Chinese New Year Event (Final Report)

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The Office of Diversity and Inclusion in conjunction with the Office of International Education hosted the 1st Annual Chinese New Year event on Tuesday, January 24th in the Rankin Center Dome Room. The majority of entertainment was provided by the Chinese Student Organization with performers from Grand Rapids. The Chinese New Year celebration featured traditional dances, a Pipa player, a Kung-Fu demonstration, and singing. There were tables on various aspects of Chinese culture and traditional foods were served. Around 500 people attended this event.

One of the objectives of this event was to inform the campus about Chinese culture. In order to assess the impact, a survey was distributed prior to the event to a convenience sample of students to determine their knowledge of China. The questions on China gauged student knowledge of the country and culture. At the event, students were given the same set of questions. (For a sample of the questionnaire please see attached Appendix B.)

For this analysis, two groups were assessed, those who did not attend the Chinese New Year Event (Non-Attendees) (n=73) and those who did attend the Chinese New Year Event (Attendees) (n=48). The average age for non-attending group was 22. The average age for the attending group was 21. The non-attending group was primarily composed of students enrolled in the College of Business (56%). The attending group was primarily composed of students enrolled in the College of Business (25%), although they comprised a much smaller majority.

Respondents were asked to name 5 things they associated with China. These responses were then coded into the corresponding categories:

Responses on "5 things they identified with China"

Category	Non-Attendees	Attendees
Culture	30%	45%
Economic	19%	6%
Food	13%	15%
Geographic	4%	2%
Government	9%	5%
History	7%	14%
Physical Appearance	4%	3%
Population	14%	9%

Source: Chinese New Year Survey, 2012

In terms of culture, the most popular terms among non-attendees were *Mulan*, *language*, *pandas*, and a mention of *martial arts, kung-fu*, or *Jackie Chan*. Attendees were most likely to mention *architecture, Buddhism, dancing, dragons,* and *kung-fu* . Non-attendees were more likely to mention negative stereotypes such as "poor driving," "they act lazy," and "triangle hats." Attendees were more likely to mention stereotypes such as *intelligent* and *hardworking.*

Economic terms were much more prevalent in the non-attending group including the terms *cheap labor, Made in China*, and *outsourcing/steal jobs*. The Attending group mentioned the terms *global economy*, *Made in China*, and *imports*. Some of the specific phrases related to China from the non-attending group included "China is taking over the world," "Lots of Businesses work with people in China," "Most productive country," and "Most things are made there and shipped all over the world." Specific statements made by the group attending the Chinese New Year celebration included "All the products I buy" and "Growing Industry."

Food was an important indicator of Chinese Culture for both groups. Overall, both groups mentioned *food* generally while *rice* and *chopsticks* were other common terms. Among both groups, the term "good food" appeared quite frequently. However, the non-attending group had the only mention of "dog soup."

In terms of Geography, most of the mentions referred to the scale of China including the terms "big country" and "large." The non-attending group was more likely to mention specific terms such as "rich farmland" and "large vacation spots." Whereas the attending group was more likely to mention general terms such as *big*.

The government and governmental policies were more pronounced in terms of what the non-attendees associated with China. However, they tended to mention more general terms such as *One Child Policy* and *Communism*. The attending group mentioned more specific policies such as *Internet Censorship* and *Poor Human Rights/Liu Xiaobo.* Statements made in the non-attending group included "Disrespectful Diplomacy-Every Culture and land is (sic) belong to them," "Forced abortions," "No freedom," and "The government take after one son only (sic)." Statements made in the attending group included "Dictators" and "Environmental Issues."

History was something that the attendees were more likely to associate with China. The non-attendees mentioned mostly *The Great Wall of China*. However, the attendees mentioned *The Great Wall of China* as well as *the Silk Road* generally. Other items mentioned by the attendees were "dynasties," "the forbidden city", and "the three kingdoms."

Physical Appearance was mentioned in fairly equal measure by both groups. The non-attendee group stated terms such as "minority," "little Asians," "slanted eyes," and "petite." The attendee group stated terms such as "small eyes," "cute Asian grandmas," and "weird clothing."

Finally population was mentioned fairly equally by both groups. Terms such as *large population* and *lots of people* were present in both groups. However, the non-attending group was 9 times more likely to mention the statement "overpopulation" than the attending group. Other terms used by the non-attending group included "too many people," "very crowded," and "over 1 billion people." Terms used by the attending group included "crowded streets," "a big population," and "highly populated."

Many of the responses correlate with a recent survey of 2 million American adults conducted by US-based Perspective Resources Inc (PRI), which found that American's, in general had a very low cultural literacy when it came to China. "When Americans were asked to think about China they mentioned words like "highly populated", "government or communism", "culture or history" and the color red. Others mentioned a wide range of topics such as population control, pollution, Communism and Capitalism, the economy, labor issues, sweatshops, low quality products, US debt to China and Tibet."

Next, respondents were asked to indicate their top sources for information on China. The following responses were gathered.

Respondent identified sources of information on China

Category	Non-Attendees	Attendees
Television	60%	48%
Internet	56%	52%
Movies	52%	63%
School	38%	29%
Newspapers	34%	13%
Friends/Family	32%	17%
Cultural Events	30%	27%
Books	15%	13%
Magazines	14%	10%
Radio	7%	6%
Travel	3%	6%

Source: Chinese New Year Survey, 2012

Overall, non-attendees were far more likely to cite television while attendees were more likely to cite movies as their primary source of information on China. In terms of the non-attending group, with the exception of the individuals who cited radio and magazines, culture was the top item mentioned when someone stated China. In the attending group, culture was the top item mentioned across the board regardless of information source.

For the next question, respondents were asked to name three cities in China.

Number of cities named correctly by respondents

Number of Cities named	Non-Attendees	Attendees
0	14%	15%
1	21%	15%
2	45%	38%
3	21%	33%

Source: Chinese New Year Survey, 2012

Top Cities Named by respondents

Top cities named	Non-Attendees	Attendees
Beijing	68%	77%
Hong Kong	47%	65%
Shanghai	40%	35%
Other	18%	13%

Source: Chinese New Year Survey, 2012

The group that attended the Chinese New Year Event was much more likely to correctly name three cities than the non-attending group. On top of that, they were more likely to name the country's capital

(Beijing), as well as the city-state of Hong Kong. While the non-attending group was more likely to name "Other" cities in China, these were often cities not actually in China, for example "Bangkok."

As a final question, respondents were given a multiple choice question and asked to indicate who the current President of China was. They were given an option of Ban Ki Moon (Secretary General of the United Nations), Yoshihiko Noda (Prime Minister of Japan), Kim Jong Un (Supreme Leader of North Korea) and Hu Jintao (President of China). The following responses were gathered.

Responses to the "Current President of China"

	Non-Attendees	Attendees
Ban Ki Moon	11%	8%
Yoshihiko Noda	16%	13%
Kim Jong Un	42%	15%
Hu Jintao	**26%**	**54%**
No Response	4%	10%

Source: Chinese New Year Survey, 2012

Overwhelmingly, the non-attending group indicated that Kim Jong Un was the President of China with 42% of the responses. Only 26% of the respondents answered correctly. The attending group fared better with 54% indicating that Hu Jintao was the correct answer, followed by 15% indicating that Kim Jong Un was the President of China.

Discussion

While the sample size from this survey was too small to actually make any large generalizations towards the campus as a whole, it does give some cursory knowledge on the attitudes that prevail towards China. For a country that has a long and rich culture, it is important to note that culture was the first thing both groups associated with the country. Food, often classified as a subgroup of culture, also scored highly in terms of what students associated with China. Considering that the Chinese New Year Event comprised of activities that highlighted both of these, it is unlikely that any schemas were significantly changed. Although, it is important to note that those who attended the event were more likely to mention *positive* aspects of Chinese culture thus providing our Chinese students who participated in the event with an environment that was fairly free of conflict.

One of the more notable aspects of this survey is the indication of the general ignorance of *modern China*, especially when it comes to the political/economic arena. It is within this topic area that the students in this survey indicate a general weakness. China has over 150 cities with populations of over 1 million, yet students struggled to name any three cities in China. Furthermore, while Hu Jintao may not be well known in the U.S. general current event knowledge (This survey was administered during the same week Kim Jong Il died), should have allowed for the process of elimination.

This particular event was successful primarily because it enabled our students from China to share more about their culture with the campus community, thus giving them an opportunity to shine. This enabled this event to obtain the goals of:
1)   Creating a university that is welcoming to diverse populations.
2)   Recruiting, retaining, and graduating a diverse student population.

3) Creating environments for student learning that are inclusive and sensitive to a diverse student population.

Overall, our Chinese student participants indicated that they had an enjoyable time contributing to this event. In fact, the Chinese Student Organization was willing to reprise one of their acts for the 24th Annual International Festival of Cultures.

While this type of celebratory event is not the proper forum for addressing the discrepancies of knowledge outlined in the survey. Future events (perhaps hosted in the fall) could be designed to address a discussion of the Chinese economy and politics. For example, bringing in a speaker or holding a debate would be a good forum to address these knowledge gaps. As China is slated to become the world's second largest economy, there is no escaping the value that having a fair and balanced view of the country will have on future student success.

BUDGET

Vendor	Item(s)	Estimated	Actual
Oriental Trading	Decorations	$150.00	$93.49
Catering	Food	$1250.00	$1330.50
Rankin Dome Room	Charge for public event	$33.00	$0.00
Mike Hu	Dance Group, Pipa player, costumes	$600.00	$600.00
Copy Center	Posters 1000	$300.00	$250.00
Copy Center	Posters 175	$0.00	$61.25
Amazon	Brushes, ink, paper, writing set	$100.00	$94.10
Amazon	Paper for paper cutting activity	$20.00	$16.99
Amazon	Additional ink	$40.00	$40.00
Quinns	Microphone rental	$60.00	$62.40
		$2553.00	**$2548.73**
Diversity Grant		$2100.00	$2100.00
Office of Int. Ed.		**$453.00**	$448.73

APPENDIX B   **China Survey**

Age_____   Major_____

When someone mentions the country of "China" what are the first 5 things you think of?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Where do you get most of your information about China? (Please circle all that apply.)

Movies	Radio	Cultural Events
Television	Books	Travel
Internet	Magazines	School
Newspapers	Friends/Family	Other_____

Can you name 3 cities in China?

1)

2)

3)

Who is the President of China?

A) Ban Ki Moon

B) Yoshihiko Noda

C) Kim Jong un

D) Hu Jintao