI is an Associate Professor in physics here at Kent State University at Stark. She is from a northeastern city in China named Jilin. Growing up, her father was an engineer and her mother was a middle school teacher. With both parents in such high professions, Dr. Li completed her bachelors at home before coming to America for her Masters and Ph.D. She believes that even if she had not moved here, she would still be a professor. As of this year, she has lived here for almost two decades. When it came to the American culture, Dr. Li was expecting some cultural and lifestyle differences. These included the use of public transportation and the weekly grocery shopping.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

<u>America</u>: There is more access for studies. It is more student-based and requires critical thinking. "Students use the information versus just learning the information."

<u>China</u>: There is a teacher-centered philosophy. Students take more tests and focus on memory.

SOCIETY PRESSURES

America: Accountability. You must work hard and be prepared. "For myself, I had to learn the technology and multimedia. There was also the pressure of getting my work published."

China: To find a well-paid job. To be beautiful and fashionable. Money and job security makes people anxious.

PRESENTING SELF

China is a very consumerist culture and focused on the market economy. You have to work hard to impress others; to be young and pretty. Status symbols are important.

ACTIVITIES

I enjoy gardening and being with friends. Most like socializing, playing Mahjong and karaoke. It is a collectivistic cuture and they like to hang out.

"I'd rather be crying in the back of a Mercedes than laughing on the back of a bicycle."

DRIVING

In America, you grow up learning the rules. In China, roads are not built with cars in mind. "Their way is chaotic, but it works."

Dating and Marriage

China is practical and more materialistic-minded. They marry not just for love, but for money and materials. They search for a financial comfort. There is a pressure for the boy to find an apartment and the girl finds a car. While watching a speed dating show, a woman said, "I'd rather be crying in the back of a Mercedes than laughing on the back of a bicycle."

FOOD COMPARISON

American: Bakery is too sweet.

<u>Chinese</u>: There are four or five different styles. "Cheese is not a part of the culture." <u>American-Chinese</u>: Not as good. "Cater to American tastes." There is a lack of variety. It is low-end with nothing fancy.

FAVORITE FOODS:

American

Steak, seafood and pizza

Chinese

Noodles, bread and

traditional food

EDUCATION SYSTEM

America: Has more academic freedom. You are able to form your own opinion. Students do not have a mathematical background. China: Students focus more on test-taking and memorization. You do not have your own opinion. Students have a mathematical background, do they do not use a cacuator.

SOCIETY PRESSURES

America: Have free choices. We have to be pretty. If you are good at math, you are called a "nerd." China: The norm is to bahave. Girls are to marry before 30 years old and have to have children. The cool kid is the one who does well on tests.

PRESENTING SELF

Women want to have expensive handbags and "make sure people can see the logo." There is the pressure to buy a new car to match their social standing. Which is the same as here in America.

ACTIVITIES

"Mahjong, sports and karaoke."

"Mahjong, sports and karaoke."

Driving

America: Rules are more clear, such as, "Right of way."

China: The tradition is to swoop in when an opening is available. They do not give way to pesdestrians.

DATING AND MARRIAGE

There is less casual dating because they are looking for marriage. They do not date in high school, so college is the more appropriate age. She has a friend here who is dating an American and only after three dates, she is thinking about the future.

FOOD COMPARISON

<u>American</u>: Sweets are way too sweet. She puts in 1/5 of sugar for recipes. <u>American-Chinese</u>: The same sauce is used for every dish. It is not authentic. The sauce used is too sweet and there are other flavors.

Favorite Foods:

American

Lasagna, mac n' cheese and chicken noodle soup

Chinese

Anything tofu, noodles and eggplants

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FINAL WORDS...



WEISS Magazine would like to thank the following people and organizations for their support and guidance throughout this process. This past year has created an unimaginable amount of memories and stories that will live for years on end. Without them, designing this magazine would not have been possible. The editor would also like to extend a thank you to her loving family for allowing her to experience these adventures.



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Western... Eastern... Is There Really a Difference?

As a part of our human nature, there is an instant judgment when we see someone who looks or talks differently from ourselves. We want to go straight to the stereotype of the other culture and what we think we know about them. In reality, we know nothing about them. Yes, we read about them in our textbooks or watch them on the television, but that is not what they are. They are just like everybody else; they are just like us.

The Chinese speak just as we do, but with a different arrangement of vowels and sounds. They eat food (because they too have to live) that is prepared differently because of the resources they have over in Asia. Their dress code may represent a more traditional and uniform approach, but that is no different than our private or religious schools.

We can even compare ourselves to them. Just like how they have their favorite singers that they are obsessed with, we too have our fan girls and fan clubs. They want to capture every moment they have on their phone; we know we do that too. Each province and even city in the country has special dishes and ways to prepare their food, which we can easily see in how our northern states and southern states approach food.

The only true difference is the location of their country. Due to being on the other side of the world (sometimes more than a twelve-hour difference), they obtain different resources and influences. For them, this goes back centuries upon centuries. With how well their country has survived, we need to be learning more from them.

We think that, as Americans, we are influencing the world by surpassing milestones in medicine, technology and individual freedom. The truth is: we can be influenced as well. Think about where we get some of our ideas from – yes, we are looking at you, Europe. If we put aside the idea that other cultures are bad, then we can work together to conquer worldwide problems.

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The only way we can make that happen is to experience these other cultures for ourselves. We need to encourage traveling and taking the road less travelled by, as Robert Frost once wrote. We need to read beyond the textbook and look outside of the classroom. We need to book that plane ticket and go somewhere new to experience the world for ourselves. If more people are able and willing to do this, I think the world can step closer to peace.

