

Comparing what teacher candidates know about each other: China and the United States

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The purpose of this article is to compare teacher candidates' knowledge and perceptions about China and the United States. Using a survey research design, 91 Chinese teacher candidates and 96 teacher candidates from the United States participated. The survey findings indicated that, while both groups of teacher candidates had a basic level of historical and political knowledge about the other country, both teacher candidate groups also had stereotypes of each other's country. In their responses to the comment section and free response questions, however, teacher candidates focused on very different aspects. The Chinese teacher candidates focused more on the United States' political and education system. The United States' teacher candidates focused their responses more on daily life and cultural aspects of China.

Keywords: cross-cultural awareness; global competency; teacher preparation; stereotypes about China; stereotypes about the United States

INTRODUCTION

According to the Council on Foreign Relations (2007), "No relationship is as important to the twenty-first century as the one between the United States of America, the world's great power, and China, the world's rising power" (p. 2). The US is a superpower country and China is an emerging superpower country. Despite political differences, these countries interact daily at multiple levels. Morrison (2014), an Asian trade and finance specialist, explains, "China is currently the United States' second-largest trading partner and its biggest source of imports; China is estimated to be a \$300 billion market for the United States" (p. 1). China has been on a fast track to economic development over the past several decades and has steadily become more influential in the global economy. The US continues to have a powerful economic and political influence around the globe. Yet, what do teacher candidates in either country know about each country's history and sociocultural context? How aware are teacher candidates in China and the US about the important relationship between the two countries' political, economic, and cultural dimensions? This article examines these larger questions. The article's purpose is to investigate and compare teacher candidates' knowledge and perceptions about China and the US. Particularly, the study examines the degree of historical knowledge and cultural understanding about China and the US among teacher candidates in both countries. The study also identifies and analyses persisting stereotypes about China and the US among the teacher candidates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research suggests that teacher candidates, especially at the elementary preparation level, have limited global awareness and knowledge of other countries (Duckworth, Levy, & Levy, 2005; Zong, 2009). Teacher candidates, like most of the general public in China and the US, learn about the other country from tourist driven media (Sun & Yu, 2012). Whether digital or in print, tourist oriented media, depicts often uncomplicated views of another country or culture. These views can lead to stereotypes. In this literature review, we examine studies about perceptions that people in the US often have about China and vice-versa. Sun and Yu's (2012) research illustrates that much of the media and tourist materials in the US describes China as an ancient country with an over 5,000-year history. Yet, China is also depicted as a country that is both "a potential threat and a global actor with increasing influence" (Sun & Yu, 2012, p. 2). In today's globalized and information-driven society, the perceptions about China continue to be in flux and China is perceived as becoming more democratic, open, and liberal.

Tourist oriented media in China about the US shows the educational opportunities available in the US but also emphasizes the political and economic relationship between China and the US (Joachim, 2002). In China, the US is translated to one word, *meiguo*. This word means a beautiful, fine, pretty, nice, perfect, splendid, and wonderful country. Meiguo is a good example of the perceptions that Chinese people have about the US (Zhao, 2005). However, reality is a little more complicated. Chinese citizens have a paradoxical mixture of love and hate for the US (Ma, 1999). Not all Chinese have such a positive attitude toward the US. Some Chinese view the US as a global hegemonic threat (Jisi, 1997). The shifting political dynamics between the Chinese government and US government is influential in changing Chinese people's views about the US. When the relationship between the governments is equable, the Chinese tend to have positive views about the US because of the positive propaganda in the mainstream media, which is mainly controlled by the Chinese government. If the relationship falters, most Chinese tend to take a negative view about the US (Zhao, Hoge, Choi, & Lee, 2007). Link (2012) explains this phenomenon: "Chinese view of anything - currency, technology transfer, cyber war, Tibet, Taiwan, Syria - is inevitably the government's view, no matter how far it departs from the views of other Chinese" (p. 27).

Common stereotypes

Uncomplicated or cursory perceptions of another person or culture can lead to stereotypes (Osunde & Tlou, 1996; Sun & Yu, 2012). Stereotypes are part of human culture and are reductive but descriptive ways to generalize a person or people group. Judd and Park (1993) define stereotypes as "an individual's set of beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of a group" (p. 110). They explain that people use stereotypes to help differentiate one group from another group (Judd & Park, 1993). Some stereotypes about people from other countries are based on stories passed down in the literature or in oral tradition. Other stereotypes are formed based on images portrayed in the print and electronic media (Zhang, 2011).

There are only a small number of empirical research studies of teacher candidates' stereotypes of other countries or regions. One such study examined US teacher candidates' stereotypes about people living in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Osunde, Tlou, & Brown, 1996). The study found that the teacher candidates had many stereotypes about Sub-Saharan Africa, including that the region was filled with wild animals, disease, starvation, and a high degree of illiteracy. In our literature review, we could not find an empirical study that examined US teacher candidates' stereotypes about people living in China. We did find a few articles,

though, about common Western stereotypes about China and the Chinese people (Sun & Yu, 2013; Zhang, 2011). The persistent stereotype about China is that it is a harsh and backward country (Sun & Yu, 2012), but the Chinese people were hard working and smart (Zhang, 2011). There were very few studies in the literature about stereotypes that Chinese people may have of the US. One study, by Tan and her colleagues (2009) found that Chinese people have mixed stereotypes about the multicultural make-up of the US. Another study discovered that Chinese stereotypes about the US vary and are significantly affected by media (Zhang & Tan, 2011).

To summarize, we found very limited research studies in the literature that have examined elementary teacher candidates' knowledge and global awareness of another country. There were no studies that specifically compared the degree of teacher candidates' socio-historical knowledge about a different country context like China or the US. Thus, our research study addresses a literature gap regarding the identification and comparison of teacher candidates' knowledge and cultural understanding about China and the US. Three research questions guide this study:

- 1) What do teacher candidates in China and the US know about each other's country?
- 2) What questions do teacher candidates in China and the US have about each other's country?
- 3) What persisting stereotypes exist, if any, between teacher candidates in China and the US about each other's country?

METHOD

The study's research design is based on a "cross-cultural survey" research methodology (Fowler, 2013; Hines, 1993). Surveying is a way to produce statistical snapshots and information from a sample population (Fowler, 2013). Hines (1993) asserts that survey design can combine qualitative and quantitative features. Such design is effective for the creation of a cross-cultural survey that provides descriptive statistics as well as ethnographic data from a sample population. Data collected using a cross-cultural surveying technique is also useful for comparisons. This paper compares survey data between teacher candidates in China and the US.

Participants and school settings

The study's participants are drawn from the sample population of teacher candidates at the pre-service level in elementary teacher preparation programs. There are two participant samples: teacher candidates from China, and teacher candidates from the US. Based on the survey response rate of 99% in China and 98% in the US, 91 Chinese participants and 96 American participants completed the survey, making up a total sample size of 187 students (n=187).

The Chinese teacher candidates are all undergraduates in the Elementary Education Department in a regional university located in the southeast of China, which we refer to by the pseudonym Dong University. More than 18,000 students attend Dong University. Of the 91 participants from Dong University, 87 are female (95%) and 4 are male (5%). All of the Dong University participants are from China and belong to Han nationality.

The US teacher candidates are all undergraduates in an Elementary Education Department in a regional university located in the south-central region of the US, which we refer to by the pseudonym East State University. More than 13,000 students attend East State University. Of the 96 participants from East State University, 96 are female (100%). The ethnic breakdown of the participants is: 7% African American; 13% Latina/Hispanic American; and 80% European American.

Data collection

The study's data were collected with survey instruments. The surveys were designed to identify the participants' knowledge in three areas: 1) historical knowledge, 2) political knowledge, and 3) cultural knowledge. There were two surveys for the study: an English version and a Chinese version. Each survey paralleled the other in terms of question areas. For example, both surveys included political questions about each country's capital city, flag, population, and leaders. However, the surveys were contextualized to the country of origin. One survey was about China and was written in English, which the teacher candidates from the US completed. The other survey was about the US and was written in Chinese, which the teacher candidates from the China completed.

Each survey had a total of 25 questions. Of those questions 3 were open-ended, free response questions, 17 were multiple-choice questions, and 5 were based on a 3-point Likert scale. Survey questions were developed based on two already established surveys (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Osunde, Tlou, & Brown, 1996). The surveys were also carefully reviewed and modified by university professors from both countries in order to ensure clarity of questions, readability, and validity. In addition, surveys were piloted with a small sample group. The reliability was calculated using the Spearman-Brown split-half and the coefficient of .87 was obtained, which indicates a high reliability. The study's surveys and research design were reviewed and approved by the authors' Institutional Review Board.

The survey was collected in Spring 2014 using two different procedures. Participants in the US completed the survey online through Qualtrics®. The Chinese participants completed a hard copy of the survey. Completed surveys were collected by a professor, who scanned and sent them electronically to the researchers using email communication. Both groups of participants completed the survey in class in their native languages. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete. The open-ended answers that the Chinese participants responded to were translated into English. The translations were checked and reviewed for accuracy by professors from China.

Data analysis

The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis provided descriptive statistics of the participants' degree of knowledge and understanding of another country and culture. These descriptive statistics also provided statistical snapshots about teacher candidates' level of historical and political understanding of either China or the US depending on the survey they completed. Because the survey included open-ended, ethnographic type questions there was also qualitative data analysis. The qualitative data offered more in-depth descriptions of the teacher candidates' perspectives and questions about China or the US. We analysed the qualitative data using the constant-comparative method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data were first read, re-read, and then coded. Codes were compared and organized into themes. The themes were furthered summarized by using

data displays like charts and tables. These data displays helped us to identify differences and similarities between the two participant groups and keep a running list of occurrence frequency.

RESULTS

The paper organizes and reports the findings related to the study's three research questions. The first research question inquires about the teacher candidates' level of historical, political, and cultural knowledge about China and the US. The second research question examines the questions that the study's teacher candidates have about each other's country. The third question relates to whether stereotypes exist among teacher candidates in China and the US about each other's country.

Teacher candidates' knowledge

The data indicated that the majority of participants from both countries hold a certain level of basic understanding about the other country's historical-political context. For example, more than half of the Chinese teacher candidates (52%) correctly answered the question about Thomas Jefferson, identifying that he was politician, philosopher and educator. About 48% of the US teacher candidates correctly answered a similarly written question about Confucius being an educator, leader, and philosopher. Table 1 shows the teacher candidates' correct responses to the surveys' historical-political questions.

Overall, the US teacher candidates' knowledge about China's political history was somewhat limited compared to the Chinese teacher candidates' knowledge of US political history. For example, only 42% of the US participants knew that Mao Tse-tung was the first president or chairman of the People's Republic of China. In comparison, 78% of the Chinese participants knew that George Washington was the first president of the US. The Chinese teacher candidates' collective historical-political knowledge was 12% greater than that of the US teacher candidates. As a whole group, the Chinese teacher candidates had a greater percentage of correct responses to the survey's historical-political questions except for two categories: capital city and flag recognition.

Table 1: Teacher candidates' degree of correct responses to historical-political questions

	Americans	Chinese
Capital city	.91	.77
Flag recognition	.98	.96
Language of instruction	.76	.89
Leader recognition	.45	.65
Map of country	.61	.87
Population total	.57	.48
States/Provinces	.43	.69
Years of history	.52	.86
AVERAGE	.65	.77

Related to cultural knowledge, the teacher candidates in both groups were more accurate in their responses to survey questions related to culture. Questions in the culture category included multiple-choice options about topics like family living style, food, language, and religion. Among the US teacher candidates, 89% correctly identified that a popular family living arrangement in China is that the immediate family *and* the extended family live together. Responding to the same question, 90% of the Chinese participants indicated that the immediate family dwelling together is a typical living arrangement in the US. More than 75% of the teacher candidates in both groups also correctly identified the major staple foods products and religious belief systems that comprise each country.

Cultural items were also popular in the US teacher candidates' responses to the survey's first open-ended question, which inquired about two words that participants immediately associated with China. The top three words or phrases the US teacher candidates typed in were: 1) Chinese food, 2) rice, and 3) dragons. Together, these words comprised about 16% of the total data related to this name association question. The Chinese teacher candidates did not write much about culture in their free association responses. Their culture-related responses were more entertainment oriented; Hollywood and television dramas were repeated responses. The Chinese teacher candidates focused more on political words and phrases in their identification of word associations with the US. Of all the words used by the Chinese teacher candidates, three political words were the most repeated: 1) freedom, 2) democracy, and 3) open or openness. These words comprised over 27% of the total words written. In contrast, the US teacher candidates associated political words and phrases very sparingly. Beijing, in association with capital city, was repeated three times and communism was repeated twice.

Participants' questions

Regarding the inquiries that two participant groups had about China or the US, the Chinese teacher candidates' top three categories of questions were: 1) education, 2) daily life, and 3) culture. The US teacher candidates' top three categories of question responses were: 1) culture, 2) education, and 3) everything or nothing. Many of the teacher candidates responded with the word "everything" in answering the question about what they were interested in about China. Conversely, about the same amount of American teacher candidates responded with the word "nothing" in answering that question. It was noted that none of the Chinese teacher candidates answered with the word "nothing" or a similar word in their response to the same question.

Rather, the Chinese teacher candidates inquired the most about US education system; they expressed their interest in every level of education in the US, but showed more interests in higher education. For example, the Chinese participants asked questions regarding campus life, college admission, education policy, the newest theory about education, the law about education, the salary and status of American teachers, and the relationship between US democracy and their system of education. The same pattern appeared among the Chinese teacher candidates in their responses to the open-ended question about whether they would like to visit or live in the US someday. Almost 94% of the Chinese teacher candidates indicated yes to this question. In the comment section of this open-end question, US universities were the third most popular destination choices. In fact, the Chinese teacher candidates named many specific universities such as Harvard University and Yale University as well as other Ivy League schools.

By contrast, the US teacher candidates' interests were more diversified. Their questions covered almost every aspect of life in China, such as religious beliefs, citizen rights, history,

traditions, language, economy, demographics, and geography. The US teacher candidates also wanted to know about what life is like for US citizens who live in China. They also had a lot of questions about Chinese culture. For example, they wanted to know about a typical day of a Chinese citizen. They were also curious about the lifestyle of Chinese millionaires. When the US teacher candidates answered the question about the place they wanted to visit in China, the results indicated their varied knowledge of China. Beside some famous cities in China, they also listed many other places, such as: Jiuzhaigou, Tiananmen Square, the Hanging Temple, Terracotta Army, and Wuzhizhou Island.

Stereotypes

The third research question focused on stereotypes, if any, that the teacher candidate participants had about each other's country. More than a majority of the US teacher candidates (77%) believed that the most frequent type of transportation used in China is the bicycle. By comparison, 65% of the Chinese teacher candidates believed that the bus is the main transportation in the US. In addition, 75% of the Chinese teacher candidates believed that most citizens in the US preferred to live in suburban areas. The US teacher candidates believed that all Chinese people are smart. The Chinese teacher candidates, on the other hand, viewed the US as a place of complete freedom.

The participants over-identified their conceptions of each other's political system. The Chinese teacher candidates tended to overemphasize the degree to which there is complete freedom in the US. The US teacher candidates overgeneralized the lack of geographic space because of China's large population of people. More than 90% of the Chinese teacher candidates were unsure about the question regarding whether citizens in the US have the freedom to do whatever they want to do. For the US teacher candidates, most viewed China as a very crowded country, but when specifically asked to identify the population in China, only 48% of the US teacher candidates could identify the correct answer.

Both groups of participants viewed the individual country equal to the whole continent. For example, the US teacher candidates equated China with the whole of Asia whereas many of the Chinese teacher candidates assumed that US made up the entire North American continent. Both groups of teacher candidates had misconceptions about the locations of some cities. For example, one of the Chinese teacher candidates expressed the desire to travel to the Caribbean islands as part of a visit to the US, but actually there is not a state in the Caribbean islands that is part of the US. Some of the US teacher candidates indicated that they would like to see Tokyo as part of a visit to China; however, Tokyo is located in Japan not in China. Similarly, some the US teacher candidates associated cherry blossom trees and sushi with China, but both cherry blossom trees and sushi are related to Japan not to China.

DISCUSSION

All the authors of this article are teacher educators. Two of us were educated in China and came to the US for graduate programs. The other author was educated entirely in the US. All authors are also dedicated to the development of globally competent teacher candidates. According to the Asia Society, global competencies are made of up the knowledge and skills to act on global issues (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). A globally competent educator helps to prepare young learners to successfully participate in a "world of increasing social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, which requires teaching young people about the

qualities—the history, languages, geography, and cultural contributions—of peoples the world over” (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011, p. 4). The Asia Society also asserts that global competence means that educators and teacher candidates should critically examine their own country’s history to understand their country’s relationship and contributions—positively and negatively—in a globalized world (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Related to the development of global competence, our study provided empirical measures to identify the degree of knowledge that teacher candidates in China and the US have about their countries interrelationship.

China and the US are both globally significant places and the relationship between the countries will increasingly become more and more important in the next decades. We believe that it is imperative for educators to have a basic understanding about the two countries’ cultural makeup, history, and political systems. This study provides a first step as it measures what groups of teacher candidates in the US and China know about each other’s country. We organize this discussion section by unpacking the themes revealed in the survey findings.

Internet connected, but isolated

One theme that emerged from the survey data is that the teacher candidates were quite media savvy in terms of where they learned about the other country. The top three media sources where Chinese teacher candidates learned about the US were: 1) movies, 2) Internet, and 3) books. The top media sources for the US teacher candidates were: 1) television stations, 2) Internet, and 3) schools. See Table 2 for a complete list of all the sources of where the teacher candidates learned about the other group’s country.

Table 2: Media resources for learning about China and the United States

Resources	Chinese participants	US participants
Books	.77	.65
Internet	.90	.75
Meeting people	.18	.38
Movies	.93	.70
School	.43	.74
Television station/news	.57	.79
Other	.08	.07

As Table 2 shows, a little more than 93% of Chinese teacher candidates learned about the US from movies, 90% from the Internet, and 77% indicated books. About 79% of the US teacher candidates indicated that they know about China from television news or shows, 75% from the Internet, and 73% from schools. Specifically, the Internet was recognized as one of the major sources by both groups of teacher candidates. Yet, a small percentage of both teacher candidate groups indicated that meeting a person from China or from the US was where they learned about the other country. It was selected as a choice for only 38% of the teacher candidates in the US and by only 18% of the Chinese teacher candidates; this is not surprising because research findings suggest that people gain knowledge and information from the media, but rarely learn from direct personal communication (Bandura, 1986; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994).

Comparing what teacher candidates know about each other

The study's teacher candidates seemed to be highly interconnected with the Internet, but also isolated in terms of their global awareness. Meeting people from another country can be a pivotal way to break stereotypes and learn about a country. With today's technology, making connections with another person is not just something that has to be done face-to-face. The Internet, through Skype and web-based programs, such as MyLanguageExchange.com, offers a great deal of opportunities for cultural exchanges with people in China or the US. It can also be a way to practice with the language and develop digital pen-pals, which can open up new paths of learning and cultural exchange for teacher candidates. Although there may be concern about firewalls that would restrict or block the exchange of some type of content—like political questions—among the digital pen pals, web-based programs have exciting possibilities both for educators and their students. More research is needed in order to see if the establishment of digital pen pals increases the level of global competencies among teacher candidates.

School was another source of media where teacher candidates indicated they learned about the other country. Table 2 shows that 74% of US teacher candidates indicated that they learned about China at school and 43% of the Chinese teacher candidates learned about the US at school. Even though the data showed that the teacher candidates have some basic knowledge about each other's country from school, there was no further evidence showing at which school level they learned the information: elementary school, middle school or high school. The examination of the related content, which was taught about the other country—either about China or the US—and at which school level in both countries will be an important part of a future research agenda.

Cultural vs. political

The study's findings showed that the teacher candidates hold a certain degree of basic cultural and political knowledge about each other's country. Comparing this knowledge, the Chinese teacher candidates knew more about the politics of the US than their counterparts from the US knew about Chinese politics. This likely relates to the media resources from which the Chinese teacher candidates indicated they obtained their information about the US. Specifically, freedom and democracy are eternal theme of most of the movies and books that are translated into Chinese. Thus, it is likely that the media and text that the Chinese teacher candidates consume have informed what they perceive about political life in the US.

Ma (1999) explains that Chinese citizens have long viewed the US as a country with almost complete freedoms and democracy. Ma's research investigated how college students across China were protesting for American style freedom and democracy. Protest examples are the Tiananmen Square event in 1989 and the more recent student-led protests in Hong Kong, known as the Umbrella Revolution. Economic trade, which has increased the daily interaction between the US and China after the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation* (APEC) conference in Beijing in 2014, has also further increased communication and understanding between the two countries.

Furthermore, the Chinese teacher candidates communicated a stronger desire to know more about the education system in the US. This is likely because of the high status given to Chinese students who go on to achieve a university degree in the US. Because of the different styles and high quality of high education in the US, many Chinese teacher candidates looked forward to receiving an education in the US.

The teacher candidates from the US were not as interested in Chinese politics since there were fewer political words they mentioned. They focused more on daily life in China and wanted to know more about the cultural part of China. This phenomenon is explained by Zhang's research (2011) about how much of Chinese culture and traditions have been represented in animated movies like Disney's *Mulan* and Dreamwork's *Kung Fu Panda*. From these movies, the US teacher candidates are more likely to learn about China's cultural aspects.

There are problems, however, when a person just consumes media from popular culture oriented movies where the movies are actually made and produced in the US. Many of the aspects of China presented in animated movies contain historical inaccuracies and perpetuate stereotypes. In addition, unlike the US, which is a relatively new nation in the world, China has a long and extensive history that goes back more than 5,000 years. It could be the reason that the US teacher candidates are interested in Chinese culture, and they are curious about the relationship between the China's long history and its cultural development. Alternatively, the US teacher candidates, especially at the elementary school level, may just have more interest in culture-related topics—which they are likely to teach someday—rather than political ones. More research is needed in this area to find out more information regarding this topic.

Incomplete and uncomplicated

A third theme from the findings of this research study is that the teacher candidate in both groups had an incomplete and somewhat uncomplicated view of the other country. The teacher candidates seemed to over-generalize—though this may be due to a limitation of surveying—their responses about the country in question. Many of the responses seemed like pat answers and were uncomplicated even though there are issues to be critical of in both China and the US. For example, the Chinese government is often accused of human rights abuses, but none of the US teacher candidates even mentioned anything about human rights. Only three of the teacher candidates included something about the rights of Chinese citizens and whether the Chinese people were happy in their open-ended responses. The Chinese teacher candidates also had quite positive and uncomplicated responses. But, one Chinese teacher candidate wrote in the word “hegemony” as part of the word association with the US. Hegemony has a negative connotation in China. It is a word that is associated with US dominance around the world and the fear that much of the popular culture and consumerism in the US is leading to the loss of local culture and, even, language.

There was also a certain level of apathy from the US teacher candidates as 12% of the candidates typed in “nothing” or “not applicable” in their response to the question about what they would like to know about China. This is cause for concern because one of the most important and primary global competencies in education is being willing to investigate the world (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011); writing in “nothing” as response shows a lack of curiosity about other countries and cultures. The other responses that the US teacher candidates wrote were almost all positive or neutral words to describe their associations about China. However, there was one word mentioned by one of the teacher candidates that was ignorant and insulting. The term was: “slant eyes”. Just the use of that term shows the need for cultural sensitivity type along with a robust multicultural curriculum to be infused in teacher education programs.

Related to geographic knowledge, it is troubling that the some in both groups of teacher candidates would confuse difference between a single country and the continent where the country was situated. According to Zhao (2005), for teacher candidates in the US and China, world history and geography courses are not always required for a degree or a teaching

certification. There is not a similar requirement in China either. This fact might cause the participants to overgeneralize some conceptions about each other's country. They learned some conceptions from school and media, but there was no particular subject for them to learn step by step. Even though they learned from school, the teachers might have the stereotypes about the each other's country, which may also affect their understanding and perceptions. For example, the US teacher candidates learned that China has a huge population, but they did not know exactly how large the population was. The Chinese teacher candidates knew that people in the US have freedom, but they were not sure about whether there were limits to the freedoms in the US.

In addition, teacher candidates learned information about each other from restaurant and eating establishments. For example, the US teacher candidates learned about Chinese food from their Chinese restaurants. In fact, the food or decorations in Chinese restaurants of the US might not reflect typical Chinese culture. It might be mix of Asian cultures. One of the typical examples was sushi. Sushi is actually a typical Japanese food, but it appears in many Chinese restaurants in the US. This can cause problem for the US teacher candidates to distinguish the difference between China and other Asian countries. Similarly, the Chinese participants learned about food that is popular in the US from fast food commercials and establishments like KFC, MacDonald's, and Pizza Hut. In China, these fast food restaurants are not exactly as they are in US. This can cause some of the misunderstanding.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study provided preliminary findings regarding teacher candidates' cultural awareness, the results should be treated with caution due to its limitations. First, while survey research is a valuable way to produce statistics and information about a sample population, there are limitations with using surveys. Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) explain that one limitation of surveys is that they are open to participant bias because they are based on self-reported data. Another limitation is the validation of the surveys. The survey about China was field-tested using a pilot study with a different focus group of elementary school teacher candidates from the US, but there was no pilot study with a different group of teacher candidates from China. There was a gender limitation in this study with a majority of participants being female. The survey data could not provide an equal representation of male teacher candidates' knowledge and perceptions of history, politics, and culture of the two countries. The inclusion of more participants along with a stronger mix of gender representation would be important for future research studies.

CONCLUSION

Educating globally competent students means that there is a high demand for globally competent teachers. This current study compared the knowledge and perceptions that teacher candidates in China and the US had about each other's country. According to findings from this study, the Internet plays an important role in how both groups of teacher candidates obtain information about the other country. Teacher educators can use this to their advantage by making the most of Internet-based resources, which fosters international dialogue and increases global awareness. Schooling was another important element for both groups in learning about each other's country, especially for the US teacher candidates. Thus, it is wise for teacher education programs schools to integrate global awareness and global competencies into their related courses in order to guide teacher candidates in their development as global citizens.

After our teacher candidates matriculate into their professions as full-time teacher, they will, in turn, foster global awareness in future generations. This is needed in both China and the US.

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