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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Male Chinese Student Transitions to Life in an American Secondary Catholic Boarding School

by

Matthew R. Mallon

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2013

Male Chinese Student Transitions to Life in an American Secondary Catholic Boarding School

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by


Matthew R. Mallon

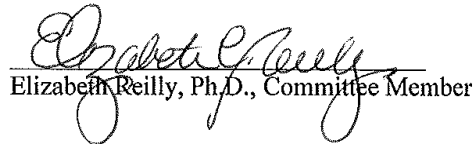
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06-21-2013  
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**DEDICATION**

To my wife Sophia

And our little monsters Missi, Joey, and Gidget

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## **ABSTRACT**

Male Chinese Student Transitions to Life in an American Secondary Catholic Boarding School

by

Matthew Mallon

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceived experience of Chinese students during their first year attending a Catholic co-educational boarding and day school in the United States. Data collection included semi-structured interviews of five current students, a faculty and staff questionnaire, and an analysis of the schedule of events for the new boarding student orientation. The data was analyzed using the inductive method for data analysis. The data showed that Chinese students face challenges in four key areas: 1) academic adjustment; 2) social adjustment; 3) emotional support; and 4) developing autonomy. Differences between Chinese culture and American culture provide challenges across the four key areas, leading culture to be best suited as a lens for analyzing the challenges faced by Chinese students transitioning to life at an American boarding school. There should be continuing research to identify the challenges faced by other ethnic and cultural groups in adjusting to life at boarding schools.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The boarding school is an educational phenomenon that has long history dating back to the Middle Ages in Europe. Many of the foundations for modern schooling began with the early European Christian boarding schools (Kashti, 1998). Boarding schools reached their height of popularity in England after the Industrial Revolution with the British public school system. The British public school system was the model for the first boarding schools established in America during the eighteenth century. These schools were originally designed to and continue to focus on the preparation of the children of the elite for positions of power and influence (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

The Catholic Church was one of the first institutions to change the mission of boarding schools towards serving a more diverse population through the founding of boarding schools for Native American children beginning in the 1870s. Although these schools were located on the reservations, the students lived at the school as part of an attempt by the American government to establish a formal educational system for Native Americans. The Catholic reservation schools were particularly effective because of the compassion that the school officials demonstrated towards the Native American students and their home cultures (Carroll, 1998). During this same time period, the Catholic Church established numerous boarding schools in the Midwest with the goal of educating the children of new Catholic immigrants. These schools were not as effective as the reservation schools because many new immigrant families needed their children to work

on their family farms so they did not send them to the schools during the busy farming season (Shannon, 1956).

During the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholic boarding schools began to spread throughout the United States (Cookson & Persell, 1985). These Catholic boarding schools were sponsored by different religious orders, each with unique missions for their schools. According to Cookson and Persell (1985) “the diversity among Catholic boarding schools suggests that many do not socialize their students for power” (p.40). This is one of the primary distinguishing factors of American Catholic boarding schools.

The tradition of enrolling ethnically diverse students in Catholic boarding schools also served as a factor in their enrollment of international students throughout the 20th century. Historically, Catholic boarding schools have enrolled more international students than other boarding schools with a majority of those students coming from the Middle East, South America, and Asia (Cookson & Persell, 1985). At St. Anthony Preparatory School, a small Catholic co-educational boarding and day school in the western United States, students from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have emerged as a steadily increasing population. In 2008 there were 12 students from the PRC. By 2010 that number had grown to 49, accounting for the largest ethnic group in the boarding program.

Chinese students are a growing population in the current educational market yet “until recently their cultural background and ways of learning were less familiar to most teachers, internationally” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p.5). Although research relating to Chinese students at American universities is growing, research relating to Chinese students at American secondary schools is quite limited. Chinese students are heavily motivated by Confucian values that are



ingrained in Chinese cultural practices, and those values present different academic and social challenges for them when studying in a Western context (Grimshaw, 2007; Ho, 1995; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Although schools in the PRC are adopting some elements of Western education, there is still a significant difference in the educational environment of Chinese and American schools (Zhao, 2005).

Even with this long history of enrolling international students, American Catholic boarding schools and the international students attending them are rarely the focus of educational research. The lack of research addressing the challenges international students face at a boarding school presents a problem for the critically minded educator. This problem is especially relevant for Catholic boarding schools with international students given the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Massaro (2008) states that Catholic social teaching requires “all people of good will to recognize the worth of all people and to do all in their power to protect the vulnerable” (p. 81). Although many international students come from an economically privileged background in their home countries, they are an inherently vulnerable population when they are studying away from their families in a different country (Barber, 2003; Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2009; Hicks, 1996; Kwon, 2009; Popadiuk, 2009, 2010). Allan Johnson (2006) stated that individuals can be privileged in one context yet be vulnerable in a different context. Given the vulnerable nature of this population, it is important for boarding school staff and educators to understand the unique needs and experiences of Chinese students from the PRC studying at American Catholic boarding schools.

## **Statement of the Problem**

American boarding schools are experiencing an increase in international students (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Hicks, 1996; National Association of Independent Schools, 2009). According to the National Association of Independent Schools (2013), in 2012 international students accounted for 12.9% of boarding students and were the largest non-Caucasian student group in American boarding schools. This represented an increase from 11.3% of boarding students in 2009 (National Association of Independent Schools, 2009). Despite this trend, most of the international student research is focused on university level students (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2010; Egage & Kutieleh, 2003; Gu et al., 2009; Kingston & Forland, 2008). There is no current research expressing the unique experiences of international students studying and living at an American Catholic boarding school. This study will address that need by providing an analysis of the perceived experiences of Chinese students studying at an American Catholic boarding school.

Documenting the experiences of Chinese students in America is particularly important given the particular cultural challenges that Chinese students face in studying and living in a Western context (Gu, et al., 2009; Ho, 1995; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Chinese students face many challenges in transitioning from an educational, social, and cultural context based on Confucianism, state-control, and filial piety to a more open educational system, society, and culture in America.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceived experience of Chinese students during their first year attending a Catholic co-educational boarding and day

school in the United States. This study aims to specifically identify the academic, social, and cultural challenges they face in transitioning to life at an American Catholic boarding school. By gaining a greater understanding of the challenges the students face, steps can be taken by the school faculty and administration to provide male Chinese students greater assistance in their transition to life at the boarding school. Assisting these students in their transition to a different environment is essential to providing for the well-being of the students.

### **Significance of the Study**

One element of this study's significance is based in its ability to provide a voice to a growing, vulnerable population in modern boarding education. Chinese students have to cope with the traditional challenges of boarding education as well as unique academic, social, and cultural challenges rooted in differences between American and PRC culture.

Van Hoof and Hansen (1999) found that American students attending boarding schools face many unique challenges in adjusting to life away from their families, including coping with homesickness and managing relationships with friends back at home. Schaverien (2004) found that domestic boarding students face greater psychosocial risks than students in traditional day schools because of the isolated nature of the schools and the separation of the students from their families. These challenges are likely to be magnified for Chinese students given the great distance and time zone differences between the United States and the PRC.

This study will help boarding schools to better meet the needs of their Chinese students. Chinese students are an inherently vulnerable population when they are studying in America given the separation from their families. They face the challenge of adapting to a society with different values, traditions, and educational practices (Grimshaw, 2007; Ho, 1995). Chinese

students are also at risk of facing intimidation from their peers given their ethnicity (Kwon, 2009). Socially just education requires that schools protect the most vulnerable populations on their campuses.

Research focusing on Chinese students at American Catholic boarding schools is extremely limited. However, research focusing on international students in both secondary level homestay programs and at the university level has shown that students from Asian countries face significant challenges in addition to those faced by their American peers (Kwon, 2009; Popadiuk, 2009; Popadiuk, 2010; Ramsay, Jones, and Barker, 2007; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Zhao et al. (2005) found that Asian university students, in general, are “less engaged in active and collaborative learning and diversity-related activities” (p. 219). American boarding schools are known for embracing collaborative learning practices and promoting diversity (Cookson & Persell, 1985). This combination could present a unique challenge for the American boarding school if secondary students share similar traits.

This study will also provide a model that future research studies could follow to study the experiences of other groups of international students in boarding education. Chinese students are only one of the nationality groups that are represented in American boarding education.

### **Conceptual Framework**

There is no single theoretical framework to explain the experiences of international students and American Catholic boarding education. To help explain this phenomenon, a conceptual framework based on constructivism, social justice, and Catholic social teaching will be utilized. Chinese students will experience a different process of constructing knowledge than their American peers given their cultural background in Confucianism (Ho, 1995). This study

utilizes a non-traditional concept of social justice to account for the unique experience of privileged students studying and living in a foreign country. Lastly, this study considers Catholic social teaching because of the Catholic affiliation of the school.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivism is a learning theory based on the concept that “knowledge about the world does not simply exist out there, waiting to be discovered, but is rather constructed by human beings in their interaction with the world” (Gordon, 2009, p. 39). Constructivism is not limited to the practices of teachers in the classroom but can also relate to social and psychological elements (Richardson, 2003). Constructivism is commonly associated with the work of Vygotsky and Piaget. Although they laid the foundation for constructivism, this study utilizes a form of constructivism based on environment and communication from the work of Ernst von Glasersfeld (1988).

Von Glasersfeld (1998) theorized that individuals construct knowledge about the environment based on how they “consciously or unconsciously disregard [differences] in order to establish the permanence of an individual identity” (p. 5). Individuals create their own version of reality based on how they assimilate those differences with their own prior knowledge. This version of reality can be shared with individuals who have also been involved in a similar experience. Individuals must have access to similar experiences to be able to construct the same knowledge of an event or incident.

Von Glasersfeld expands this concept to apply to communication. Von Glasersfeld (1998) states that “to understand what someone has said or written means no less but also no more than to have built up a conceptual structure that, in the given context, appears compatible

with the structure the speaker had in mind” (p. 11). Individuals must have access to the same conceptual structure to be able to construct meaning in communication. This can be a challenge for individuals with different linguistic backgrounds.

This approach towards constructing knowledge is significant for the experiences of Chinese students at an American Catholic boarding school because they have a different set of prior experiences and a different primary language than their American peers and teachers. Given their background knowledge and prior experiences they are likely to construct different meanings around the events that take place during their time at the boarding school than their American peers and teachers.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice is a term that has developed many different meanings in the modern world. This study will consider an understanding of social justice that accounts for relationships of power and privilege based on Allan Johnson’s (2006) *Power, Privilege, and Difference*. According to Johnson (2006), individuals may be financially privileged but still be a vulnerable or oppressed population based on race, ethnicity, or geographic location. A majority of the international students studying in American boarding schools come from wealthy backgrounds (Barber, 2003). Although these individuals are socio-economically privileged in their home country, when they come to the United States they become members of a different social category because of the manner that privilege in the United States is organized: according to race, culture, and language (Johnson, 2006). Chinese students studying in the United States face the challenge of transitioning from a world of privilege to a world where they are a vulnerable population at risk for oppression and/or marginalization.

## **Catholic Social Teaching**

Although boarding schools were originally designed to educate the children of the elite in a closed setting (Cookson & Persell, 1985), Catholic boarding schools have a special responsibility to promote social justice given the concept of Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching is shaped by seven themes that have been developed over the course of over 100 years. The seven themes are: 1) life and the dignity of the human person; 2) call to family, community, and participation; 3) rights and responsibilities; 4) option for the poor and vulnerable; 5) the dignity of work and the rights of workers; 6) solidarity; 7) care for God's creation (McKenna, 2002). Four of these themes relate to the role of the Catholic boarding school and its responsibility for the care of international students: 1) life and the dignity of the human person; 2) solidarity; 3) call to family, community, and participation; 4) option for the poor and vulnerable.

Life and the dignity of the human person encourages all people to “recognize the worth of all people and to do all in their power to protect the vulnerable” (Massaro, 2006, p. 81). The option for the poor and vulnerable also requires society to protect the most vulnerable members from harm (Massaro, 2006). An American Catholic boarding school has a special responsibility to protect international students as they are a vulnerable population. An American Catholic boarding school should strive to protect all vulnerable student populations and not exploit any population for the financial benefit of the school.

The teachings of solidarity stresses the importance of acknowledging that people are interdependent and that “to be excluded from playing a significant role in the life of society is a serious injustice, for it frustrates the legitimate aspirations of all people to express their human

freedom” (Massaro, 2006, p. 86). According to McKenna (2002), solidarity also acknowledges the importance of respecting the unique cultural and ethnic identity of each individual. An American Catholic boarding school has a responsibility to ensure that no students are excluded from playing a role in the life of the school. This is especially relevant for international students because of the difficulties they may face in integrating with the school community based on their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences (Gu et al., 2009).

The social teaching of the call to family, community, and participation considers the role of the family as “the most intimate sphere in which people cooperate and the first place where children learn about themselves, their individual identities, and their vocations with the wider social world” (Massaro, 2006, p. 87). This is especially relevant for international students at an American boarding school because they are separated from their families. The school has a responsibility to fill the role of family for those students on a temporary basis.

### **Synthesis of Concepts**

Constructivism will provide the lens for understanding how the previous experiences of the Chinese students shape their experiences at the boarding school. It is important to view the experiences of the Chinese students through a lens that accounts for their previous experiences given the cultural, religious, and linguistic differences between America and the PRC. Social justice and the principles of Catholic social teaching will provide a lens for analyzing how the boarding school meets the needs of the Chinese students as a vulnerable population and providing insights into recommending steps the school can take towards meeting other needs of the students.



## **Research Question**

The research question to be addressed by this study is:

How do male Chinese secondary school students perceive their first-year academic, social, and cultural experiences at an American Catholic co-ed boarding and day school?

The general nature of this research question allowed for the specific aspects of each participant's experiences to be expressed without being heavily influenced by me and allowed for the research to follow the emergent nature of qualitative research.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

The research question was answered through an intrinsic collective case study. Stake (2005) describes an intrinsic case study as one that is “undertaken because, first and last, one wants better understanding of this particular case” (p. 445). I am interested in the experiences of students at this school given my close relationship and history with the school. This method sacrifices the ability to generalize from the results to provide a greater understanding of the case itself (Stake, 2005).

Data collection involved multiple semi-structured interviews, a faculty/staff questionnaire, and a document analysis. The questions in the interviews were based on questions used by Cookson and Persell (1985) and Popadiuk (2009). I also developed original questions for the study. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. A faculty and staff questionnaire was used to provide data triangulation. One teacher and one resident life staff member completed a questionnaire about each of the participants. The document analysis involved the records and files relating to the incoming boarding student orientation program. The document analysis served primarily as a data triangulation point and as a tool in creating the

recommendations for future practice. Data analysis was based upon the model of inductive analysis described by Hatch (2002). Focus groups were not utilized given the Chinese value of filial piety and the influence it could have on group dynamics (Ho, 1995).

The research took place at St. Anthony Preparatory School, which is located in a small city on the west coast of the United States. St. Anthony Preparatory School is a private Catholic co-educational boarding and day school with 296 students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve. Among the 296 students are 96 boarding students from the PRC, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Canada, Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Lithuania. The largest boarding population group is from the PRC with 49 students, with 32 of those students being male. The participants were three male ninth grade PRC students who transferred to the school directly from the PRC during the 2011-2012 school year and two male twelfth grade PRC students who transferred directly to the school without any previous boarding school experience or educational experience in the United States. The goal was to have three students from each of those grade levels, but only two senior students gave consent to participate.

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

One of the primary limitations of this study is that all of the Chinese students who were interviewed had developed strategies for coping with the challenges they faced adjusting to life at St. Anthony's. I made the assumption that those students could all be considered to have successfully transitioned to life at the school since they completed the first semester at the school and returned for the subsequent semester. The research did not address the experiences of students who were unable to cope with the first year studying and living at a boarding school because those students did not return for the remainder of the year.

A second limitation of the study was the retrospective component of the design in interviewing twelfth grade students. The twelfth grade students were three years removed from their transition experience and had time to reflect on their experience. This could have impacted the answers that they provided in the interviews. Retrospection also may have changed their memory of the events that occurred.

The final limitation is the limited transferability of the study given the nature of an intrinsic case study. An intrinsic case study is focused on the experiences of a specific population at the expense of transferability (Hatch, 2002). Since I was primarily interested in the experiences of the international students at St. Anthony's, I selected an intrinsic case study to allow me to focus on the experiences of that specific student population.

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited through both the selection of the site and the participants. The study was conducted at one school site and the only participants selected were Chinese students. Although this significantly limited the scope of the study, it was a necessary decision to provide an in-depth description of the experiences of the Chinese students given the time constraints of the research.

### **Definition of Terms**

Some terms utilized in this study could be interpreted in multiple ways. The following definitions are provided to create uniformity and will be utilized in this research study.

A *boarding school* is a college-preparatory secondary school where some students live on campus with some of the school's faculty and staff. There is a wide-variety of boarding school

models including: traditional elite academies, single-sex schools, equestrian schools, and religious schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

*Academic experiences* include elements relating to life in the classroom and studying. Possible academic experiences are: learning in a foreign language; preparing for the SAT; homework structure; communicating with teachers.

*Social experiences* include elements related to socialization and relationships with classmates, faculty, and boarding staff. Possible social experiences are: making new friends; participation in extracurricular activities; homesickness; attitudes towards and practice of dating.

*Cultural experiences* include elements relating to distinct cultural differences, including religious differences, between the student's home culture and American culture. Possible cultural experiences are: dining structure and food types; observation of holidays, particularly Chinese New Year; behavior outside of the academic program.

*Chinese students* refers specifically to students that were born and raised in the People's Republic of China. This eliminates students from Hong Kong and Taiwan even though they share many cultural similarities. This distinction is due in part to the highly structured nature of the PRC's educational system (Zhu, 2007).

*Homestay programs* are academic programs that involve international students living with host families in the second country. The student lives with the host family and is treated as a traditional student by the school. These programs can vary greatly depending on the organization arranging the program.

*Sundry accounts* are accounts at St. Anthony where the parents of resident students deposit money for their children and the child can withdraw money from the account on a weekly basis.

## **Summary**

This study analyzed the perceived experiences of Chinese students adjusting to life at an American Catholic boarding school. Chapter 1 provided a brief outline of the topic, problem, significance, methodology, and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 will review the literature on the topic and provide a critical analysis of the literature. Chapter 3 will provide the research design for the qualitative study that will be utilized to answer the research question. Chapter 4 will provide the data and findings of the qualitative research. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Boarding schools provide a unique educational and social environment in comparison to traditional day schools given their role as both a school and residence. In addition to providing a traditional education, boarding schools are also responsible for the general welfare and social development of their students given their role as temporary guardians. This can present a challenge when the cultural and educational backgrounds of their students are considered.

This literature review is limited by the lack of current research in the field of American Catholic boarding education. Because of the limited availability of literature, studies relating to homestay programs at the secondary school level and challenges facing international students in post-secondary education have also been considered to provide a foundation for analyzing the challenges faced by international high school boarding students. No studies were identified that directly addressed the issue of international student adjustment at American Catholic boarding schools.

This chapter will provide a history of boarding education, an overview of research on boarding education, the experiences of international students in multiple educational contexts, information relating to PRC educational and cultural practices, and an overview of the conceptual framework.

#### **History of Boarding Education**

Boarding schools were founded by religious groups to help create a new generation of educated leaders for churches and communities (Kashti, 1998). They began in Europe and

eventually spread to the United States during the 19th century (Kashti, 1998). This section traces the history of boarding schools beginning with both a global and American perspective, describes the role of the Catholic Church in boarding education, and examines the growing trend of international students attending boarding schools in the United States.

### **Global History**

Kashti (1998) provides a historical overview of the social impact of boarding education around the world. He traced the development of boarding schools to their roots during the 14th and 15th centuries, when religious groups were primarily responsible for the establishment of the schools. The Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation shaped and spread boarding education. As Kashti explains, during this time, only the elite had access to boarding schools with most of the schools reserved for male students. The industrial revolution and its social impact dramatically changed boarding education. After the industrial revolution, boarding education became more accessible to the middle class and expanded to the United States. During the 20th century, boarding education expanded to Israel with the growth of the Zionist movement. This growth reached its peak with the spread of adolescent refugees due to the Holocaust during the 1930s and 1940s (Kashti, 1998). One of the primary characteristics distinguishing the Israeli boarding schools from American and British schools is that Israeli boarding schools “mainly serve immigrant youth or those from low socio-economic backgrounds” (Arieli, 1999, p. 275).

According to Kashti (1998) and Lambert (1975), one of the most successful of the boarding school models was the English public school system of the 19th century. These schools were based upon five themes and were primarily for male students: 1) the student as a Christian

gentleman; 2) cultivation of a strong bond between the church and the school; 3) informal social education; 4) formalized curriculum including both the classics and progressive studies; and 5) the formalization of athletic competition (Kashti, 1998).

Lambert (1975) conducted the most comprehensive study of boarding school education in England. Lambert's study addressed the historical development of the schools, including student, teacher, administrator, and parental expectations and experiences. This was the first study to critically address the psychological needs of adolescents in boarding schools. Despite the many successes of boarding education in England, the sector has experienced a steady decline since World War II. This decline has been due to increasing costs associated with boarding education and the negative impact on student mental health as a result of some of the more strict styles of boarding schools.

### **Boarding Schools in the United States of America**

The American boarding school system was modeled on the public schools of Great Britain (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Kashti, 1998). Originally, these schools were for the wealthy and aimed at preparing their children for leadership roles and admission into prestigious colleges (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Throughout the 20th century, American boarding schools have expanded their population to include an increased number of international students (Barber, 2003; Hicks, 1996). Although boarding schools account for only 20% to 30% of private school enrollments, they have a disproportionate representation of graduates enrolled in elite universities and leadership positions (Persell, Catsambis, & Cookson, 1992; Useem & Karabel, 1984). Useem and Karabel (1984) found that students graduating from boarding schools are more likely to hold top corporate managerial positions. American boarding schools tend to have



more financial resources, better teaching staffs, smaller class sizes, higher quality facilities, and more regular construction of new facilities to meet the demands of contemporary education than their public school counterparts (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Persell et al., 1992)

Cookson and Persell (1985) conducted the most comprehensive study of boarding education in the United States. They visited 55 American boarding schools between 1981 and 1983 and collected questionnaires from 2,475 students. In addition to the student questionnaires, they surveyed 382 teachers from 11 boarding schools and nine comparable private day schools as a source of comparison between boarding and private day schools. This study addressed many aspects of American boarding schools, including incoming student expectations, graduating student experiences, and both administrative staff and teacher experiences. Cookson and Persell found that the level of rigor in the curriculum at boarding schools was significantly higher than at public schools according to the teachers they surveyed. One of the negative byproducts of the level of rigor was an increased level of student stress as compared to public school students. Cookson and Persell attributed higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse in boarding schools to this increased level of student stress although they did not provide empirical proof of this connection. One of the main drawbacks of this study was that it was completed before the emergence of the current trend of international students attending American boarding schools so it does not address the experiences of international students.

During the second-half of the 20th century, American boarding schools experienced a decline similar to British boarding schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Hicks, 1996). This is due in part to psychological and economic factors. The psychological factors include an increase in drug and alcohol use, bullying, eating disorders, and concerns about sexual activity (Hicks,

1996). Hicks found that the inability of boarding schools to rapidly adapt to changes in society further compounds those negative issues. Financial factors primarily focus on the rapid increase of fees for boarding education, with boarding education being approximately triple the cost of a private day-school education (Hicks, 1996).

### **The Catholic Church and Boarding Education**

The Catholic Church was one of the first institutions to change the mission of boarding schools towards serving a more diverse population through the founding of boarding schools for Native American children beginning in the 1870s. Although these schools were located on reservations, the students lived at the school as part of an attempt by the American government to establish a formal educational system for Native Americans (Carroll, 1998). Carroll theorized that the Catholic reservation schools were particularly effective because of the compassion that the school officials demonstrated towards the Native American students and their home cultures. During this same time period, the Catholic Church also established numerous boarding schools in the Midwest with the goal of educating the children of Catholic immigrants. These schools were not as effective as the reservation schools because many new immigrant families placed a greater value on their children on the family farm as opposed to achieving a formal education. Students were often absent from the schools to assist their family with farming duties (Shannon, 1956).

During the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholic boarding schools began to spread throughout the United States (Cookson & Persell, 1985). These Catholic boarding schools were sponsored by a variety of religious orders, each with unique missions for their schools.

According to Cookson and Persell (1985) “the diversity among Catholic boarding schools

suggests that many do not socialize their students for power” (p.40). This is one of the distinguishing factors of American Catholic boarding schools along with their distinctly religious nature (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

The tradition of diversity in Catholic boarding schools also served as a factor in their acceptance of international students throughout the 20th century. Historically, Catholic boarding schools have enrolled more international students than other boarding schools with a majority of those students coming from the Middle East, South America, and Asia (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

### **Growth of International Student Population**

Enrollment of international students in American boarding schools began during the 1980s and experienced significant growth during the 1990s (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Barber, 2003). Although Catholic boarding schools have a long history of enrolling international students, many boarding schools have only recently begun recruiting international students to help offset decreases in enrollment (Hicks, 1996). The recruitment of international students has also been fueled by a desire to increase diversity in boarding school environments (Barber, 2003). Barber studied the international student program at Wyoming Seminary in Pennsylvania because the school has been at the forefront of international student enrollments dating to the 1960s. Many of the international students come from wealthy backgrounds as there is a limited amount of financial aid offered by American schools for international students (Barber, 2003). Currently, international students account for 12.9% of boarding students and are the largest non-Caucasian student group in American boarding schools (National Association of Independent Schools, 2013).

One of the primary motivating factors leading to this increase in international student enrollment is the desire of international families for their children to master the English language and attend a prestigious American university. This has led to the growth and development of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs at many American boarding schools (Barber, 2003). Chinese perceive that an international education is of a higher quality than an education obtained in the PRC (Bodycott, 2009). Bodycott surveyed 251 PRC parents and 100 PRC students to determine what factors they considered in selecting a college or university outside of the PRC. Educational practices in the PRC are viewed as being too rigid and traditional.

Once international students adapt to the American school environment they become a key element of the school community, providing a new level of diversity in the classroom that is often not found in day schools (Barber, 2003; Hicks, 1996; Persell et al., 1992). International student adjustment does not end once they adapt to boarding school life. International students also often face adjustment issues when they return to their home countries (Barber, 2003).

### **Boarding School Research**

Current boarding school research is primarily limited to studies on the support services designed to address the challenges faced by boarding school students. Most studies either address mental health support or social support. There are very few studies (e.g., Coleman, 2002; Dorsel & Wages, 1993) that address support for academics in boarding schools. There are also no studies that address support for international students at American Catholic boarding schools. A majority of the evidence representing international students is anecdotal, existing in collections of essays composed by students, teachers, and staff from boarding schools (Hillman & Thorn, 1997; Heiter, 2009). Due to the lack of research addressing international students and

the assumption that international students face more significant challenges than traditional domestic students (Gu et al., 2009; Popadiuk 2009, 2010; Ramsey, Jones, & Barker, 2007), the studies addressing domestic boarding students and first-year university international students will be reviewed for possible application to the challenges facing international boarding school students.

### **Support for Mental Health and Psychological Challenges**

Mental health services are of particular concern for boarding schools because of the unique psychological challenges facing boarding students. Adolescents are already an “at-risk” population for mental health problems, and the boarding school environment magnifies that risk (Schaverien, 2004; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999). Due to the rigorous nature of boarding education and the psychological challenges of adolescence, student demands for counseling services is high (Lehrer, 2001). Psychological adjustment is also more difficult in single-sex boarding schools because of the lack of emotional contact with same-age members of the opposite sex (Schaverien, 2004).

Van Hoof and Hansen (1999) conducted a study analyzing mental health services provided by 19 independent, secondary, college-preparatory, boarding schools in one northeastern state. Van Hoof and Hansen included “psychiatric, psychological, substance abuse, and developmental issues” (1999, p. 69) in their definition of mental health. They found that a majority of the schools provided both mental health and substance abuse treatment options. Despite providing services, a majority of the schools did not include mental health and substance abuse prevention programs in their curriculum (Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999).

Student access to psychological and mental health services is a key factor in student success at boarding schools (Bar-Nir & Schmid, 1998). Psychological support and counseling play a key role in helping students adjust to life away from home and the sense of isolation often associated with entering a boarding school for the first time. Bar-Nir and Schmid (1998) found that dedicated counseling services are most effective at providing the level of psychological support needed at boarding schools. However, Van Hoof and Hansen (1999) found that in a majority of boarding schools, the director of mental health services also served in other positions ranging from teacher to administrator to coach. This inhibits the level of access that students have to mental health services. Van Hoof and Hansen (1999) also found a wide range of services provided by the schools, with no clear consensus emerging for how best to provide mental health services in boarding schools.

Although mental health services are important for psychological adjustment, the most important factor in student psychological adjustment is maintaining a moderate level of student to family contact. Family contact can help to offset some of the negative psychological effects of boarding education (Bar-Nir & Schmid, 1998; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999).

### **Support for Social Challenges**

There are two primary social support networks for boarding school students: parental/family support and peer support. Parental or family support involves the relationship that the student maintains with his/her family during enrollment at a boarding school. The family exhibits some degree of control over this type of support (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Family support is especially difficult for international students because most family contact is by phone (Popadiuk, 2010). This can be a challenge for international students given time-zone

differences and the lack of face-to-face communication. Popadiuk (2010) interviewed 21 international students attending homestay programs at secondary schools in Western Canada.

Peer support involves the relationship that the student develops with other students and the school community as a whole. Peer support can be directly influenced by the boarding school through the introduction of school sponsored programs and activities (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Academic success is more closely linked to family support and psychological adjustment more closely linked to peer support (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Dunn et al., 1987).

**Family support.** Family support is critical due to the lack of direct parental involvement in the lives of boarding students (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dunn et al., 1987; Kashti, 1998). The study conducted by Dunn, Putallaz, Sheppard, & Lindstrom (1987) assessed “perceived support from peers and family as well as their perceived social support in general” (p. 468). Dunn et al. (1987) found that there is a direct relationship between student adjustment to boarding school life and perceived support in general and from the family. Dorsel and Wages (1993) found that family support is of increased importance during difficult academic periods, such as final exams. Family support and a sense of “family togetherness” provide the students with greater self-esteem and self-adjustment (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Dunn et al., 1987). Dunn et al. (1987) found self-esteem to be directly related to academic performance in boarding schools. Family support is especially important for international students due to the financial burden attending school in a foreign country places on the family of the international student. Without appropriate support from the family, the student may feel additional pressure to be successful in their work (Gu et al., 2009).

Although schools can encourage students to maintain regular contact with their families, there is little the school can do to enforce such contact (Dorsel & Wages, 1993). Dunn et al. (1987) recommends developing regular weekend activities that encourage parents and families to visit the school and interact with the student at least once a month. Although these types of programs may benefit domestic boarding students, they are unlikely to provide much benefit to international boarding students.

**Peer support.** Perceived peer support is also important for psychological adjustment because peer relationships help produce a sense of psychological well-being in the absence of convenient access to relationships with members of the immediate family (Dunn et al., 1987). Students entering boarding schools also experience a disconnect with their existing childhood friends and peers (Bar-Nir & Schmid, 1998). This disconnect increases the importance of developing a strong relationship with peers and the school community. Successful peer relationships help develop a sense of belonging, increasing the rate at which a student adjusts to boarding school life (Bar-Nir & Schmid, 1998; Dunn et al., 1987, Wires & Barocas, 1994). Some students may require a few years to adequately adjust to the social demands of boarding education (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dunn et al., 1987). Peer support is significantly helpful during periods of increased academic stress, since stress often leads to negative behaviors in adolescents (Wires & Barocas, 1994).

In addition to the development of relationships and support structures, social support can be provided through the participation in extra-curricular activities (Bar-Nir & Schmid, 1998). Bar-Nir and Schmid found that students' satisfaction with the extra-curricular activities at their boarding school is a key determinant in the quality of the relationship a student develops with the



school community. Boarding schools that have a greater variety of clubs, athletic teams, and performing arts will provide more opportunities for students to develop relationships with their peers (Dunn et al., 1987). Popadiuk (2010) found that participation in extra-curricular activities can help international students cope with homesickness. The one major drawback created by extra-curricular activities is the increased demands on the time of the students (Dunn et al., 1987).

In addition to the general benefits of peer support to social adjustment, peer support networks also help prevent drug and alcohol abuse (Dunn et al., 1987). Due to the combination of psychological and academic demands, drug and alcohol abuse has become a common problem for boarding schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dunn et al., 1987; Hicks, 1996). Dunn et al. (1987) found that perceived support from peers can reduce drug and alcohol abuse. Peer networks have the potential to serve as a means for reinforcement for positive behavior.

### **Support for Academic Challenges**

Due to the academic rigors of boarding education, it is important for boarding schools to provide adequate academic support. Even those students who enter boarding schools with the expectation of difficulty find academic adjustment to be difficult (Coleman, 2002). The academic stress level at boarding schools has been shown to lead to a feeling of “burnout” in some adolescents (Dorsel & Wages, 1993; Lehrer, 2001). The academic demands of boarding education are not just limited to the quantity of homework, but also the general difficulty of the homework and class work (Coleman, 2002). Students are regularly faced with issues of academic honesty as they look to meet the academic demands (Lehrer, 2001). Some aspects of academic support are directly related to psychological support (Dorsel & Wages, 1993). Dorsel

and Wages (1993) found a direct correlation between parental contact and academic success. Schools tend to adopt two types of academic support: direct and indirect.

**Direct academic support.** Coleman (2002) found that the most critical period for academic support is when a student first enters a boarding school. Coleman conducted an ethnography of a boarding school in the United States. His study included over 100 days of field notes and observations, semi-structured interviews with eight students, and a questionnaire specifically addressing homework that was completed by the same eight interviewed students. Students felt the greatest pressure and stress when they were first adjusting to the academic rigors of boarding school curriculum. One factor that Coleman found leading to the increased pressure and stress is that the rigorous nature of American boarding schools creates a culture of academic competition as opposed to one of collaboration. Students were competing for access to prestigious colleges and were less likely to assist each other due to this sense of competition (Coleman, 2002). During the beginning of the school year many schools focus on direct academic support for their students (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Some boarding schools have mandated study periods to help students adjust to the time demands boarding school work requires, although there is no experimental data to judge the effectiveness of those study periods. Another strategy adopted for direct academic support is the formation of student tutoring centers. These centers allow students to receive assistance from student volunteers. The students felt this model was effective because the tutors were familiar with the academic demands that the tutees face in the school (Coleman, 2002).

Students also need access to resources outside of school hours. This requires boarding schools to have adequate computer labs and libraries for their students (Persell et al., 1992). This

is especially important for boarding schools that are in isolated areas where students cannot easily access a community or college library (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

**Indirect academic support.** In addition to direct academic support, many schools adopt indirect systems for academic support (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Two of the most common forms of indirect academic support are time management classes and promotion of peer study groups (Coleman, 2002; Cookson & Persell, 1985).

Time management classes help students to manage the increased homework workloads encountered at most boarding schools (Coleman, 2002). Since most boarding school students are involved in some type of extra-curricular activity, it is especially important that they find a balance between time devoted to studying and time devoted to other activities (Coleman, 2002; Cookson & Persell, 1985).

Peer study groups can provide both academic and social support (Coleman, 2002). They encourage students to develop relationships with their classmates (Dunn et al., 1987). Peer study groups also help to develop a sense of belonging, allowing students to share their academic resources and support each other. Peer study groups can also have negative consequences. Some peer study groups may be more focused on social gossip and entertainment than on actual studying (Coleman, 2002).

Coleman (2002) found that indirect academic support helps students to develop a sense of control over the academic demands. This sense of control helps students to adjust to academic demands of boarding education.

Despite the increased academic demands, many students consider the academic rigors to be a positive experience (Coleman, 2002; Dorsel & Wages, 1993). Many boarding school

graduates report being better prepared for college course work due to the academic rigor of their boarding education (Coleman, 2002; Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dorsel & Wages, 1993).

### **Challenges facing International Students**

International students face a number of unique challenges. Most boarding schools feature a more rigorous academic program than day schools (Coleman, 2002; Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dorsel & Wages, 1993; Dunn et al., 1987). Those rigors are magnified by the fact that international students are often studying in a second language (Barber, 2003). In addition to the increased academic demands, traditional adolescent development challenges are magnified since the students are also confronting the issue of separation from their families (Schaverien, 2004). International students face unique social and cultural challenges based on differences between their home culture and the culture where they are studying (Barber, 2003). Given the limited amount of research on international students attending American boarding schools, this section will also focus on research relating to international students at the university level.

#### **Academic Adjustment**

Many studies (e.g., Coleman, 2002; Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dorsel & Wages, 1993; Dunn et al., 1987) have shown the academic rigors of boarding education to be more strenuous than that of traditional day education. According to Cookson and Persell (1985), even domestic “students who enter boarding school after graduation from a prestigious and demanding day [elementary] school may find that they are struggling just to keep up with their teachers and other students” (p. 103). International students face many academic challenges because of differences in their cultural backgrounds, primary language, and the culture and language of instruction.

The high level of academic rigor poses a significant challenge to international students with a primary language other than English. Kwon (2009) found that international students studying in American universities experienced greater isolation and intimidation in classes than native speakers. International students from Asian countries are more likely to struggle with note-taking during class and less likely to ask questions of their teachers than domestic students (Kingston & Forland, 2008; McMahon 2011). Kingston and Forland (2008) found that language difficulties are one of the main factors influencing their lack of classroom participation. Students from the PRC may also struggle with establishing English language proficiency because American English instruction varies greatly from PRC English instruction. Gan (2009) found that English instruction in the PRC is “generally characterized by large class book-based instruction and mastery of linguistic knowledge” (p. 47) with limited opportunities for the development of conversational English.

McMahon (2011) found that PRC students are less likely to ask questions in class than their native counterparts, but that they are more likely to attempt to meet with their teachers outside of class. PRC students are accustomed to an educational system that allows them to ask questions of their teachers outside of the classroom as opposed to utilizing classroom time for asking questions. McMahon found that given the Confucian roots behind the teacher-student relationship, PRC students consider it rude to ask a question in class and interrupt the teacher. Students from the PRC commonly believe that it is shameful for a student to admit that they do not know something in the middle of class (Huang & Brown, 2009).

The behavior of American students in the classroom also presents a challenge to PRC students. Because the teacher-student relationship in the PRC is a strict relationship similar to

that of a parent and child, PRC students find it rude when students are late to class or joke with the teacher during class instruction time. PRC students can also experience difficulty in adjusting to teaching styles that are more informal where the teacher utilizes humor in joking with the class (Huang & Brown, 2009).

International students from Asian countries are also not always aware of Western standards in regards to plagiarism and cheating given their educational background in memorization. An individual's educational ability in the PRC has traditionally been judged based upon their ability to recall specific blocks of text. Students from the PRC come from an educational tradition that values directly recalling text with a general understanding of the original source of the text instead of the process of having to properly cite sources of information. This can create difficulties for PRC students in writing research papers (Kingston & Forland, 2008). PRC students are also likely to place a greater emphasis on examinations because examinations dominate student assessment in the PRC's education system (McMahon, 2011).

### **Psychological and Emotional Adjustment**

Adolescents attending boarding schools usually experience a period of traumatic psychological adjustment (Schaverien, 2004). Not only must they face the common adolescent developmental challenges, they face these challenges separate from their families. This can often lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, causing the development of problems like alcohol and drug abuse (Cookson & Persell, 1985). The sense of isolation is magnified for international students by the physical distance between the student and the family (Bar-Nir &

Schmid, 1998). Psychological adjustment can be assisted by regular contact with parents and strong peer support networks (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Dorsel & Wages, 1993).

In addition to the psychological challenges facing all boarding students, international students face a greater risk of struggling with the separation from their family. Shen and Peterson (1999) found that the relationship between Chinese students and their parents plays a significant role in their development of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Separation from their parents could possibly impact their development of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Kwon (2009) found that female international students are more likely than male students to struggle with homesickness. Homesickness is also magnified because of the difficulty in regularly contacting family members due to physical distance and time differences (Kwon, 2009). Feelings of homesickness can be magnified through the celebration of North American holidays. Huang and Brown (2009) found that the observation and celebration of North American holidays leads Chinese students to further isolate themselves from American students. Chinese holidays also create a feeling of homesickness because students have to attend classes instead of celebrating their cultural holidays (Huang & Brown, 2009). Some students may feel a sense of resentment towards their parents for sending them to a school away from their family and friends (Yeo, 2010). Popadiuk (2010) found that participating in extra-curricular activities and building positive relationships with other students can help to ease the feeling of homesickness.

International students also face cultural issues in relation to psychological support. Different cultures approach mental health with different attitudes causing some international students to be more reluctant to request support services (Forness & Hoagwood, 1993). Wanxue and Hanwei (2004) found that PRC young people are particularly worried about “examinations,

materialism, sexual behavior, and suicide” (p. 475). These concerns increase the importance of providing active psychological support services to monitor student adjustment.

### **Social/Cultural Adjustment**

Not only do international students face the challenge of studying in a second language, they often face additional challenges in integrating with the school culture and environment due to their language and cultural differences (Barber, 2003). This is especially true for Chinese students given their background in Confucianism. Chae and Larres (2010) stated that Asian people were generally devalued in American society based on their ethnicity. This required them to develop responses to different elements of societal oppression (Chae & Larres, 2010). Minority students are also likely to face pressure towards acculturation, placing less value on their home culture than on the dominant culture (Rivera, 2010). This challenge of acculturation and cultural adjustment is similar to the challenges that third culture children experience (Cockburn, 2002).

Making friends and building new relationships is a significant challenge facing international students. Chinese students are more likely to make friends with other Chinese students because it provides a sense of security and support, although this process also makes it more difficult for Chinese students to develop relationships with domestic students (McMahon, 2011). Yeo (2010) found similar results for Asian students studying in a Western context. Popadiuk (2009) found that receiving encouragement, making friends, being accepted, and having fun with others can have both a facilitating and a hindering influence on the adjustment of international students depending on whether those elements were experienced in a positive or negative manner.



Arndt and Luo (2008) found that Chinese students are at particular risk for bullying in American classrooms. Bullying is especially challenging when teachers are not proactive in preventing bullying because of the differences in the teacher-student relationship in American and Chinese cultures (Arndt & Luo, 2008). Wenxin and Jones (2000) found that bullying in the Chinese classroom was almost nonexistent because of the strict control that the teacher had over the classroom and the belief that PRC teachers would not tolerate any outbursts or talking from students. This led most instances of bullying to occur either on the way to school or to home. Wenxin and Jones surveyed 4000 Chinese students in the PRC and Hong Kong to address the issue of bullying. Kwon (2009) surveyed 165 international students attending a university in the United States and found that developing positive relationships and friendships helped to reduce the occurrence of bullying and classroom intimidation. Students were more likely to feel intimidated and to experience bullying if their English language proficiency was lower than that of their peers (Kwon, 2009).

In addition to challenges with relationships, international students also face more general cultural concerns. Gu et al., (2009) found that concerns about food and diet begin to emerge as students adjust to the problem of homesickness and the changes that are occurring in their daily lives. International students may also experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, and dissatisfaction with their social life due to “unfamiliarity with societal values, structures, and systems” (Gu et al., 2009). McMahon (2011) found that Chinese students also face challenges in adjusting to different systems of health care. It is common for Chinese students to have medicines sent to them from China as opposed to relying on the native healthcare system.

According to Polluck and Van Reken (1999) a third culture kid (TCK) is “a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture” (p. 19). This creates an individual who participates in multiple cultures but is likely to not feel complete membership in both cultural groups (Polluck & Van Reken, 1999). Third culture kids are different from immigrants in that they expect to return to their home country to live permanently (Cockburn, 2002). These characteristics relate to PRC students at American boarding schools. The student is temporarily displaced into a different culture, and experiences the challenges of adapting to that culture. According to Cockburn (2002) these students must “learn to become very flexible and adaptable in order to deal with the transitions and changes that take place in the TCK world” (p. 483).

### **Developing Autonomy**

International students face the challenge of developing autonomy when they come to the United States and are living away from their families for the first time. Chickering and Reisser (1993) established three stages for university students in the process of developing autonomy: 1) emotional; 2) instrumental; and 3) recognizing interdependence. Boarding school students must address the first two phases of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) process for developing autonomy because they are separated from their parents for the first time. Emotional autonomy involves the process of disengaging from the immediate support of one’s parents. Instrumental autonomy involves the ability to take physical responsibility for oneself. Recognizing interdependence is the final stage of the autonomy process where an individual ultimately attains autonomy. Interdependence may not develop for secondary students at an American boarding school because of the way in which the residential life staff serve as parental figures for the students.

Popadiuk (2010) found that Chinese students were not prepared to undertake daily tasks and chores because their parents completed these tasks for them in China. Zhang (2008) surveyed 103 third-year Chinese university students at a major university in Shanghai. Zhang found that male Chinese university students were more likely than female students to struggle with developing emotional autonomy from their parents. Ho and Crookall (1995) followed a team of 21 university students from Hong Kong as they participated in a large-scale computer simulation with students from 27 other universities across the world to test how well the Chinese students demonstrated autonomy without a teacher to guide their work. Ho and Crookall found that Chinese students experience difficulty in developing autonomy because of their cultural respect for teachers and elders.

The development of autonomy in an academic setting is especially challenging for English language learners (Littlewood, 1996). Littlewood conducted a meta-analysis examining the components of autonomy in language learning and found that individuals need both willingness and academic ability to achieve autonomy in a language learning setting. This can present a challenge to Chinese students studying in the United States if they do not have the necessary English language knowledge to make decisions for themselves. Littlewood (1996) theorized that learner autonomy is related to personal autonomy because the individual must develop “the ability to create personal learning contexts, e.g through interacting outside the classroom” (p. 431).

### **Chinese Culture and Education**

Chinese students come from a cultural and educational environment that is dramatically different from that in America. PRC culture and education are based on a long history of

Confucianism and filial piety (Ho, 1995; Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990; Hui, Sun, Chow, & Chu, 2011; Shengdong & Dan, 2004). Since the 1980s, PRC educational reforms have served to blend Confucianism and Western educational philosophy in a Marxist educational context (Shengdong & Dan, 2004). Education in the PRC is also underwent a transition from a “governmental department unit to a service agency” (Wanxue & Hanwei, 2004, p. 473). These elements must be considered to generate an understanding of the experiences of Chinese students at an American Catholic boarding school.

### **Cultural Background**

Chinese society is currently undergoing a shift towards a more private and individualized style of parenting, but it is still strongly shaped by Confucian principles (Naftali, 2010). This cultural background leads to a difference in the Chinese and Western concepts of selfhood and identity (Ho, 1995). Confucianism establishes a social structure based on Five Cardinal Relationships that determine the appropriate interactions between individuals. These relationships are: 1) father and son, 2) sovereign and subordinate, 3) husband and wife, 4) elder brother and younger brother, 5) between friends (Hwang, 1999). According to Ho (1995) these relationships create an individual identity that is based on “reciprocity, interdependency, and interrelatedness among individuals, not to the individuals themselves” (p. 116). This social structure creates individuals that are more focused on their responsibilities to their family and friends as opposed to themselves. Given the nature of the relationships and interrelatedness, shame and humiliation are important elements in the development of the individual because they are shared elements. Lebra (as cited in Ho, 1995), states that “both the pride and shame of an individual are shared by his group, and in turn the group’s pride and shame are shared

individually by its members” (p. 117). Hwang (1999) reinforces that concept in stating that “the Confucian idea of filial piety is constructed on the simple fact that one’s body exists solely because of one’s parents. In fact, Confucians conceptualized family members as one body” (p. 169). This relationship contributes to the sharing of experiences between family members.

Filial piety is a key element of the relationship structure established by Confucianism. Filial piety originally referred to the relationship between a father and his son. In modern China, this concept has expanded to the relationship between all children and their parents (Ho, 1995). Chinese children are supposed to respect the sovereignty of their fathers, creating a parent-child relationship that is based on authoritative parenting (Ho, 1995; Pearson & Rao, 2003). According to Naftali (2010), one element of the Confucian relationship between parent and child is that the:

parents have a ‘moral duty’ to train the child to succeed in school, while children must repay their parents for their care and investment by working as hard as they can in order to obtain good grades and later on a successful career. (304)

Identity development in a Confucian society places an emphasis on sacrificing and suppressing the identity of the individual and following the decisions of those individuals in a position of superiority (Hwang, 1999). The ingrained principles of Confucianism create an educational philosophy where success is more a result of effort than of natural ability (McMahon, 2011). Gan (2009) found that English teachers in the PRC “constantly emphasise that individual effort is essential for a satisfactory grade in the exams at the end of each semester” (p. 47). This could lead to additional pressures on students since success is an element of their own effort.

Academic failure is viewed by the family as a failure of the individual student to expend the effort required to be successful.

This complex system of relationships and family structure derived from Confucian principles creates an environment where Chinese students feel a responsibility to bring honor and show respect to their parents. One manner in which they can accomplish that is to succeed academically (Hui et al., 2011). This can also lead Chinese students studying in a foreign country to feel added stress to be successful given the financial sacrifices their families are making to send the child to school in a foreign country (Kwon, 2009).

Confucian principles for moral development can be successfully developed in a Catholic context. Chi-Hou (2004) found a combination of both Confucianism and Catholic Christianity in the educational system of Macao. Both Confucianism and Catholic Christianity demonstrate a concern with “the education of young people. Both cherish cardinal values, such as paternalism, submission to authority, conservatism, and the importance of social relations” (Chi-Hou, 2004, p. 558). Chi-Hou conducted a case study of the educational system of Macao based primarily on government documents and survey data that was provided by the educational authority of Macao. Chinese families identify a relationship between the traditional family values inherent in both Confucianism and Catholic Christianity (Chi-Hou, 2004).

### **Educational Practices**

PRC educational practices have their roots in the ideology and advancement of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Reforms began in the 1960s to shift PRC educational practices away from the advancement of education for the masses towards a focus on developing the best students. During the late 1970s and 1980s, PRC education focused on meeting the technical

and economic demands of the Four Modernizations program introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 (Sautman, 1991). The Four Modernizations increased the importance of education for the CCP creating a new phase in the PRC educational history by placing a great emphasis on education to allow the PRC to compete in a market driven economy (Bian, Shu, & Logan, 2001). The introduction of the Four Modernizations also created a revival in the open study of Confucianism (Mooney, 2007). Bian, et al. (2001) found that members of the CCP with a college education are more likely to advance through the party structure than members of the party with similar years of service but a lower level of education. This relationship between party advancement and education shows the continued growth of the significance of education in the PRC as the CCP places a greater emphasis on members attaining a college education.

Throughout the development of the PRC's educational system, ideological indoctrination has remained a central element (Tse, 2011). Fairbrother (2003) surveyed 535 university students from Hong Kong and the PRC to analyze the relationship between education and the political socialization process. Fairbrother found that Chinese students in both the PRC and Hong Kong identified the relationship between CCP ideological indoctrination and what was being taught in school. Tse (2011) analyzed the official PRC textbooks that were published in 1997 and 2005 to compare the content of the curriculum with the PRC's changing position in the global marketplace. Tse found that the ideological elements in current curriculum have become less prevalent as the PRC has developed more of a modernized market economy. Education in the PRC is currently struggling with a shift towards individualism while maintaining the importance of the collective and socialism (Tse, 2011). Confucianism is also experiencing a revival in PRC

schools through moral education programs as part of the CCP's response to the challenges to their political order (Yu, 2008).

Jacob (2006) found that access to education in the PRC varies greatly by geographical region, gender, and ethnicity. Jacob conducted 10 case studies of PRC universities with surveys of 797 undergraduate students and 192 graduate students. Minority individuals living in rural areas have less access to formal education than Han individuals living in urban areas. Only 5% of the students surveyed being were minority students (Jacob, 2006). Students in rural areas are more likely to drop out of school than students in urban areas (Liu, 2004). Liu interviewed 30 families in a rural Chinese region where their children had dropped out of their school before reaching the secondary level. Liu found that the number of students that were supposed to be enrolled at one of the local schools was 210 and 17 students had dropped out of the school representing an enrollment rate of 92%. This differed from the government reported enrollment rate for all primary schools of higher than 99% (Liu, 2004). Liu found that a majority of the student families interviewed claimed their child grew tired of the rigors of study and left school to begin working on the family farm since they were unlikely to have a future in higher education, although the exact number was not stated. Central and western China experience less access to education than eastern China based on income inequality in those regions (Yang, Huang, & Li, 2009). Yang et al. conducted a quantitative analysis of the relationship between income and educational access based on geographical region for the PRC using governmental statistical data from 1997 to 2005. This analysis was based on funding patterns for different schools. Sixty-three percent of educational funds were spent in Eastern China (Yang et al., 2009). The differences in educational opportunities created a system where the rural poor of the



PRC were likely to fall into a poverty trap because of the continual lack of educational opportunities (Wu, Zhang, & Zhang, 2008). This combination has led families in the PRC, particularly those from the middle and upper classes, to migrate towards urban centers to increase the educational opportunities for their children (Jacob, 2006; Yang et al., 2009). Jacob (2006) found that female students and ethnic minority students experience decreased accessibility to advanced education in the PRC.

Current PRC educational practices focus on the development of the best students and are driven by testing, authority, and competition (Halstead & Zhu, 2009; Huang & Brown, 2009). This has created a system with a number of problems including “students’ lack of creativity, an over-emphasis on testing, a focus on memorization over application, a disconnection between school learning and real-life situations, and overworked students” (Zhao, 2005, p. 220). China only requires nine years of compulsory education. After ninth grade, students are tested and then divided into three groups: those joining the unskilled workforce after limited training; those attending vocational or technical schools; and those going on to secondary academic schools to continue their education (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990; Jin & Cortazzi, 2008). This places a strong emphasis on the placement test after the ninth grade (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990). In the PRC it is accepted that students spend Saturday and Sunday attending some form of formal academic instruction through their school or a tutoring program in preparation for the examination (Zhao, 2005). Zhang (2010) found that this practice of high stakes testing creates an educational environment that is driven by competition. Standardized testing is also utilized as the primary determinant in college acceptance (Zhang, 2010). Zhang compared government reports on educational achievement with different theories on education to develop a model to

reform the PRC educational system away from high stakes testing. Current PRC educational reforms are working to change the system to allow a greater number of children access to secondary education (Zhu, 2007). Despite these reform efforts, examination oriented learning and teaching dominates curriculum in PRC schools (Bai, 2010).

PRC schools focus primarily on mathematics and science achievement and have a limited number of elective courses (Zhu, 2007). These offerings have created a system that was successful in achieving high standardized test scores but placed significant stress and pressure on the student. Despite the success that the PRC system has experienced in math and science achievement, they have explored reforms based on student-centered learning and reducing student stress (Zhao, 2005). PRC educational reforms are also focusing on increasing a sense of autonomy in their students. However, because of the influence of Confucianism, PRC adolescents are more likely to accept authority than their American counterparts (Halstead & Zhu, 2009).

One additional element of PRC education is a focus on learning the English language. The study of the English language has developed into a key element of PRC curriculum, even serving as the language of instruction at some of the most prestigious universities in the PRC. English language proficiency is a requirement for both secondary school graduation and acceptance into the PRC military (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). The study of English in the PRC is focused more on the memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules as opposed to functional English for communication (Gan, 2009). According to Jin & Cortazzi (2006), a popular slogan in the PRC army is that “every soldier needs to memorise one English word a day and one sentence per week” (p. 10). One reason behind the growth of English language instruction is the

desire of PRC families to send their children to foreign universities. English proficiency is also seen as a sign of social prestige (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Jin and Cortazzi conducted a meta-analysis covering the development of English language instruction in the PRC. PRC students who come to America to study will already have a background in the English language because of their prior educational experiences.

Some elements of the PRC educational system are influenced directly by the government, including civics, economics, and history classes (Fairbrother, 2008). These classes are designed to promote patriotism, the CCP, and the contributions of the CCP to the PRC's revival on the global stage (Fairbrother, 2008; Law, 2010). Textbooks utilized in PRC classrooms are published by a government authorized publishing house (Tse, 2011). Tse found that the CCP integrates government policy documents directly into textbooks as a way of disseminating information. Fairbrother (2003) found that the integration of patriotism and nationalism in the educational system of the PRC led to students in the PRC demonstrating higher levels of patriotism than students in Hong Kong. The CCP continued the trend of integrating patriotism in education with the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games. The CCP utilized the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games to establish a partnership with schools for promoting national development and the PRC's rejuvenation (Law, 2010). Despite efforts by the PRC government to influence curriculum relating to national themes and patriotism, students in the PRC are more likely than students in Hong Kong to be more globally minded and hold more negative feelings towards patriotism for the PRC (Fairbrother, 2008).

Classroom instruction in the PRC tends to be more teacher-centered and textbook focused than student-centered (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Zhu, 2007). This reinforces the Confucian

principles of authority and relationships. Teachers are “regarded as an authoritative parent to whom respect and obedience are due” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 12). Teachers are seen as moral authorities who should develop a relationship similar to that of a parent and child (McMahon, 2011). McMahon found that it was common for PRC students to regularly meet with their teachers during meal times to foster and develop those relationships. Teachers are more likely to employ strategies that emphasize memorization as opposed to constructivist teaching strategies (Law, 2008).

### **Conceptual Framework**

There is no single theoretical framework to explain the experiences of international students and American Catholic boarding education. To help explain the phenomena of American Catholic boarding education, a conceptual framework based on constructivism, social justice, and Catholic social teaching will be utilized. Constructivism is utilized as part of the framework for the study because Chinese students experience a different process of constructing knowledge than their American peers given their background in Confucianism (Ho, 1995). The study also utilizes a concept of social justice to account for the unique experience of economically privileged students studying and living in a foreign country. Lastly, the study considers Catholic social teaching because of the Catholic nature of the school.

### **Constructivism**

Boarding schools are often sources of educational innovation and as such, adopt a pedagogy of psychological constructivism (Kane, 1991; Powell, 1996). Constructivist theory is a “learning theory that suggests that individual learners actively construct meaning around

phenomena, and that these constructions are idiosyncratic, depending in part on the learner's background knowledge" (Richardson, 2003, p. 1625).

Constructivism is a learning theory based on the concept that "knowledge about the world does not simply exist out there, waiting to be discovered, but is rather constructed by human beings in their interaction with the world" (Gordon, 2009, p. 39). Constructivism is not limited to the practices of teachers in the classroom but can also relate to social and psychological elements (Richardson, 2003). Constructivism is commonly associated with the work of Vygotsky and Piaget. Although they laid the foundation for constructivism, this study considers a form of constructivism based on environment and communication from the work of Ernst von Glasersfeld (1988). This version of constructivist theory is supported by the concept of intersubjectivity from the field of human development (Alterman, 2007).

Von Glasersfeld (1998) theorized that individuals construct knowledge about the environment based on how they "consciously or unconsciously disregard [differences] in order to establish the permanence of an individual identity" (p. 5). Individuals create their own reality based on how they assimilate those differences with their own prior knowledge. This version of reality can be shared with individuals who have also been involved in a similar experience. Individuals must have access to similar experiences to be able to construct the same knowledge of an event.

Von Glasersfeld expands this concept to apply to communication. Von Glasersfeld (1998) states that "to understand what someone has said or written means no less but also no more than to have built up a conceptual structure that, in the given context, appears compatible with the structure the speaker had in mind" (p. 11). Individuals must have access to the same

conceptual structure to be able to construct meaning in communication. This can be a challenge for individuals with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Intersubjectivity is a similar concept utilized to explain relationships and understandings between individuals in the field of human development. Alterman (2007) states that “the participants’ common ‘sense’ of the situation creates a foundation, a framing, an orientation that enables human actors to see and act in coordination with one another” (p. 815). This process of shared experiences between individuals allows individuals to develop a relationship (Balbernie, 2007). Often times those experiences are routine interactions that occur without the explicit awareness of the participants (Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008). Intersubjectivity is an essential element of human communication and is dependent upon the participants’ ability to create a common ‘sense’ of the situation. This follows with the concept of environmental constructivism that requires individuals to have common background knowledge to be able to construct common knowledge about an event.

This approach towards constructing knowledge is significant for Chinese students at an American Catholic boarding school because they have a different set of prior experiences and a different primary language than their American peers and teachers. Given their unique background knowledge and prior experiences they are likely to construct different meanings around the events that take place during their time at the boarding school than their American peers and teachers.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice is a term that has many different meanings. This study will consider an understanding of social justice that accounts for relationships of power and privilege based on

Allan Johnson's book, *Power, Privilege, and Difference* (2006). According to Johnson (2006) individuals may be financially privileged but still be a vulnerable or oppressed population based on race, ethnicity, or geographic location. A majority of the international students studying in American boarding schools come from wealthy backgrounds (Barber, 2003). Although these individuals are highly privileged in their home country, when they come to the United States they are members of a different social category because privilege in the United States is organized according to race and culture (Johnson, 2006). Chinese students studying in the United States face the challenge of transitioning from a world of privilege to a world where they are a vulnerable population at risk for oppression or marginalization. If the Chinese students are marginalized or oppressed by the school they do not receive a socially just education.

### **Catholic Social Teaching**

Although boarding schools were originally designed to educate the children of the elite in a closed setting (Cookson & Persell, 1985), Catholic boarding schools have a special responsibility to promote social justice given Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching is shaped by seven key themes that have been developed over the course of more than 100 years. The seven themes are: 1) life and the dignity of the human person; 2) call to family, community, and participation; 3) rights and responsibilities; 4) option for the poor and vulnerable; 5) the dignity of work and the rights of workers; 6) solidarity; 7) care for God's creation (McKenna, 2002). Four of these themes relate to the role of the Catholic boarding school and its responsibility for the care of international students: 1) life and the dignity of the human person; 2) solidarity; 3) call to family, community, and participation; 4) option for the poor and vulnerable.

The life and dignity of the human person encourages all people to “recognize the worth of all people and to do all in their power to protect the vulnerable” (Massaro, 2008, p. 81). The option for the poor and vulnerable requires society to protect the most vulnerable members from harm (Massaro, 2008). An American Catholic boarding school has a special responsibility to protect international students as they are a vulnerable population. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1986) stated that human beings are “not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals” (p. 9). A Catholic boarding school has a responsibility to make sure that the needs of the international students are being served and that the students are not being exploited for the financial benefit of the school. The exploitation of international students by American boarding schools or universities for financial gain is a practice that has recently come under criticism in the mainstream media (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011; Golden, 2011). Golden (2011) told the story of a Chinese family that felt exploited when an educational recruiting agency arranged for their daughter to be placed in an elite American boarding school to study with American students only to find that the school primarily served students with learning disorders. Golden also found an increase in the number of schools that admitted increasing numbers of PRC students to help meet the financial needs of the school, although he only consulted with six schools for his article. According to Bartlett and Fischer (2011) there is a similar issue at the university level where PRC student enrollments in American university tripled between 2008 and 2011 reaching 40,000 students and representing the largest foreign student population enrolled in American universities.

The Catholic social teaching of solidarity stresses the importance of acknowledging that people are interdependent and that “to be excluded from playing a significant role in the life of



society is a serious injustice, for it frustrates the legitimate aspirations of all people to express their human freedom” (Massaro, 2008, p. 86). According to McKenna (2002), solidarity also acknowledges the importance of respecting the unique cultural and ethnic identity of each individual. An American Catholic boarding school has a responsibility to ensure that no students are excluded from participating fully in the life of the school. This is especially relevant for international students because of the difficulties they may face in integrating with the school community based on their cultural and linguistic differences (Gu et al., 2009).

Catholic social teaching also accounts for the differences that exist between cultures and value systems. Pope John Paul II stated that poverty is not just an economic condition, but one that exists when individuals experience “the denial or the limitation of human rights – as for example the right to religious freedom, the right to share in the building of society” (Ioannes Paulus, 1987). This Catholic consideration of poverty places an emphasis on a Catholic boarding school to include the international student population in the shaping of the school society regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

The Catholic social teaching of the call to family, community, and participation considers the role of the family as “the most intimate sphere in which people cooperate and the first place where children learn about themselves, their individual identities, and their vocations with the wider social world” (Massaro, 2008, p. 87). This is especially relevant for international students at an American boarding school because they are separated from their families. The school has a responsibility to fulfill the temporary role of family for those students including providing food, health care, support for mental health, and safety.

## **Synthesis of Concepts**

Constructivism provided the lens for understanding how the previous experiences of the Chinese students shape their experiences at the boarding school. It is important to view the experiences of the Chinese students through a lens that accounts for their previous experiences given the cultural and linguistic differences between America and the PRC. The Chinese students have different previous experiences than their American counterparts, leading them to construct their knowledge of events differently than the American students and teachers.

Constructivism is also appropriate for studying boarding schools since “constructivists assume a world in which, universal, absolute realities are unknowable” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). This requires the researcher to co-construct knowledge with the participants, which places an emphasis on the individual experiences of the participants. Social justice and the principles of Catholic social teaching provided a lens for analyzing how the boarding school addresses the needs of the Chinese students as a vulnerable population and for providing recommendations the school can take to meet the needs of the students.

## **Summary**

International students attending boarding schools in the United States face a number of significant challenges in transitioning to life as a boarding student. These challenges include: 1) psychological/emotional adjustment; 2) academic adjustment; 3) developing autonomy; and 4) social/cultural adjustment. Despite these challenges, international boarding students are a population that is significantly under-represented in academic research. This is especially true for Chinese students given the vast cultural and educational differences that exist between Chinese and American culture and education. The educational community needs to pay greater

attention to Chinese students so that appropriate support can be provided to assist them with the difficult transition to life at an American Catholic boarding school.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will explain the research design, rationale, site and participant selection, and methods for data management and protection. This chapter also discusses my background and qualitative validity. This study was an intrinsic collective case study of the first-year experiences of international students at an American Catholic coeducational boarding and day school. It included student interviews, a faculty and staff questionnaire, and document analysis.

#### **Research Question**

The research question addressed by this study is:

How do Chinese secondary school students perceive their first-year academic, social, and cultural experiences at an American Catholic co-educational boarding and day school? The research question was specifically left open-ended to allow the data the necessary flexibility to adequately tell the story of the students' experiences.

#### **Design**

In a research study that focuses on the perceived experiences of students, a qualitative approach is the most effective (Creswell, 2009). I selected a collective case study to provide the story of the experiences of multiple student groups in an attempt to produce generalizations about the first-year experience of PRC students at St. Anthony. The two student groups studied were new students who were in the final month of their first year at the school and returning students that previously completed their first year at the school and have had the opportunity to reflect upon that experience. An intrinsic case study was selected because of my role as a

teacher at St. Anthony. Because of my relationship with St. Anthony, I was interested in the experiences of the students at that school to facilitate changes that could assist the international students with the difficulties of transitioning to life at a school in a different country. Although this will limit the transferability of the study, it allowed me a better opportunity to provide the inside perspective given his experience as a teacher and previous relationship with the participants.

Case study research is grounded in the context of the case being studied. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) case study research “leads to a different kind of knowledge compared to other kinds of research. It is more concrete...” (p. 426). Since a case study is grounded in the specific context being studied, the knowledge created is “tangible and illuminative” (p. 426). One of the challenges of case study research is that the knowledge created is only transferable to similar cases. This limits the transferability of the knowledge in exchange for providing a more specific explanation of a particular context.

Case study research was especially relevant for this study because of my desire to explain the process of international students adjusting to life at an American Catholic boarding school during their first year at the school. This case study provides detailed descriptions of the academic, social, and cultural experiences of the international students. Conducting case study research also allows me to situate the experiences of the international students in the framework of Catholic social teaching, which is important considering the Catholic affiliation of the school.

### **Site Selection**

I selected St. Anthony Preparatory School, a small private Catholic coeducational boarding and day school with a student population of approximately 296 in grades nine through

twelve in a small city in the western United States as the research site for the study. St. Anthony is a private Catholic school owned and operated independently of the local archdiocese. The name of the school is a pseudonym and the names of the participants have been changed to protect confidentiality. The student body is approximately two thirds day and one third boarding. The boarding student population is comprised primarily of students from Asia with 49 from the PRC, 19 from Taiwan, 15 from South Korea, and 13 from Indonesia, Lithuania, Japan, Canada, Vietnam, Turkey, and the United States of America combined. Approximately two thirds of the boarding students are male and one third are female. Site entry requirements were negotiated with the school. I agreed not to select any participants who were currently enrolled in the classes that I taught and I will present the results of the research to school leaders to help inform the practices of the boarding program.

### **Participants**

I selected students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) because of their growing role as a population in the boarding program at St. Anthony. In the 2008-2009 school year, students from the PRC accounted for 13% of the boarding population. In the 2011-2012 school year, students from the PRC accounted for 51% of the boarding population. The parents of possible participants were contacted through email with an introduction letter explaining research and its purpose, an informed consent form, and a human subject bill of rights that were all translated into simplified Chinese. Six students were identified by the residential life staff as possible participants. Three of those students were first year students and three were returning students. After contacting the parents, all six of them agreed to allow their children to attend an informational meeting providing an overview of the study. After holding the informational

meeting with possible participants all three of the first year students and two of the returning students agreed to participate in the study and received parental consent to participate. Once the students agreed to participate interview times were arranged on an individual basis. The interviews were completed over a three week period during April and May of 2012.

The participants were all male students from two different populations. The first group was students who transferred directly from schools in the PRC to St. Anthony at the start of the 2011-2012 school year and had not attended a school outside of the PRC prior to enrolling in St. Anthony. The second group was current twelfth grade students who had not attended a school outside of the PRC and enrolled at St. Anthony during their tenth grade year. The selection of these two groups allowed me to identify if the experiences of the students changed as the population of PRC students grew or after the school instituted an orientation program that began with the current ninth grade students.

Qualitative research involves an inherent risk to the participants because they are “sharing intimate details of their lifeworlds [*sic*]. We make some sort of record of these, then we leave. We ask a lot, take a lot, and if we’re not careful, give very little” (Hatch, 2002, p. 65-66). This is of increased importance in an educational setting with students as participants. According to Hatch (2002), “students are especially vulnerable to exploitation because of their youth and their positioning as a kind of captive audience in the school” (p. 67). My study involved a possible conflict of interests because of my position as a teacher at the research site. I undertook multiple steps to meet the ethical demands of conducting qualitative research at a school. The interview questions were carefully crafted to address concerns that are prevalent in the literature on international students. I made arrangements for the students to have access to

counseling services if their participation in the interviews caused any undue emotional or psychological stress. I also made arrangements to share the results of my research with leaders at the site so that the experiences of the students may inform future practices at the site.

### **Data Management and Protection**

The primary method of data collection utilized in this study was interviews. Utilizing interviews allowed the students to provide their own account of the first year experience at an American Catholic boarding school. To provide data triangulation, I utilized both a faculty/staff questionnaire and a document analysis. Focus groups were omitted from the methodology because of the role of filial piety in Chinese culture. Filial piety would cause the younger students in the group to look to the oldest student in the group for approval and agree with his comments (Ho, 1995).

### **Interviews**

I selected a format of semi-structured interviews to allow the responses of the participant to influence the direction of the interview and follow-up questions. Each participant was involved in two interviews and both interviews were conducted in person on the school campus. The first interview focused on non-academic elements and the second interview on academic elements. I provided the participants with a copy of the interview questions that were translated into Chinese for them to access during the interview to provide support for their primary language. An additional adult who is fluent in both English and Mandarin was available during the interviews to provide any necessary translations but was not required in any of the interview sessions. I made arrangements for the participants to have access to counseling services if the interview process produced any negative psychological outcomes for the participants. The



interview questions were based on questions utilized by Cookson and Persell (1985), Popadiuk (2009), and questions that I created (see Appendices A and B for complete interview protocols). The semi-structured interview allowed me more flexibility in aligning the interview questions to the research question. Some of the questions were designed to address specific elements of the research question and others were more open-ended to allow the student to express their own voice (see Table 1). All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Semi-structured interviews present a problem for the authenticity of the research. Since the interviews did not follow a strict structure, the questions asked in each interview were not necessarily identical. According to Bush (2007), this process can result in the reliability of the study being compromised. Although a more structured interview instrument could result in greater reliability, it would limit the ability of the interview to capture the individual voice of each participant by restricting the possible follow-up questions.

Table 1

*Selected Interview Questions and Research Categories*

Social Adjustment	Cultural Adjustment	Academic Adjustment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you experience any homesickness during your first six months at St. Anthony?</li> <li>• How often do you communicate with your parents or other family and friends from the PRC?</li> <li>• What was your experience in making new friends at St. Anthony? Did you experience any bullying or hazing from other students?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before coming to St. Anthony, did you have much experience with different types of food? Has it been a challenge adjusting to the dining structure at St. Anthony?</li> <li>• What was your initial reaction when you found out that you were going to be attending a school in the United States?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role did homework play in your previous school? How does that compare to the role of homework at St. Anthony?</li> <li>• How did you study in your home country? Did you study individually or in groups? Was study time primarily at home or school? How late would you stay up studying?</li> <li>• Did you have confidence in your English language abilities before attending St. Anthony?</li> </ul>

**Faculty/Staff Questionnaire**

The primary means for data triangulation was a faculty and residential life staff questionnaire (see Appendices C and D for complete questionnaires). This questionnaire was designed to verify the responses of the participants and to provide further insight into follow-up questions that might be helpful during the interview. The faculty questionnaire was completed by each participant’s English teacher. The residential life questionnaire was completed by a member of the residential life staff who knew the participant well. The responses from the questionnaires were fairly consistent with the responses provided by the participants during the

interview sessions. The questionnaires did provide some insights into issues of bullying relating to two of the students. The questionnaire responses allowed me to specifically ask both of those participants about the issue of bullying in the second interview. One of the participants proceeded to talk at length about the issue while the other participant did not want to discuss the issue of bullying.

### **Documents**

A document analysis was utilized as a secondary means of data triangulation. I analyzed the agendas and program documents relating to St. Anthony's orientation program for new boarding students, resident student handbook, and the resident staff handbook. All of the ninth grade participants completed this program at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. This program was not in place prior to the 2011-2012 school year. The orientation program may account for some of the differences between the responses provided by the ninth grade students and the twelfth grade students. The orientation program overview also provided insights into possible recommendations for change. The analysis of the student and staff handbooks provided insight into the policies of the residential life program and the rules the students were expected to follow while living at the school.

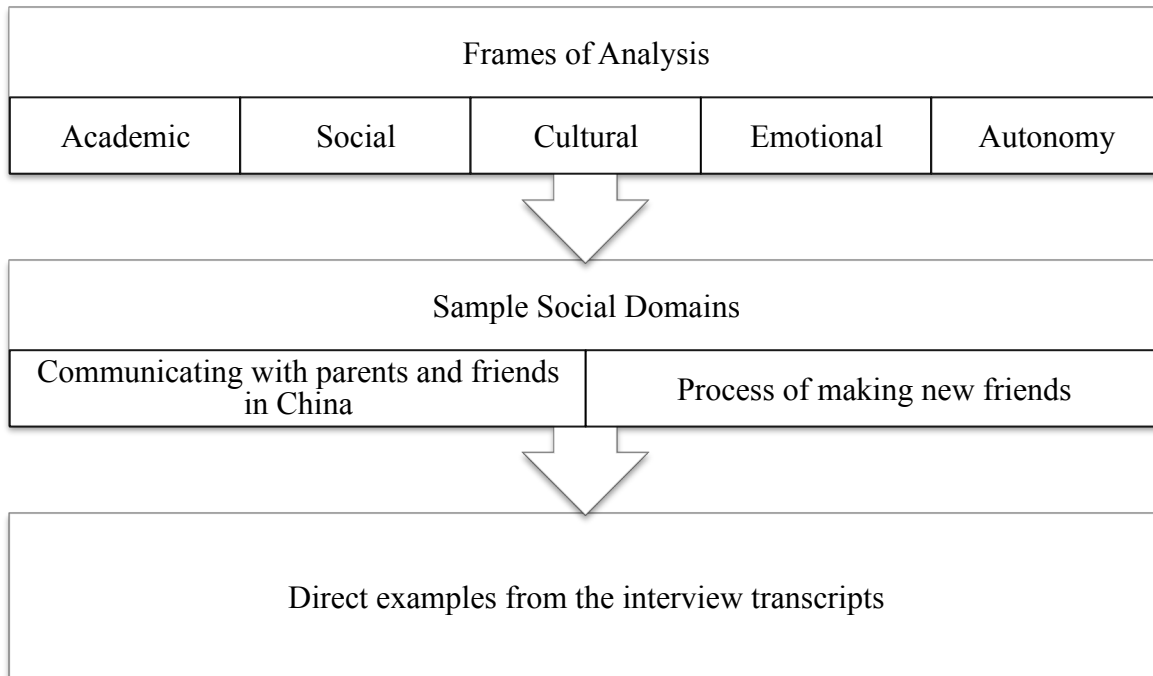
### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed based on the inductive method for analysis as described by Hatch (2002). According to Hatch (2002), "inductive data analysis is a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made" (p. 161). Utilizing inductive data analysis allowed me to identify general patterns that emerged in the data

to explain the experiences of international students in transitioning to life at an American Catholic coeducational boarding school.

The data was analyzed with the use of the NVivo data management software. The interview transcripts and the questionnaires were uploaded into the NVivo program. Once the transcripts were uploaded into the program I began to search the transcripts for pieces of data that related to the original frames of analysis of academic adjustment, social adjustment, and cultural adjustment as specified in chapter one. I began with general classifications and then searched those classifications for the specific themes that developed in the data (see Figure 1). Throughout the data coding process additional domains of emotional adjustment and developing autonomy emerged. The data coding process also identified the domain of cultural adjustment as being more appropriate as a lens for interpreting the data as opposed to an individual domain. The questionnaires were utilized to check for consistency in the response provided by the students. I compared expected elements from the interview domains with the responses from the faculty and staff.

Data analysis was an ongoing process once the data collection began. This process allowed me to reflect on the data and follow-up on the themes that emerged throughout the data collection process. Ongoing data analysis also allowed me to utilize the responses of the faculty and staff questionnaire as a tool for guiding the interview and follow-up questions in the second interview session. Choosing an inductive method for analysis helped to minimize possible researcher biases and allowed the themes of the research to emerge. Through the use of the inductive method for data analysis I was able to identify the emergent domains of emotional adjustment and developing autonomy.



*Figure 1. Data Analysis Process*

### **Data Protection**

Data protection is an important element of qualitative research to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' responses. This is especially important in studies that involve audio or video recordings (Howe & Dougherty, 1993). The audio recordings of the interviews were saved digitally on my laptop computer and also saved on an external hard drive as a backup. The recordings on the computer were password protected. The external hard drive was stored in a locked desk drawer at my house. My notes from the interviews and observations were stored in a file that I kept at home so the individual participant responses were not accessible to any other school personnel. These steps helped to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

## **Timeline**

A review of the literature, consultations with the dissertation chair, and selection of the research method began in February 2011. The dissertation proposal defense took place in December 2011. Interview instruments, formal approval from the research site, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval took place in January 2012. The initial IRB application required modifications and was approved in February 2012. Parents were contacted in February 2012 to provide permission for their child to attend an informational meeting at the end of February. Prospective participants attended an informational meeting in February and informed consent and participant assent was completed in March. Interviews, the faculty/staff questionnaire, and the document analysis began during April and were completed in May 2012. Data analysis was ongoing once data collection began and continued throughout summer 2012. The final dissertation was defended in the April 2013.

## **Researcher Background**

I am interested in the first-year experiences of international students because of my background as a teacher at the school site. Prior to beginning my work at St. Anthony's I had no experience with international students. I was fascinated with their experiences and began to pay greater attention to them in an attempt to learn their stories. Throughout my own graduate studies, I was constantly bothered by the lack of research and information documenting the experiences of international students. The international students at St. Anthony's appeared to face many challenges integrating with the greater culture of the school and adapting to different elements of American education. This led me to explore possibilities for conducting my own research to try to provide this student population with a voice in the field of education.

## **Qualitative Validity**

According to Creswell (2009), “qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 190). The main tool I utilized to assure qualitative validity was the process of data triangulation. In addition to conducting interviews, I had a teacher and a resident life staff member complete a questionnaire about each participant. This allowed me to compare the interview responses from the participants with the faculty and staff responses to check for consistency. I also analyzed the documentation of the incoming boarding student orientation program and the residential life handbook. Data triangulation is important for this case study because of the constructivist theory I am utilizing for understanding the data. Since I am acknowledging that knowledge is created differently for different individuals, I am utilizing multiple methods of data triangulation to account for different constructs of knowledge (Golafshani, 2003). I engaged in the process of member checking to verify two of my interpretations in interviews with two of the participants. During the second interview session I presented them with my interpretation of a statement they had each made in the first interview to verify the accuracy of my interpretation. One participant verified the interpretation and the other provided some additional clarification to eliminate any confusion with his previous response. In addition to elements of the research methodology, I have also clarified my previous background and how it relates to the subject being researched.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided the research methodology, rationale for the methodology, site and participant selection, and methods for data collection. I also provided an overview of my own background and interest in the research topic to provide transparency in any biases that I may

have. I provided the timeline for the research process and the steps undertaken to maintain qualitative validity.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a general description of the five students that participated in the study and an overview of their experiences in adjusting to life at St. Anthony. Some background information has been omitted to protect the anonymity of the participants. This was necessary given the small sample size of the study and also the small student population at the research site. This chapter also provides an analysis of the emergent domains.

#### **Individual Case Backgrounds**

The individual case studies were used to address the research question of: How do male Chinese secondary school students perceive their first-year academic, social, and cultural experiences at an American Catholic co-ed boarding and day school? To protect the anonymity of the participants some background information cannot be provided on an individual basis and all of the names utilized in the study are pseudonyms. All five participants were from either the Beijing or Shanghai urban centers. The two 12<sup>th</sup>-grade participants both went on to attend four-year universities in the United States. One of the ninth grade participants did not return to the school for the following year because of a family issue in China. None of the participants had previously studied outside of China. All five participants came from high socio-economic backgrounds as their families were able to afford the full school tuition and room and board fees. Two of the students had previously attended a boarding school in China for middle school. The grammatical errors of the participants' spoken English are included in the quotations to preserve the voice of the individual participant.

## **Jacob**

Jacob came to St. Anthony as a 16 year old sophomore and was in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade at the time of the study. He was completing his third year at St. Anthony. Although he is an only child with no brothers or sisters, he does have a cousin attending a large public university in California. Jacob attended private schools for six years in China before coming to the United States. He was one of two students in the study with prior boarding school experience, having attended a Chinese boarding school for three years during middle school. This boarding school was located a couple of hours from his hometown so he was still able to see his family on a regular basis. Jacob had visited the United States once on an educational tour before coming to St. Anthony. Jacob did not consider himself to be religious but his family observed some Buddhist traditions. Jacob was in a relationship with a girl from China throughout his time at St. Anthony. Jacob's primary interests are music and basketball. The faculty and staff questionnaires were consistent with the responses that Jacob provided during the interviews. Jacob was described by the resident life staff as being one of the leaders of the Chinese community in the boarding program.

Jacob's mother was primarily responsible for him attending school in the United States and he did not have much input into the decision. She was concerned with him taking the Chinese high school entrance exam because of his time at a boarding school. Jacob would have to take the entrance exam in his home city instead of the city where he attended the boarding school. Jacob explained:

I am not from ... but I was studying there, so there is some problems. If you not live in the, that city and you want to take the high school test, I need to go back to my hometown

to take the test, but my study in ... and my hometown is different so that might not let me get into the best school in China so my mom decided to let me come to the United States.

His family had business associates who had sent their children to school in the United States and had spoken positively of the experience so the family considered schools in the United States for Jacob. The family also hoped that Jacob would be able to attend a college in the United States like his cousin and believed he would be better prepared if he attended high school in the United States. Once the decision was made for Jacob to attend school in the United States his mother chose the school. Jacob did not visit the school until he moved in to the dormitory.

Jacob was initially intimidated by attending school in the United States but he was also excited to have to opportunity to experience living in a different country. He did not initially want to leave China for high school because he did not have confidence in his English language skills. Jacob explained his initial reaction as being:

Kind of scared but also excited. Scared is because my English skills and I am not sure if people here would be friendly or if the teachers style might be different from China and I may not be able to learn well and that kind of scared me. But I get to come to another country and see another culture and a different education background because all of my friends who have come to the U.S. say that it is like education background is more free and can also you can have more interests outside of the class so I was excited to come here.

Jacob's cousin attending college in the United States spoke with him over the phone to try to ease some of his fears about attending school in the United States, especially in regards to teacher styles and the friendliness of other students.

Once Jacob arrived at St. Anthony, homesickness was a major concern. Jacob missed "[his] family and [his] friends so much and ... also miss the food in China because Chinese food is so better." Jacob also had difficulty in making friends during the first few months because he felt their "idea of how to make friends is different from how my friends in China were and I kind of felt uncomfortable and my first few months were not very well because I could not make good friends." This difficulty in making friends led Jacobs to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. Jacob would either call or Skype with his mother and friends in China almost daily to help cope with the homesickness and loneliness. Jacob would also call his girlfriend every day. Jacob could not identify a specific point when his feelings of homesickness became less of a challenge, although he did credit his teachers and the residential life staff in helping him make friends with other students.

Making new friends was initially a difficult experience for Jacob. Jacob described the experience as being "kind of hard for me to make friends with day students at first because I kind of, well actually in China I am not that shy but when I came here I became really shy because of language." After time went by, Jacob became more comfortable talking to other students and realized that many of them were nice people and wanted to have friends. Initially he would focus on speaking with just the other Chinese students but his roommate helped convince him to talk to other students. Becoming friends with his roommate helped to show Jacob that he could make friends with students who were not from China because his roommate was from Taiwan.

This student helped Jacob learn to accept the students from Taiwan as also being Chinese. He could not recall exactly when this changed for him, but he credits making friends with a small number of American day students in helping him to be more comfortable speaking to other students. Making friends with a small number of American students also helped Jacob to feel accepted at the school. Jacob did not experience any bullying or hazing while he was trying to make friends, but he said that he saw other students being bullied in the dorm. He said that “it didn’t bother me too much because I mean if they don’t want to make friends with you, you can just ignore them.” The resident life staff described Jacob as having many friends in the dorm, primarily with the Chinese and Taiwanese students.

One of Jacob’s greatest challenges in adjusting to live at St. Anthony was the food. Food was a major element in his early feelings of homesickness. The quality of the food was not of the standard that he was used to eating. He felt that although the school tried to make Chinese food “it isn’t real, just being honest.” During his first year at the school he would order Chinese or Thai food to be delivered from local restaurants at least twice a week. Jacob did say that the quality of the food had improved during his senior year at the school and that his frequency of ordering food had decreased.

Jacob felt that one of the most significant changes in his daily life involved learning how to manage his time effectively. Although he had prior experience at a boarding school, the study time at that school was more structured than at St. Anthony. Study hall in his previous school occurred in a classroom with a teacher providing constant supervision. Jacob explained that:

even though we have study hall we can study in our room so sometimes in the beginning I would play computer games or watch videos but that did not help

because my grade was kind of bad so it, it make me have to manage my time better and get more self-control to do my work that I need to do.

Jacob felt that his time management skills improved over time and that he would be better prepared for college because of having to learn to manage his own time. The resident life staff described Jacob as a student who sometimes would allow his social interactions and video game playing to interrupt and interfere with his studying.

Religion was not a significant element of Jacob's life in China. His father observed some Buddhist traditions but did not pass those traditions on to Jacob. Attending Mass initially made Jacob uncomfortable because he felt it was boring and a waste of his time. By the end of his first year, Jacob began to think that "some Catholic ideas teach you how to be a good man or to communicate with each other it is good, but that is, but I don't want to be a religion." His overall outlook on religion did not change but he began to appreciate some of the values expressed in Mass and his religion classes.

Jacob faced a number of academic challenges in adjusting to life at St. Anthony. The most significant academic challenge for him was adjusting to instruction in English. Although he was nervous to study in English, Jacob initially had confidence in his English language abilities. He begun studying English at age six and also visited both England and the United States on school trips before attending St. Anthony. He struggled studying in English and he had a difficult time focusing in class. Jacob explained that "each class here will be longer even though the total school time is shorter, but at first some of the reason is my English skill I could not pay attention really well." Jacob's English teacher described him as often appearing tired and having difficulty focusing in class. Jacob relied heavily upon working with teachers after

class to help make up for his inability to focus during class because of his struggles with the language. His history, religion, and English classes were particularly difficult because of the English writing required in the three classes. Religion classes presented a challenge because the topics were very different for him and “there was a ton of reading and I hated that reading.” Jacob credited some of the feedback that he received from his history teacher in giving him the confidence that he could be successful in studying in English.

Homework also presented a challenge for Jacob. In China, homework had not been a graded academic component of his studies. Jacob equated the importance of homework to being prepared for the test, saying that “in our [Chinese] school the middle and final test are whole grade so if you didn’t do homework then maybe you cannot pass the test.” He was not prepared to turn in homework on a daily basis for a grade. Jacob recalled that:

There was homework in [history] class and I had wrote down answer in the book and then [he] ask to collect and I was so embarrassed because I had done it in the book but it was just not on paper to hand in.

Jacob quickly realized that he had to complete homework assignments to physically turn in as opposed to having them checked for completion. Another challenge for Jacob in regards to homework involved having to type assignments. Jacob had very little experience in China typing papers and had a difficult time adjusting to typing papers in English. He found himself typing assignments in Chinese and then translating them to English and trying to correct the grammatical mistakes that occurred in translation. Jacob explained that “some words in Chinese is really good but when you translate to English it is not the same meaning so like in the

beginning my writing is really slow.” Writing also presented a difficulty for Jacob in adjusting to the simpler English sentence structure. He shared that:

In English the grammar would be change some sentences, actually most sentences the sentence is simple and the meaning is good but in Chinese the sentence is supposed to be really long and really beautiful and it is hard for me to think like that. My Chinese writing is very good and it is really hard to think like writing shorter sentence instead of what I do.

Homework did not become easier for Jacob until his second semester when he was more comfortable thinking in English as opposed to relying upon thinking in Chinese and translating to English.

Jacob enjoyed the American teaching style as opposed to the Chinese teaching style he was used to, although it did take him some time to adjust to the more casual American approach. Jacob felt that his American teachers cared more about whether or not he actually understood the content. The experience of visiting a teacher after class for additional help was initially a challenge as Jacob explained, “in China I did not, I can’t do it and here I need to do it so it is difficult for me.” Jacob enjoyed meeting with his math teachers after school because it gave him the opportunity to gain more knowledge of math, especially calculus. One challenge for Jacob in adjusting to the American teaching style involved participation in class. Jacob was reluctant to speak English in class in front of other Chinese students explaining that:

I know my English is not as good, as good as day student but I don’t want other Chinese students to see me have hard time with my English. It’s really bad to have,



um, other Chinese student laugh at my English so I don't want to speak in class with them.

This fear led Jacob to be reluctant to participate in class discussions and small group work.

Jacob was described by his English teacher as being more comfortable participating in small groups than participating in front of the class as a whole. Jacob continued to be uncomfortable participating in English in front of his Chinese classmates until his second year at the school.

### **Paul**

Paul came to St. Anthony as a 16 year old sophomore and was in the 12th grade at the time of the study. He was completing his third year at St. Anthony. Although he is an only child, he had a cousin and a close family friend who also attended St. Anthony at the same time he was enrolled. His cousin was one year ahead of him and the family friend was in the same grade. Paul also had an uncle living in the Southern California area because of the extended family's business. Paul attended private day schools in China for both elementary and middle school. Paul's family actively practiced Buddhism, but they practiced privately in their home as opposed to regularly attending services at a temple. Paul had never visited the United States before he moved in to the residence hall at St. Anthony. Paul's primary interests are computers, graphic design, and basketball. The faculty and staff questionnaires described Paul as a student who developed a greater sense of autonomy and independence after his cousin graduated at the end of Paul's junior year. The questionnaires were fairly consistent with his responses but did identify an issue of hazing and bullying that Paul did not share when the topic was brought up during the first interview. During the second interview, I asked Paul specifically about the bullying incident and he shared the details about what happened.

Paul's cousin was the primary reason that he attended school in the United States. Paul's uncle is a wealthy businessman in China and has a great deal of influence on the entire family. The cousin wanted to learn more about American culture and customs to prepare for a role in the family business. The family decided that it would be best if the cousin was not alone in attending a school in the United States so they decided that Paul should apply for admission to the school as well. They were also able to convince a family friend to have his daughter apply to schools in the United States. Paul viewed this family friend as a cousin and would often refer to her as a cousin when he spoke about her. All three students were accepted at St. Anthony and enrolled in the school at the same time. Paul was extremely nervous to attend school in the United States and did not want to leave China. Paul was scared about having to study in English and explained that "it's like in China, I am kind of scared for English. I do not like to speak English a lot and that is why when my mom first tell me about it I was really scared." His parents and cousin were eventually able to convince him that it would a good opportunity for him and that he did not have to worry because his cousin would be with him so he would not be alone. The resident life staff described the relationship between the families of Paul, his cousin, and the friend as being a complex business relationship between very wealthy families and felt that the relationship between the families dictated the relationships between the students with other Chinese students deferring to Paul and his cousin out of respect for the family. Paul was described by his English teacher and the resident life staff as being intimidating to other Chinese students because of his family.

Homesickness was a concern for Paul but he credited his cousin being at the school as something that helped alleviate his feelings of homesickness. Paul explained that "it really help,

when I really miss my parents, and after that I see my cousins after that I thinking that it is ok right now.” In addition to spending time with his cousin, Paul would also call his parents every day for the first few months that he was at the school. The feelings of homesickness began to subside as he made friends at the school. Throughout all three years at St. Anthony, Paul would continue to call his parents on an almost daily basis. Paul had a difficult time trying to communicate with his friends in China because of their academic schedules. He felt that “they need to study for final tests and something else so they are also busy so I couldn’t really talk to them.” This made it difficult for Paul to maintain some of his previous friendships. Food also contributed to Paul’s feelings of homesickness. He explained that “that’s a lot I always miss my mom’s cooking, even today, of course.” Paul would order Chinese food with his cousin almost every day for the first couple of months that he was at St. Anthony. Eventually he began to try an eat more of the American food, but that did not really begin until his second year at the school.

Paul experienced some difficulties in making friends at St. Anthony. When he first came to the school he would only talk to other students from China. Paul explained that he was “really scared to you know make American friends because I think my English not really good and that I cannot talk to them a lot and I was really scared.” Paul’s English teacher described him as a student who primarily interacted with Chinese students and avoided interactions with American students. Paul struggled to make American friends and explained that “I just wish, once, maybe one time to be invited to American student house and really be like one of their friends but it never happen.” He also explained that “I don’t know why but you cannot really make good friends with Americans. I mean you can be a friend but you are not really.” Paul did not

experience any bullying or hazing, but was involved in some bullying of other students in the dorms. Sometimes Paul would think he was joking around with other students but would actually be making comments that were hurtful to the other students. He explained that “when we are joking around he maybe get really pissed and ... when I go back to China and then want to call him and after that he doesn’t answer me.” This was shocking for Paul because he was accustomed to other individuals deferring to him because of his family’s status in China. The resident life staff shared that Paul stopped bullying the other student during his senior year at St. Anthony.

Paul struggled with living on his own in a dorm away from his family. He had never shared a room before and found it difficult to share the space with another student. He did not develop a close relationship with any of his roommates and described his first year experience as “when we are in the room we don’t really talk to each other. Just be quiet and do your own homework and then after that it is like sleeping and nothing else to do.” Cleaning his room and having to do his own laundry was also a challenge. Paul had never had to wash his own clothes before and had to learn how to use the clothes washer and how to plan his laundry so that he would have clean clothes to wear. He also had to learn to manage money on his own. Paul explained that he also learned “something about how to save my money and to get a cheaper thing instead of always the most expensive. In China I never do that my mom used to buy everything for me.” He had to learn how to create a budget to make sure that the money his parents deposited into his sundry account would last throughout the entire semester. In his first semester, he spent too much money and had to call his mom to ask her to send more money to the school. Paul described this as being very “embarrassing, feel very shamed to have to ask for

money. Like I let her down.” Over time, Paul learned how to stay within his budget and it was the only time that he had to ask his parents for more money.

Time management was a significant challenge for Paul, and he acknowledged this as a problem that he would continue to address when he went to college. He would often spend time on the computer reading about sports and basketball or watching television on his computer instead of studying. He felt that this had negatively impacted his grades throughout his time at St. Anthony. The resident life staff confirmed that Paul often spent time on the computer during study hall instead of working with his textbooks. Paul’s time management also impacted his sleeping habits and he was often tired when he would attend class in the morning. This was confirmed by his English teacher who reported that Paul would often fall asleep in class and would complain of being tired.

Language was the most serious challenge that Paul faced in adjusting to life at St. Anthony. Paul did not start to formally study English until he was in the seventh grade. He remembered being exposed to some English as a child, but it was always casual and unimportant until he started middle school. Even after he started to study English in middle school, instruction focused on vocabulary and written English with very little conversational English. When he first came to the school he would spend some evenings in his dorm room crying because he was so scared to speak English. Paul explained that:

I don’t really know the English that well when I come and after that I should be translating every word from the computer and after that I was really want to go back to China to learn more English for that because I think was really helpful for me and sometimes I would try to give up but my cousin tell me that and my parents tell me that if

you can keep doing that you will be doing well and after that I stop doing that with translating and uh you know stopped playing games and tried to learn more to speak English and to memorize the English words and after that was a really hard time for me. Remembering vocabulary and conducting conversations were especially difficult for Paul. He would avoid talking to American students in class because he felt that his “English is no good. Especially in class, I look like I don’t know anything.” He would also try to avoid speaking English with other Chinese students because he was afraid that they would make fun of his English. Paul’s English teacher described him as a student with limited English proficiency who struggled with both verbal and written English. The English teacher speculated that Paul’s lack of proficiency in English made him reluctant to communicate with the American students.

Paul really enjoyed interacting with the teachers in the classroom because he felt they cared about him as a person. Paul explained that:

I think it is better than China. Because the teacher will understand your emotions. You know sometimes you cannot understand the words or something else and they going to have, when school is over, they are going to tell you to stay and see you and will tell you how to do the word and help. But in China some teachers doesn’t really care about your emotions. When you don’t know the knowledge they are not going to teach it again and help you.

During his first year at St. Anthony, Paul would visit with teachers almost every day to receive support with vocabulary. Paul also credited the teachers and the practice of small group work as helping him to confront his fear of speaking to other students in English.

The process of completing homework to turn in was not a challenge for Paul, although the practice of completing the homework in English presented Paul with some challenges. His school in China graded homework assignments so he was prepared to complete homework assignments to turn in to his teachers. Paul did struggle with completing the homework in English. He would often first do his work in Chinese and then translate it to English. Paul also had no experience typing in English before coming to St. Anthony. He had completed research on the computer but had never typed out a paper.

### **Seth**

Seth came to St. Anthony as a 15 year old freshman and was in the ninth grade at the time of the study. He was completing his first year at the school. He is an only child and has no family living in the United States. There is a family friend who lives in a nearby urban area that serves as his guardian in the United States. He attended private schools in China for elementary and middle school. Seth was the only ninth grade participant who had previously attended a boarding school. He spent his three middle school years in a boarding school in China. His boarding school was located within a couple of hours of the city in which he lived so he had regular contact with his family. Some of his middle school classmates also attended boarding schools in the United States for high school, but none were at St. Anthony. Seth does not consider himself to be religious and his family has no active religious tradition. He had visited the United States once to watch the Los Angeles Lakers play basketball and to attend Disneyland before moving into St. Anthony. Seth's primary interests are music, basketball, and video games. The responses from the faculty and staff questionnaires were consistent with what Seth shared in the interviews.

Seth was actively involved in the decision for him to attend high school in the United States. He told his parents that he wanted to attend a college in the United States and his parents felt he would be better prepared for and have a better chance of attending a college with a strong reputation if he attended high school in the United States instead of China. Once Seth's parents agreed that he could attend high school in the United States, Seth completed the majority of the research in selecting a school. One of his primary criteria in selecting a school was that it was located in an area with a warm a climate. The family decided upon St. Anthony because of the combination of the academic program and the geographic location. Seth was nervous and excited to attend school in the United States stating that he was "excited to make new friends and international is good for me."

Homesickness was a minor concern for Seth when he first moved to St. Anthony. He said that the first few days were difficult but then he began to "play sports with friends, read some novels, and play some video games" so he would no longer experience regular feelings of homesickness. Seth would regularly communicate with his family through Skype. Seth also maintained some regular contact with his Chinese friends who were attending other boarding schools in the United States. They would chat online and would also play video games together over the internet. One element of American culture that helped Seth with his homesickness was going to the movies. He enjoyed being able to watch movies in the theaters because the movies are released in America before they are released in China. This would allow him to talk to his friends back in China and tell them what happened in the movies and gave him additional social capital for connecting with some of his Chinese friends. The residential life staff identified Seth as a resident who did not demonstrate many signs of homesickness.



The dining structure at St. Anthony did not contribute to feelings of homesickness for Seth because of his prior experience at a boarding school. Although he prefers Chinese food he felt that it has been easy to adapt to the varied types of food with the exception of Mexican food. Seth found the Mexican food difficult to eat and orders food from take-out restaurants whenever St. Anthony serves Mexican food for dinner.

Seth found the transition to life at an American boarding school somewhat easy because of his previous boarding school experience. Seth had to wash his own laundry at his previous school and they also had chore rotations that included tasks like washing the dishes. Seth felt that he was well prepared for the independent nature of St. Anthony because of those experiences. Seth particularly enjoyed having a roommate because he does not have any brothers or sisters. He felt that having a roommate has “helped [him] to feel less homesick even though [they] have come from different countries it has helped [him] to know different foods and different friends.”

Seth had mostly positive experiences in making friends at St. Anthony. He enjoyed being able to meet students from different countries and felt that it has helped him to be a better communicator and has taught him the importance of other cultures and hobbies. He had not experienced any bullying or hazing but did say that there is some friendly joking around between the boys. He felt that the residential life staff members were influential in helping the boys to interact positively with each other. The resident life staff described Seth as being well-liked by the other Chinese students in the resident program.

Although Seth had mostly positive experiences in interacting with the other international students he felt it was a challenge to interact with the American students. He felt that the

“American students don’t really come to you to try and be friends.” Seth was very nervous about speaking English with them and admitted to being afraid to communicate with them during his first few months at the school.

Seth felt that the teachers were very helpful in bringing the American and international students together. He appreciated how some teachers would group international students with American students so they would have to communicate with each other. He stated that after working together in class “lunch time and break time then became a chance for us to communicate after class but it started because we had to sit together in class.” Seth thought that his English teacher was especially helpful in increasing his level of interaction with the American students. Seth believed that it was important not to always work together with Chinese students because even though it “might be easier and make you feel better, but then you won’t be friends with day students and it’s your best chance to communicate with them. Teachers help you with that so it’s better than by yourself.”

In addition to the teachers in the classroom, Seth found the extra-curricular activities to also be helpful in making new friends and communicating with American students. Seth participated in the recycling club and was also a member of the golf and swim teams. He felt that his golf coach “really helps us and it makes us friends with other people on the team.” Seth enjoyed being able to play a sport that allowed him to be outside. He liked the fact that there were extra-curricular activities not centered on academics.

Seth’s family does not have an established religious tradition and he had not previously attended a Catholic Mass. Despite his lack of familiarity with Catholic practices he felt that it was important to respect the religion class and Mass services because of the importance of

religion to the school. Seth found a number of the assignments in the religion class to be difficult because the concepts were new and unfamiliar to him. He also thought it would have been nice for the staff to spend some time explaining some of the religious traditions during the orientation so that he would have been better prepared for the first all school Mass. He felt that attending a Catholic school helped the students to be kind to each other and to make new friends.

Seth experienced a number of challenges in adjusting to the routine of the academic day at St. Anthony. In his prior schools, the students stayed together in the same classroom and the teachers rotated throughout the day. Seth had to memorize where his classes were located and the order of the classes. This was especially challenging at first because St. Anthony uses a rotating schedule so the classes were not in the same order every day. Seth remembered struggling with this during the first couple of school.

Homework was something that Seth found both challenging and enjoyable. Completing long reading assignments in English was a challenge and made the completion of the homework assignments take more time than in China. Seth was also surprised to find that he was encouraged to “get extra knowledge from the internet to find whatever we want.” Most of his experience on the internet had been basic web browsing and game playing. Seth did not feel prepared to use the internet as a tool for gathering information. Seth enjoyed the fact that the homework was more than just answering questions on a worksheet. Seth felt that completing exercises over and over on a worksheet was “mostly just waste of time and is boring.” Seth was described by the dorm staff as being a responsible student that focused on his homework during the study hall period.

Seth found group work and working with partners to be challenging at first because he was not used to accepting input from another student on how to complete an assignment or answer a question. He initially found it difficult to speak up and give advice in a group but that changed over the course of the year and he now really enjoys working with other students in small groups. He did admit to usually working with other Chinese students in his math and science classes but that he tries to work with American students in his English and speech classes. Seth was also initially nervous in working with other Chinese students because he was “a little worried they would make fun of my speaking,” but he soon found that his English was better than most of his Chinese classmates so he did not need to worry about their criticism. Seth’s English class helped him to adjust to small group work because he was the only Chinese student in that class. His English teacher was impressed with how well he adapted to group work and described Seth as a student who his classmates always wanted to have in their groups.

Seth began studying English around the age of 7 or 8. Most of his English language work was done in school and he also attended extra weekend classes to help improve his English. When he first came to St. Anthony he felt confident in his reading and writing skills but not in his speaking skills. Preparing for speeches in English has been challenging for Seth because of the language and because he has had limited experience giving speeches. Seth explained that he mostly would just listen and take notes in his classes in China and that they would not get up in front of other students to give a speech. Seth experienced a great deal of nervousness when he would have to speak in front of the class at St. Anthony. This feeling of nervousness would decrease over the course of the year as Seth became more comfortable with both his spoken English and the process of speaking in front of other students.

Seth enjoyed the interaction with his teachers at St. Anthony. He found them to be very helpful and enjoyed being able to meet with them after class. Meeting with teachers after class was a difficult adjustment for Seth but once he became comfortable meeting with his teachers after school he visited with a couple of them on a regular basis for extra help. Seth explained that at his previous school in China “if attend teacher after class it means that you are worse than other students and maybe doing bad. Here more people do it so it is ok and just about getting more knowledge.” Seth said that a couple of the older students encouraged him to see his English teacher for help when he was struggling with a homework assignment during study hall. This encouragement helped him to feel comfortable in meeting with his teacher the next day after school. Some of his teachers would also encourage him to study with his classmates after school. Seth had rarely studied with other students in China so this was difficult at first but became easier over the course of the year. Seth was a little disappointed that he did not have many opportunities to study with American students outside of class. He thought it would have been really helpful if there had been opportunities to study with American students during evening study hall.

### **Brian**

Brian came to St. Anthony as a 15 year old freshman and was in the ninth grade at the time of the study. He was completing his first year at the school. He is an only child and has no family members living or studying in the United States. He attended private elementary and middle schools in China and had no prior experience at a boarding school. Although none of his friends had attended St. Anthony, he had heard about the school from his friends who knew students who had attended the school. Brian visited the United States once for a summer

vacation in 2010. He does not consider himself to be religious but he attended a Catholic Mass when he visited a cathedral on his vacation. His primary interests are reading and video games. The faculty and staff questionnaires were consistent with the responses that Brian provided and also suggested that he was one of the role models and leaders amongst the freshmen boys in the resident program.

Brian's parents decided when he was a young child that it would be best for him to attend college in the United States. Brian recalled that "I was told that I should go to America when I was only 4 or 5 years old. At that time, my parents told me that I would go to America to study in University." Because of this plan, Brian knew growing up that it was likely that he would leave China for school at some point. One of the reasons for the vacation in the United States was for Brian to experience American culture. Brian really enjoyed the vacation with his family and this led his family to make the decision for him to attend high school in the United States as well. When Brian first found out that he would be attending high school in the United States he was "excited but then ... got a little nervous about the language and making friends and being homesick." St. Anthony was a school that they considered because Brian had heard some of his classmates talking about the school. Brian was able to talk with some St. Anthony students through those middle school classmates. When his family learned about the small size of the school they felt it would be a good fit because it would provide Brian with a better chance to know American students. Brian's parents wanted him to attend a Catholic school because they thought it would be a safe environment for him.

Homesickness was a concern for Brian when he first came to the school. Brian explained that "because I was a pretty independent child in China so I only experience homesick for like

two or three weeks.” Brian felt that homesickness was almost more of a problem when he returned from the Christmas break than when he first arrived at the school because he had been home with his family and knew that he would not see them again until summer vacation. One of the factors that did contribute to some of the feelings of homesickness was the food. Although Brian was comfortable with food other than Chinese food, he had never had any Mexican food before. During the first few weeks Brian would order food with some of his resident student classmates whenever there was Mexican food for dinner. After a few weeks, Brian began to adjust to the food and said that he now only goes to McDonalds when they have trips on the weekend and tries not to order take-out food on a regular basis. The resident life staff commented that when Brian ordered food from outside restaurants he would usually share it with his friends.

Brian’s family showed a great deal of support for him during his first couple of months at St. Anthony. Brian would talk to his parents on the phone a couple of times a week. In addition to talking with his parents, Brian also received phone calls from his uncle and his grandparents saying that he was “brave to come here by myself at this age and [they] are impressed.” Brian did not talk on the phone much with any of his former classmates from China. He would only communicate with them when playing video games on the internet. Brian does have a couple of Chinese friends who are attending other boarding schools in the United States and he tries to talk to them through instant messaging on the computer and through video games.

Brian began studying the English alphabet when he was four years old and then in elementary school beginning with the fourth grade. When he arrived at St. Anthony he was initially more comfortable conversing with other international students instead of American

students because he was not very confident in his English language abilities. This was confirmed by the residential life staff who stated that Brian spent most of his time interacting with other Chinese students. Brian explained that:

my English ability is better than most of the students in class when I was in China but I still know, I know that I still need to work hard on my English because it is still not good enough to be studying with other American students.

Brian felt that adjusting to the language was the biggest change that he had to make in his life especially in trying to make friends and communicate with American students and staff. Brian was also concerned about speaking English in front of other Chinese students because he “did not want to look bad in front of other Chinese students.” Brian did begin to converse with American students because of the computer games that he played. Brian considered himself to be an expert at some computer games that were popular with some of the students at St. Anthony. When some of the American students discovered this, they began to talk to Brian outside of class to ask him questions about the game. This allowed Brian to become comfortable talking in English with American students. He found that it was “more easy to talk about things you are interested in than studies because after class American students don’t really talk about studies so you have to talk something else.” Conversing with the other boys about the computer games helped Brian to feel comfortable talking in English with American students. Brian’s English teacher confirmed that he is very active in his use of English in the classroom and appeared to be more willing to speak English in the classroom than any of the other Chinese students.



Brian thought that it was easy to adjust to life in the dorm. He enjoyed having a roommate because it gave him someone to talk to about his problems. Brian explained that “I think if I have a single room I might have some problems and not have someone that I can share with.” Brian did experience some problems when he had to order a new computer early in the school year because he did not bring a computer with him from China. He had never ordered anything through an American company and this was a frustration for him early in the school year. Brian believes that having attended a boarding school will help him to be better prepared for life at a university.

Brian found the homework expectations at St. Anthony to be a little difficult. Brian explained that at his previous school in China “we don’t really have graded homework, it is more like how we find the ability to handle the problems that will be on the test.” Brian was not prepared for the importance placed on homework completion at St. Anthony. Two of the most challenging aspects of homework were writing essays for his English class and preparing for speeches. Brian spent most of his time focusing on math and science homework and had not had to prepare and present a speech in front of his class in China. Brian explained that “I still get nervous when I give a speech and I am going to give my final next week and I am preparing really hard but no matter how I practice I still get nervous.” Brian found it much more difficult to memorize what he was going to say in English than if it were Chinese. Brian also had to make adjustments in using the computer to type papers. Brian explained that he “had to learn to put a space after each word” when he typed in English.

Brian enjoyed the classroom environment at St. Anthony. He found it nice that he could “drink water and go to the bathroom when [he] wants.” Brian also felt that the classroom

environment was more relaxed and that the teachers were more willing to talk to the students.

Brian felt like he developed better relationships with his teachers here because:

the teacher might talk about something other than what you learning like part of their life or the world. In China because there are so many students and the class is only 45 minutes the teacher must speak very fast to get knowledge out and unless the teacher ask a question then you are not talking.

Brian felt that his teachers cared about him as a person but he also said that was no different than China because “teachers always care about their students either their studies or themselves.”

Brian also found it helpful that his teachers at St. Anthony were available for meetings after class. In his previous school, there were too many students for the teacher to spend much time meeting individually with the student for additional help or support. Brian found the accessibility of his teachers at St. Anthony to be helpful because it allowed him to receive help with his speech preparations and with his English writing. Brian’s English teacher described him as a very talented student who would often want to discuss other issues and how they related to material that was covered in class.

Brian found the general structure of the school day to be a little confusing at the beginning of the year. At his previous school in China, the students would remain in the same classroom with all of their materials and the teachers would rotate throughout the school day. At St. Anthony, Brian had to rotate and have the appropriate materials with him for class. Brian explained that:

it's a challenge to remember what is your next class. I went to wrong period one time and I also have to have notebook for right class from my locker and have to carry all of that around when there is three class in a row.

Brian said that at the school orientation the residential life staff explained that the process would be difficult but he did not anticipate just how difficult an adjustment it would be for him. Brian also experienced difficulty in making it to class on time in the four minute passing period. He also initially struggled with the rotating class periods but adjusted once he understood the daily rotation pattern.

Brian felt that St. Anthony placed a much greater importance on cheating and the school's honor system. He explained that in China "we memorize things and recite them and it can be hard to know what you can use here without being trouble." Brian found this especially challenging with his writing and said that he would spend extra time on his English essays to make sure that he did not have any copied information.

One of Brian's favorite elements of studying at St. Anthony was working in small groups. Brian explained that "it has really helped me to know more friends and to practice more and I have to speak language." Working in small groups was initially difficult for Brian, especially if there were mostly American students in the group. Brian explained that:

if I am in a group with all American and I feel like my skill is junk and I can't speak anything because I feel that if I speak wrong they will laugh at me and they will not understand what I say.

Brian eventually conquered that fear and realized that "most of the American student understand that we are foreign student and that we don't speak English as our language." Brian could not

remember any American students teasing him about his English, he was just afraid of it happening. Brian's English teacher described him as being comfortable working with both American and Chinese students.

### **Robert**

Robert came to St. Anthony as a 15 year old freshman and was in the ninth grade at the time of the study. He was completing his first year at the school. Robert has a younger sister who lives with his parents in China. Robert has a cousin who also attends St. Anthony and a cousin attending a boarding school in New York. He attended private elementary and middle schools in China and had no prior boarding school experience. His family was familiar with St. Anthony because the cousin was a senior during Robert's first year at St. Anthony. His family observes some Buddhist traditions but Robert does not consider himself to be religious. Robert's only visit to the United States was in 2008 to see his cousin who was studying in New York. Robert's primary interests are baseball, football, and video games. Robert had to return to China twice during the school year because of a family emergency. The resident life staff identified this family emergency as a possible source of stress and anxiety for Robert and it was a topic that he declined to discuss when asked about it during the interview. The faculty and staff questionnaires also suggested that Robert did not communicate in English as effectively or as frequently as he suggested during the interviews.

Robert's parents were primarily responsible for the decision for him to attend school in the United States. They felt the Chinese educational system overworks students and does not allow them to develop interests outside of the classroom. Robert explained that "the American system is better than the Chinese educational system. The Chinese system make student very

tired with lot of homework lot of test. The American system is different. It give student more free time to do other somethings.” They also believed that St. Anthony was a good school because of his cousin’s experiences at the school. Robert’s parents wanted him to attend a religious school because they felt it would be “a very safe school” for him. Although Robert was excited for the opportunity to attend a school in the United States, he was not actively involved in the process of selecting the school. His parents conducted all of the research and selected the school for him.

When Robert first found out that he would be attending a school in the United States he was nervous to be attending a school where the primary language would be English. He explained that:

I have uh little nervous because in China, uh here we only speak English so when I come here will I talk to American and make friends because I am nervous that somebody will don’t understand what I am talking about. But I think I have a lot of improve with the English.

Robert was also worried that he would:

Miss my family and that I not make many friends so I a little sad at first but then my cousin really help me to meet people and to feel better and I know that it not too bad being here.

In addition to being nervous, Robert was excited for the opportunity to study and live in a different country where he would be exposed to new cultures and ideas. Robert was also excited to be able to study with his cousin at St. Anthony.

Homesickness was a concern for Robert when he first arrived at the school. Robert had never spent an extended period of time away from his parents before moving to St. Anthony. He explained that “the first two weeks is very missed my parents.” Once the orientation ended and classes began Robert felt that he was too busy with his classwork to focus on the feeling of homesickness. Robert would call his parents almost every day and then would Skype with them on the weekends. He tried to remain in contact with some of Chinese friends but he rarely had an opportunity to communicate with them because of how busy they were with schoolwork in China. Robert also felt that being able to talk to his cousin at St. Anthony helped him to feel less homesick.

Robert experienced difficulty in adjusting to the food and dining structure at St. Anthony. He felt that most of the food was not very healthy and that there were too many fried foods. He also found it difficult to eat Mexican food. Most weekends he would order food from either the local Chinese or Thai restaurants. Robert felt that he had to participate in a sport or other activity to help monitor his weight and health because of the changes to his diet.

Robert did not have an active religious tradition but his family respected some Buddhist practices. Robert attended a Catholic Mass at Christmas when his family was in New York to visit his cousin. He felt it was interesting to learn about something that was very different and new to him but that the religion class and regular Mass services were boring and not very helpful to his studies.

Robert’s cousin was influential in helping him make new friends when he arrived at St. Anthony. Robert experienced success in making friends with other international students in the boarding program but experienced difficulty in making friends with the American students. He

explained that “I would like to be American friends and go to their house and be part of it but I know I Chinese and that friends are different and communication is bad so it is ok.” Robert felt that more American students became willing to talk to him when he began to speak more English in the classroom and when he joined the football team. He explained that:

If you speak Chinese in class the kids will see it as less important. Speak English and if you don't know a word ask the teacher or student and they will be very helpful but if you just speak Chinese then American student not want to talk to you.

Robert's English teacher described him as being well-liked by the American students that were also on the football team. Robert did not experience any bullying but observed other students being teased about their language skills and how they dressed.

Adjusting to the daily routine of living away from his parents was somewhat easy for Robert because his cousin helped to explain the process to him. His cousin helped him to learn how to use the lockers, find teachers after school, wash his clothes, and follow the basic rules of the dorm. Robert felt that adjusting to life at St. Anthony would have been extremely difficult if not for his cousin. He explained that “he really show me what to do so I don't know how I learn that stuff without him help.” Robert found it especially difficult and tiring to make the walk across campus between some of his classes. Another element of life that was difficult for Robert was in managing his time, especially with video games in the evenings. Robert explained that “it easy to play video game because your parent not there to check and can hide from dorm staff if you hear. So just have to be careful to still sleep.” During the beginning of the year he would stay up late playing video games on his computer and then would be tired for class and he felt this was impacting his performance in class. Although the resident life staff would tell him not

to play video games he did not feel that their directions were as significant as the directions that he received from his parents when he was home in China. Robert also learned how to manage his own money. He felt it was difficult to learn how to "...be smart with it. Not always buy whatever is most expensive because only so much money in allowance." Robert felt it was easy to manage those elements once they were introduced to him and he began to understand what was expected of him.

Robert began to study the English language in elementary school when he was five years old. While he was studying in China he felt somewhat confident in his English language abilities but he was nervous to leave China to study in a school using English. Communicating and studying in English made Robert very nervous. He explained that although he was very social and outgoing in China, when he arrived at St. Anthony he became "a little shy because it is the first time I will really talk with American and I just speak Chinese so it was hard at first. Don't want to look dumb or sound like I have no knowledge." Robert was nervous about communicating in English with both American and other Chinese students. He explained that:

I don't want to look bad for either. But I see Chinese student more and I know they will make fun if my English bad. American student expect my English to be bad but I still shy and a little nervous for it.

Robert became more comfortable communicating in English as the year went by but he still experienced nervousness when he would have to present information in class in English. Robert's English teacher reported that he was reluctant to speak English in the classroom and would mostly speak "English to non-Chinese students and Chinese to Chinese students."



Classroom interactions and small group work helped Robert begin to feel more comfortable with his use of English. Robert's previous school did not utilize small group work in any of his classes. Robert especially enjoyed the small group work in his English and religion classes because it gave him the opportunity to have his American classmates help him understand concepts that were somewhat difficult for him. Group work was initially intimidating for Robert, but he found his classmates to be especially helpful and kind. He was also more likely to ask questions during small group because he was not comfortable asking questions in front of the entire class.

Adjusting to the homework practices at St. Anthony also presented a challenge for Robert. Although his previous school in China would check homework for completion it was not a component of the final grade. Robert was not prepared for homework and class participation to be part of his grade. He felt there was less homework at St. Anthony than at his previous school but that he spent more time completing his homework because he was working in English. Robert found it especially difficult when his English class was studying poetry that used old English words as opposed to modern English. Robert also found it challenging to adjust to the length of some of his written English assignments. Before coming to St. Anthony, Robert could not remember writing more than one page in English for any single assignment. His English teacher stated that he often struggled completing his written homework in English.

The use of computer technology was somewhat challenging for Robert. Robert had a class at his previous school that focused on computer building and repairs but he did not have experience in using computers to type papers or to research for academic information. He found

it difficult to adjust to typing papers in English because of the language difficulties and also because his teachers were not always able to answer his computer questions.

Robert enjoyed the classroom environment and the interactions with his teachers at St. Anthony. He would regularly visit with his teachers after school to receive additional support for his English, especially with his writing. He explained that the first time he went to visit a teacher after school he was “really nervous but they are really nice and care and want to help.” Robert liked how even high achieving students would visit teachers to receive extra help after school. He was a little reluctant to visit with teachers after school because at his previous school students would only receive extra help after school if they were experiencing a serious problem in the class. His cousin helped him to realize that it was important to receive extra help from his teachers after class. By the end of the school year, Robert thought it was important for Chinese students to know that it was acceptable to receive extra help after school because “the teacher will take care of you even if you are just one person.”

### **Emergent domains**

Throughout the data coding process two new domains emerged: 1) emotional adjustment and 2) developing autonomy. As the data was broken down into individual themes there was data that did not fit in the existing domains. I had originally identified the challenge of homesickness as a social issue relating to relationships, but upon analyzing the data it was apparent that the experiences of homesickness were more of an emotional challenge than a cultural challenge. The data also presented an element of a sense of fear and being afraid of the challenges the participants would face in coming the United States. Homesickness and the general sense of being afraid were identified as the key elements of the emotional adjustment

domain. The data revealed issues relating to living away from home and in a different country for the first time. These pieces of data did not naturally fit into any of the other domains and led to the creation of a domain for issues relating to developing autonomy. Money management, personal well-being, and time management were the key issues identified in the autonomy domain.

### **Cultural Adjustment**

Throughout the data coding process, the issue of culture was evident in most of the data. The connection between culture and the experiences of the students was too intertwined to separate into a specific domain. I found that most data could be categorized as belonging to both the cultural adjustment domain and an additional domain. In formulating my research question for this study, I underestimated the significance that culture would play in shaping the experiences of the students. Because of the significance of the cultural element in the data coding process I decided that it would be more appropriate to use culture as a lens for understanding the experiences of the participants. I initially coded 117 elements into the domain of cultural adjustment, 112 of those elements were also coded into other domains. The only cultural issues that were not cross-coded with another domain were issues relating to religion. As there were only five specific references relating to religion, I did not feel issues of religion were significant enough to merit a domain in this study. This showed me that the domain of cultural differences was more significant than the other domains and it was not adequate to simply classify culture with the other domains.

All the domains have an inherent element of culture. Many of the challenges that the participants faced involved the differences between American cultural practices and Chinese

cultural practices. The challenge of separating culture from the other domains is evident in the following statement from Jacob “if the teachers’ style might be different from China and I may not be able to learn well and that kind of scared me.” This quote demonstrates the difficulty in separating culture from the other domains. This quote was coded into the domains of variety of teaching and educational styles, fear, and culture. The differences in teaching styles across cultures was a concern for Jacob because he knew that he was probably going to have to adjust how he learned in coming to the United States. There was also a sense of fear that came from not knowing exactly what to expect from the American teaching style. This fear is created by the cultural differences in education in the United States and in China.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a general description of the five students that participated in the study and a detailed overview of their experiences in adjusting to life at St. Anthony. Some background information was omitted to protect the anonymity of the participants. This chapter addressed the issue of emergent domains and the change made to the domain of cultural adjustment. Chapter 5 will provide a detailed breakdown of the major themes that emerged across the domains in relationship to the research question.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an analysis of the data and the domains that were anticipated and those that emerged throughout the research process. This chapter also provides recommendations resulting from the shared experiences of the research participants.

#### **Domain Analysis**

My research question: How do male Chinese secondary school students perceive their first-year academic, social, and cultural experiences at an American Catholic co-ed boarding and day school; originally specified three domains of academic adjustment, social adjustment and cultural adjustment for classifying the data gathered in the study. During the data coding process two new domains emerged: emotional adjustment and autonomy. The data coding process also identified a flaw in the cultural adjustment domain. Culture was so ingrained in the experiences of the students that it consistently overlapped with the other domains. Culture is more appropriate as a lens for analyzing the other domains than to stand on its own as a domain.

#### **Academic Adjustment**

Academic adjustment was the focus of the second interview session. In addition to the interview, each participant's English teacher completed a short questionnaire about his behavior and attitudes in the classroom. This provided additional data to provide triangulation on the interview data. Throughout the coding process, four elements emerged as key issues in academic adjustment: 1) English language proficiency and skills; 2) teaching and educational styles; 3) working in small groups; 4) homework and testing. Issues relating to English language

proficiency and teaching styles were the most prominent. Issues relating to the practical issues attending an American school were raised and I chose to include those in the domain of autonomy.

**English language proficiency.** Language was a concern addressed by all five participants. A majority of the concerns relating to language involved the ability to think, study, and communicate in English. Although all five students began studying the English language in elementary school, they all experienced some degree of nervousness or fear when faced with studying and communicating at St. Anthony. There were 44 references specifically relating to the use of English in academics.

Studying in English was a concern for Jacob before he arrived at St. Anthony. Jacob was excited for the opportunity to study in the United States but he was scared of using English in school. Paul was also scared of studying in English before arriving at the school, explaining that:

I just like, I don't really know the English that well when I come and after that I should be translating every word from the computer and after that I was really want to go back to China to learn more English.

All five students identified having to study in English as the most significant academic challenge they faced at St. Anthony. Robert explained that “from the beginning just speaking I have some problem and yeah, because in China I have not always use English in talking to my classmates or my friends and now I just use English.”

The use of English in the classroom also made it difficult for some of the students to focus. Robert experienced difficulty in understanding some of the lectures and would often try to use his electronic translator to understand what was being said by the teacher. This made it

difficult for him to keep up with the pace of some of his classes. Jacob experienced difficulty paying attention to lectures in class because of the language. He explained that “like during sophomore year and I first came here I didn’t get used to uh studying English so uh I always like because sometimes I cannot focus and I would be falling asleep during class.”

Writing in English was also a challenge. Jacob and Paul would write assignments in Chinese and then translate them into English on the computer because they were both uncomfortable writing long essays in English. Jacob explained that:

In the beginning I could not used to the four or five hundred essay in two days and I cannot get used to it. I could not think in English and I had to prepare the essay in Chinese and then translate to English and that spend a lot of time and later I learn that is not a good way but in the beginning that was a really challenge for me.

Jacob also expressed a difficulty with adjusting to the style of writing in English. He explained that in English “most sentences the sentence is simple and the meaning is good but in Chinese the sentence is supposed to be really long and really beautiful and it is hard for me to think like that.” Brian, Robert, and Seth were all made aware of the problems with writing in Chinese and then translating a document to English through the new resident orientation program. Seth and Brian both tried to avoid writing assignments in Chinese. Robert would translate assignments early in the year but found that it actually took him longer to correct the mistakes in translation than to write the essay in English the first time.

All five students expressed some degree of nervousness in speaking English in front of both their international and American classmates. Jacob was initially afraid to ask questions in class because he was afraid that his Chinese and Taiwanese classmates would make fun of his

English. Jacob preferred to ask questions after school because he would not have to speak in front of classmates. Seth was initially worried about speaking in class, explaining that he was “a little [scared] at first, but I learn that my English knowledge is more than most of my Chinese classmates.” This nervousness was especially evident when any of them would have to give a speech in front of a class. Brian explained that he would still “get nervous when I give a speech and I am going to give my final next week and I am preparing really hard but no matter how I practice I still get nervous.”

**Teaching styles and educational practices.** Differences in teaching styles and educational practices contained elements that were both challenging and helpful for the participants. All five students felt the teacher-student relationship at St. Anthony was more positive than at their previous schools. None of the students had typed an essay in English and they all had limited experience in using the computer for academic research. The structure of the school day also presented a challenge to all of the students. There were 57 specific references to teaching and/or educational styles.

All five participants enjoyed the teacher-student relationship dynamic at St. Anthony. They felt that their teachers cared about them as individuals in addition to simply caring about how they performed in class. All five felt that their teachers made an effort to connect with them as individuals. Jacob explained that:

teachers connect with students more. I mean in, in China, like, the almost the only teacher connect with student is to ask question but here they have more in stake in helping students to learn and to make them stay focused and I think that is great.



Paul felt that his teachers at St. Anthony paid much more attention to his emotions and to helping him to learn. He explained that in China “teachers doesn’t really care about your emotions. When you don’t know the knowledge they are not going to teach it again and help you.” Brian had a similar experience with his teachers. He enjoyed how his teachers would discuss events that were occurring in their own lives or around the world. Brian felt this sharing showed that the teachers “always care about their students.” Robert felt that the way that teachers spoke to him made him feel important. His teachers in China would only ever talk to him if there was a problem with his work or behavior in class. Seth enjoyed having the ability and freedom to interact with his teachers individually after school. Although he liked his teachers in China, he never felt like he could talk to them on a personal level. Overall, all five students were happy with the teacher-student interactions and preferred the style at St. Anthony to the style at their previous schools.

The use of computer technology presented a challenge for four of the students. All five students had experience with computer repair and computer building classes at their previous schools, but Brian was the only student to have much experience using the computer as a tool for academic research. None of the students had ever typed an academic assignment in English before arriving at St. Anthony. Paul explained that:

in China we are not going to use the computer to type the words so we only have handwriting to finish the word and after that I come here and we should be typing English for the essay and after that turn the work in on time and that was the difficulty with typing.

Typing in English presented a challenge to all of the students, but Brian and Jacob both liked how the computer would check the spelling of their writing. Brian initially found it difficult to adjust to typing in English because “at first I had to learn to put a space after each word but once I got used to that it was easy for me.” Jacob had to explain to his parents how they actually used the computer for studying because his parents thought that computers were mostly used for playing games.

The structure of the school day also presented some challenges to all of the students. None of the students had previously attended a school where the students switched classrooms throughout the day or used a locker to hold their textbooks and other school materials. Brian explained that:

it’s a challenge to remember what is your next class. I went to wrong period one time and I also have to have notebook for right class from my locker and have to carry all of that around when there is three class in a row.

The three ninth grade boys had attended the new orientation program during which the resident life staff explained the structure of the school day but all three still felt unprepared for the actual process of the day when classes began. Robert found it difficult to walk from one classroom to the next in the four minute passing period because of the size of the campus. Paul felt it would have been really difficult to adjust to the schedule and rotating classes if he did not have his cousin with him to help him understand the process. The length of the classes was also longer for all of the students. Jacob felt that the length of the classes made it difficult to stay focused throughout the entire class period.

The academic honor system also presented some challenges to the students. Brian found it difficult to understand the honor system and the concept of plagiarism. He explained that in China “we memorize things and recite them and it can be hard to know what you can use here without being trouble.” Jacob also found it difficult to understand what information he was allowed to use in his writing without it being considered cheating. Paul would sometimes copy homework assignments from his classmates because he struggled to complete everything in the time that was allotted. He understood this was cheating but he felt it was necessary to complete his work and to receive a high grade.

**Working in small groups.** Participating in small group work was one of the most difficult academic adjustments for the students. All the students were initially uncomfortable working and participating in small groups regardless of the nationality of the group members. Working in small groups was an academic strategy that none of the students had any experience with prior to St. Anthony. Language was one of the challenges associated with small group work. The students also avoided studying in small groups during study hall, although they would have been more open to group study if American students were involved. Once the students embraced the process of small group work, they were able to start bridging the gap between themselves and the American students. There were 20 specific references relating to working in small groups.

Language was the primary obstacle to participating in small groups regardless of the nationality of the group members. Brian expressed the difficulties of working with American students:

it took time to adjust. At first if I am in a group with all American and I feel like my skill is junk and I can't speak anything because I feel that if I speak wrong they will laugh at me and they will not understand what I say.

Although Brian was initially afraid of communicating in a small group he eventually realized that "most of the American student understand that we are foreign student and that we don't speak English as our language." Brian did not experience any American students teasing him about his English during small group work. Seth would try to work with Chinese students during small group activities because if the teacher was not paying attention he could speak Chinese with his group members instead of English. Seth eventually realized that this was not an effective strategy for improving his English. He explained that Chinese students should try not to "always work with other Chinese students. It might be easier and make you feel better but then you won't be friends with day students and it's the best chance to communicate with them."

Seth, Brian, and Jacob all found it difficult to trust other students to contribute the necessary content to small group work. Jacob was afraid that his ideas would not be represented when he was the only Chinese student in the group. Seth found it difficult when he would disagree with one of his group members explaining that:

doing project and with partners because when we have different advices maybe it is hard for us to do this and usually do it together with students and to do the classwork it is just uh, hard to do at first.

They were more familiar with being the only person responsible for the grade that they would receive and found it difficult to understand how other students could contribute to the grade that

they would each receive. Paul was confused by the whole concept of group work. He explained that in:

history class doing group work after that I was really confusing in why you would do that and after that when we first met the group I felt it was really helpful to study because you should talk to each other and after that if you don't know the knowledge you can ask your group and they can help you to find the answer. It was really helpful.

All of the participants found small group work to be helpful both academically and socially once they accepted the concept of working with other students. Brian explained that small group work “really helped me to know more friends and to practice more and I have to speak language.”

Evening study hall presented an opportunity to study together with other students and to receive support from a resource teacher. Seth thought it was nice to be able to review vocabulary and to be able to ask the resource questions. Despite the help that Seth received from the resource teacher he felt that it would be nice to “have study groups with day students and not just international students at night” because the American students can help them with their language and tended to be more helpful in the study of vocabulary and other concepts.

**Homework and testing.** Homework and testing presented a number of challenges to the participants. Most of the students were unfamiliar with turning in homework assignments for a grade. All participants stated that the amount of homework was less than what they received in China although it took more time to complete because it was in English. They were also all surprised to learn that their grade was comprised of more than just midterm and final exams. There were 11 specific references to homework and testing.

The process of completing homework to turn in during class was a significant adjustment for all participants. Although they all had experience completing homework on a daily basis, it was usually just checked for completion in China. Jacob explained that “we don’t have participation points like in America where we have participation and it include homework, but like in our school the middle and final test are whole grade” and that the homework was mainly practice for the tests as opposed to a component of the grade. Jacob was not prepared to have to turn in homework assignments. He explained:

There was homework in [history] class and I had wrote down answer in the book and then [he] ask to collect and I was so embarrassed because I had done it in the book but it was just not on paper to hand in.

Paul had a similar experience in his English class. He completed an assignment by writing in the book as opposed to on a separate sheet of paper to turn in to the teacher. He explained that “homework is not nearly as important as it is in America. We don’t really have graded, it is more like how we find ability to handle the problems that will be on the test, the final.” All of the participants were accustomed to their grades being determined by their performance on a small number of comprehensive tests as opposed to an accumulation of classwork, homework, and tests over the course of the semester.

Language presented a challenge for the participants in completing their homework. Reading assignments were especially difficult because of the English. Robert found his religion reading to be time consuming because it was a topic that he had no previous experience studying. Brian also found language to be a challenge in his homework. He felt that although he had less homework than he had in China, it took him much longer to complete because all of the work

was being completed in English. Language was also a challenge when it came to written assignments. Jacob found it difficult to adjust to typing essays in English as opposed to writing by hand in Chinese. He was not used to the layout of the English keyboard for typing and that presented additional linguistic challenges for him.

### **Social Adjustment**

Elements relating to social adjustment emerged in both interview sessions, but were primarily involved in the first interview session. Some social elements emerged in the second interview session in relationship to communication with other students and interaction with teachers. Social issues were also a key component of the questionnaire completed by a member of the resident life staff for each participant. Throughout the data coding three social issues emerged: 1) making friends with American and international students; 2) communication with students, faculty, and staff; 3) maintaining relationships with family and friends in China.

**Making friends with American and international students.** All the participants were able to easily make friends with other Chinese students in the resident program and they all struggled to make friends with American students. This was consistent with previous research addressing the challenges international students faced studying in a different country (see McMahon, 2011; Popadiuk, 2009; and Yeo, 2010). Once they became friends with some American students it tended to help them to feel accepted in the school community. All five participants identified their teachers as being influential in helping them establish friendships with American students, although none of the participants felt that they had developed any close friendships with American students. The Chinese students had a strong desire to support one another so that they all could be successful. Two of the participants were involved in issues

relating to bullying with other international students. One of the two was not willing to discuss the topic during the interview and did not want to be identified as a victim of bullying. There were 33 specific references relating to the issue of friendship.

The Chinese students were very supportive of one another especially during the first few weeks at St. Anthony. Jacob explained that “actually the first few months every one stay to their own and groups not like each other” but that once they spent some time together and they “have same class and study and eat and have lives together we get to know each other better.” Robert and Paul both made friends easily with other international students because of their family members who were at St. Anthony with them. Seth felt that the older Chinese students were very helpful and tried to explain elements of life at St. Anthony that they struggled with when they first came to the school.

None of the students were able to develop close friendships with American students. Paul explained “I don’t know why but you cannot really make good friends with Americans. I mean you can be a friend but you are not really.” Jacob also experienced difficulty in making friends with American students, especially during the first couple of months at St. Anthony. He felt that “it’s kind of hard for me to make friends with day students at first because I kind of, well actually in China I am not that shy but when I came here I became really shy.” Language and communication were issues for the participants in that they did not have the confidence to try to speak with American students outside of class. Paul explained his difficulties in communicating as “the first year when I come here I like really scared to you know make American friends because I think my English not really good and that I cannot talk to them a lot and I was really scared.” This fear of speaking with the American students led Paul to spend most of his time



with other Chinese students because he was more comfortable communicating with them.

Robert accepted that it would be difficult to make friends with American students because of what his cousin had shared with him. Robert explained that “I would like to be American friends and go to their house and be part of it but I know I Chinese and that friends are different and communication is bad so it is ok.” Robert also felt that some of the American students may not have wanted to be friends with him because of how he would speak Chinese in the classroom with his Chinese classmates. He shared that “If you speak Chinese in class the kids will see [you] as less important.”

Seth, Robert, and Jacob all reported that playing sports helped them to meet more American students. This was consistent with the findings of Popadiuk (2010) who found that participating in extra-curricular activities helped international students to develop friendships. Seth felt that his golf coach “really helps us and it makes us friends with other people on the team.” His teammates were the American students that he was closest with, although he did not consider them to be close friends. Robert had a similar experience through playing football and baseball. Brian was able to develop friendships with a small number of American students because of their common interest in video games. He considered himself an expert at video games that are also popular with some of the American students. Once the American students discovered this they wanted to talk to him and ask him questions about the games. The discussions about video games served as a bridge to other conversations.

Bullying and hazing were not identified as significant issues by the student participants although the resident life staff questionnaire identified concerns that had developed involving two of the participants. Both participants were asked about the incidents during the second

interview but only one of them was willing to discuss the issue of bullying. All the participants felt that there was a certain degree of joking that occurred between the boys but none of them initially identified it as bullying. Robert did not experience any bullying but he had witnessed other resident students being teased. Robert explained that it was mostly “not very nice like [their English] language or how they dress” but that it was mostly “joking around” and not meant to be hurtful. Jacob felt that bullying and hazing was “kind of part of the life but we are all, well some other students if one student is not nice to me I will just ignore him or her.” Paul was one of the students who was involved in incidents relating to bullying. He upset a couple of other Chinese students with his teasing and joking. He shared that:

I mean you know, when we are joking around he maybe get really pissed and then we start talking to each other and after that being around him and when I go back to China and then want to call him and after that he doesn't answer me.

The resident life staff met with Paul about the bullying concerns and he eventually realized that other Chinese students “have emotion and after that they have to know you are joking around and if not you are going to make relationships really bad.” He felt bad about he had treated other Chinese students during the first year and worked extremely hard to try and rebuild those relationships and change his behavior throughout the remainder of his time at St. Anthony. One participant was identified as having been bullied but he did not want to discuss what had occurred and he did not want me to identify him as a victim of bullying. Previous research (Arndt & Luo, 2008; Kwon, 2009; and Wenxin & Jones, 2000) identified Chinese students as being an at-risk population for bullying and hazing. Arndt and Luo (2008) identified teachers as being influential in preventing the bullying of Chinese students. All five participants identified

teachers as being influential in helping them develop relationships with other students and this could be a reason that bullying was not identified as a significant problem for the participants.

**Communication.** Communication was one of the most significant challenges that the participants faced during their first year at St. Anthony. Most of the issues relating to communication involved the use of English and the lack of comfort and confidence in English language abilities. There were 31 specific references related to communication.

Communication in English was a significant challenge that all the participants faced during their first year at St. Anthony. The participants identified both a discomfort with speaking English to the American students and a discomfort speaking English with other Chinese students. This was consistent with Kwon's (2009) findings that identified English language proficiency as a factor that led to feelings of discomfort and intimidation. Communication was identified as a barrier to the development of relationships between the participants and the American students. The participants were able to accept that their English language abilities would not be as strong as their American classmates, but they identified a concern with other Chinese students teasing them or making fun of their inability to communicate in English.

Jacob was especially concerned with speaking English in front of other Chinese students. He explained that:

it is, um, actually hard to speak in class with Chinese students. I know my English is not as good, as good as day student but I don't want other Chinese students to see me have hard time with my English. It's really bad to have, um, other Chinese student laugh at my English so I don't want to speak in class with them.

During his first year at St. Anthony, Jacob would try to only speak Chinese with other Chinese students. This also influenced his willingness to participate in class when there were other Chinese students present. Paul did not experience any American students teasing him about his English but he was very afraid of speaking English in front of other Chinese students. He explained that “with other Chinese students I try not talk too much English so they don’t hear it.” Brian felt that the American students were more understanding of the difficulties in communicating in a second language than his Chinese classmates. He felt that “most of the American student understand that we are foreign student and that we don’t speak English as our language.” Communicating in English contributed to Robert changing his social behavior. He described himself as a very outgoing student at his previous school but that when he arrived at St. Anthony he did not:

want to look bad for either [American or Chinese students]. But I see Chinese student more and I know they will make fun if my English bad. American student expect my English to be bad but I still shy and a little nervous for it.

Seth also experienced feelings of being shy around other students, both American and Chinese, because he was concerned with communicating in English. Communicating in English remained a challenge for all the participants at the end of their first year at St. Anthony.

**Maintaining relationships with family and friends in China.** All participants identified maintaining relationships with family and existing friends who were still in China as a challenge. Part of the challenge was the physical distance and time differences. They would all try to communicate with their parents on a regular basis but found it difficult to maintain close

relationships with their Chinese friends while they were at St. Anthony. There were 17 specific references relating to the challenges of maintaining existing relationships.

All participants communicated with their parents at least once a week through either Skype or the phone. Seth would try to Skype with his parents at least once a week during the break in evening study hall around 8 pm. The time difference made it difficult to communicate at other times. Seth would reach his parents before they left for work in the morning. Robert would call his parents almost every day during the school week because his mother was worried about him. He would use Skype on the weekends when both he and his family had more time to talk. Paul would “usually talk on phone almost every day during night time when they just wake up. And it just be good things.” All of the participants would try to call their grandparents during special holidays especially during the Lunar New Year. Jacob felt that it was difficult to be away from his family during the New Year holiday and that he had to call his grandparents even though it did not make up for him missing the holiday celebrations.

Communicating with existing friends was more of a challenge than communicating with family members. Paul felt guilty trying to contact his Chinese friends because he knew that they had more school work to complete and that they would be studying for their college entrance test. He explained that his friends in China “need to study for final tests and something else so they are also busy so I couldn’t really talk to them.” Seth shared this feeling and the only time he would communicate with his Chinese friends was through “chat online or through video games.” He did not remember a single instance of calling one of his Chinese friends on the phone. Robert also stated that his Chinese friends were too busy with their studies to be socializing with him. This contributed to his feelings of homesickness because he felt like he

was losing friends that he had known since childhood because he was attending a school in a different country.

### **Emergent Domains**

During the data coding process the domains of emotional adjustment and autonomy both emerged. Certain emotional concerns like homesickness, loneliness, and fear did not easily fit with any of the existing domains so the domain of emotional adjustment was added. Practical issues relating to living on one's own for the first time also emerged in the coding process. I identified those issues as being related to the development of autonomy and caring for oneself leading to the addition of the domain of developing autonomy.

**Emotional adjustment.** Emotional adjustment emerged as a domain primarily relating to the issues of homesickness, loneliness, and fear. I had originally categorized homesickness as a social experience relating it to the relationships that the individual had with his family and home life. Throughout the interview and data coding processes, the issue of homesickness was clearly more than just a social issue and invoked more of an emotional response from the participants than any other issue discussed in the interviews. This led me to create a new domain relating to emotional adjustment. Emotional adjustment differs from the social category because it involves personal emotional issues as opposed to issues relating to relationships. The key issues identified in this domain were homesickness and a general sense of being afraid.

**Homesickness.** Homesickness was one of the most important concerns identified by the participants. All the participants acknowledged experiencing homesickness during their first few weeks at St. Anthony. Homesickness continued to be an issue for four of the five participants throughout their first year at St. Anthony. There were 22 specific references relating to

homesickness in the interviews. The two most common elements associated with homesickness were missing interactions with parents and having to eat different types of food.

All five participants experienced some degree of missing their family throughout their time at St. Anthony. One of the most common ways that they would cope with the feelings of homesickness was to call their parents on the phone multiple times throughout the week. The frequency of phone calls varied with Jacob participating in the fewest phone calls with 3 per week and Paul demonstrating the greatest frequency at almost every day. Robert felt that his English teacher understood what he was experiencing with homesickness and made an effort to help him to meet other students to start making new friends. He also felt that his feelings of homesickness began to decrease as he became busier with his school work and with athletic practices. Jacob found that having to make new friends contributed to his feelings of homesickness. Jacob explained that he:

kind of felt uncomfortable and my first few months were not very well because I could not make good friends and if I had a bad day I would not be in a good mood and I had no one to talk to so I would have to wait and call back to my friends in China.

Jacob did not really begin to effectively cope with his feelings of homesickness until he began to develop friendships with students at St. Anthony.

Homesickness was also an issue after returning to school from the Christmas break. Over the Christmas holiday the participants returned home. Brian felt that “homesick problem right after Christmas break even more serious then when they just come from America” because he had an opportunity to return home and spend time with his family and he missed his family even more than when he first arrived at St. Anthony.

Homesickness was especially difficult for Paul. He was unsure that he would have been able to manage his feelings of homesickness without his cousin at the school. When Paul arrived at the school he explained that “I just want to cry.” Paul really missed his mother and his primary means of coping with his feelings of homesickness was to spend time with his cousin and family friend from China. He explained that “when I really miss my parents, and after that I see my cousins after that I thinking that it is ok right now.” This created a challenge for Paul when his cousin graduated. Paul continued to experience feelings of homesickness and had to develop a new coping strategy. Paul explained that even during his final year at St. Anthony “I still miss my home, but now I can go with my friends to do other things to forget about miss home.”

Changes in diet contributed to feelings of homesickness. This was consistent with the relationship between food and homesickness found by Gu et al., (2009). Jacob associated food with homesickness explaining that “I also miss the food in China because Chinese food is better.” Brian also identified food with homesickness and acknowledged that he had “to prepare to accept other things like dining structure because you won’t really have a chance to get Chinese food and have to be ready for it.” Adjusting to the different food and the feelings of homesickness had a negative impact on Brian. He explained that at first he “was very upset and not very friendly and ordered lots of food and it was bad for a couple of weeks” until he could adjust to eating things other than Chinese food.

***Sense of being afraid.*** All five of the participants experienced some feelings of fear or a sense of being afraid in coming to school at St. Anthony. This sense of being afraid tended to



begin when they first learned that they would be moving to the United States for school. There were 15 specific references to being afraid.

The initial sense of being afraid was often associated with the thought of moving far away from home and having to study and live in a country with a different linguistic background. Jacob explained that although he was excited for the opportunity to study in the United States he also was “Scared ... because my English skills.” This feeling of fear because of the language was also shared by Robert and Paul. Paul was not confident in his English language abilities and explained that “you know actually it’s like in China, I am kind of scared for English. I do not like to speak English a lot and that is why when my mom first tell me about it I was really scared.” Feelings of fear over the language also led to feelings of loneliness. Jacob explained that “when I first came here I was kind of afraid to talk to other people because I was from another country. And this made me really kind of lonely and scared.”

Feelings of being afraid extended to the process of having to make friends with American students. Paul and Robert specifically mentioned being afraid of making new friends who were American instead of Chinese. Robert was afraid that American students would not be able to understand him and that they would make fun of him. He explained that “here we only speak English so when I come here will I talk to American and make friends because I am nervous that somebody will don’t understand what I am talking about.” Brian was also afraid that he would not be able to communicate with the American students and that they would make fun of him or they would think that he was not very smart. He explained that “I feel like my skill is junk and I can’t speak anything because I feel that if I speak wrong they will laugh at me and they will not

understand what I say.” Despite his fear of being made fun of, Brian did not experience any American students making fun of him for his English language abilities.

**Developing autonomy.** Autonomy emerged as a domain relating to issues involved with living away from home for the first time. Although two of the participants had prior boarding school experience, this was the first time that each student lived a significant distance away from their family and were unable to receive regular contact and support. The physical distance from their families created a situation in which the student had to learn to be responsible for his well-being. Although the school does have adults living and working in the residential halls, the relationship between these adults and the students is different from the relationship that the students had with their parents. Three key issues emerged in this domain: 1) managing money on their own; 2) responsibility for their own well-being; 3) time management.

**Managing money.** Managing money on their own was an issue that emerged for all of the participants. This was especially challenging for two of them because they came from socio-economic backgrounds where they were never concerned with the amount of money that they were spending. Their parents would deposit money into a school sundry account for them and then they would request money from the account each week. There were 14 specific references relating to managing money. Money management was not included in the new resident student orientation program.

One of the key elements of managing money was having to purchase things that they felt they needed for their studies on their own without the help of their family. Brian needed to order a computer when he arrived at the school and he had never had to do that without the help of his parents. Brian worked with the school’s information technology department to order a computer

and to make sure that the computer was properly set up for him to be able to complete his school work. The first computer he ordered had a mechanical defect and had to be returned to the company. Brian did not know what to do and experienced a sense of helplessness in having to wait for the technology director to help him communicate with the company that made the computer.

Paul and Robert both experienced difficulties in budgeting the money their parents had deposited for them over the course of the semester. Paul was accustomed to always buying the most expensive items because he associated cost with quality. He explained that while living at St. Anthony he learned “how to save my money and to get a cheaper thing instead of always the most expensive. In China I never do that my mom used to buy everything for me.” Paul was initially unable to manage the money that his parents deposited for him and ran out of money before the end of the semester. He had to contact his parents and ask them to send more money to the school to help him to make it through the rest of the semester. Paul explained that the experience was very “embarrassing, feel very shamed to have to ask for money. Like I let her down.” Robert had similar problems with managing his allowance and shared that he had to learn how to be “smart with it. Not always buy whatever is most expensive because only so much money in allowance.”

***Well-being.*** Managing their own well-being was a challenge for all five of the participants. This included elements such as personal hygiene; body weight and fitness; and maintaining a balance between social time and private time. There were 31 references relating to managing their own well-being.

Personal hygiene was a challenge identified by all the participants. Jacob and Seth were the only students in the group who had ever washed their own clothes before moving to St. Anthony. Paul had to learn how to sort his laundry by different colors before washing. Robert had difficulty remembering to do his laundry until he was out of clean clothing and would have to wear clothes again. Seth sometimes found it difficult to gain access to one of the washing machines. He felt “there are not enough of them for all of us.” Paul also complained about experiencing difficulty in getting quarters from the residential life staff for the machines. He felt they did not usually have enough quarters available for the number of students who had to wash their clothes. Two students discussed how they sometimes would skip showering in the morning if they were running late for class. Robert explained that “sometimes two or three days and I know I don’t smell good but it so hard to wake up early enough and sometimes all the shower are busy so you just have to skip and go to class.” Maintaining a clean room was the final element relating to personal hygiene. Only Seth and Jacob had any experience in cleaning their own room and that was only while they were previously living at a boarding school.

All five participants also identified concerns over body weight and fitness. This was partially related to the changes in their diet from the dining structure. Jacob gained ten pounds during his first semester at the school and this was a factor that helped motivate him to join the basketball and swim teams. He felt that he needed to be active to help manage his body weight. He also explained that “sometimes there is too much fried food so have to remove the outer part because it is too fat and then the sauce. Also have to skip the sauce.” Jacob was concerned that the food was not as healthy as what he was accustomed to in China and made a conscious effort to avoid some of the fattier foods in the dining room. Robert was also concerned about his

weight and activity level especially because he felt that the food was not very healthy. He explained that “the food no healthy. Some food have too much suger and actually the Mexican food really bad and fatty.” He joined the football and basketball teams because he felt it was a good way to help watch his body weight. Paul joined the basketball team and exercise but would also spend time in the weight room with his cousin. He was afraid of gaining weight and felt that if he did not exercise he would “become embarrass because of being fat.”

Personal well-being also involved finding a balance between social time and private time. This was a challenge for all the participants and was often associated with sharing a room with a roommate. Although all the participants identified being happy with their roommates in general, they all also acknowledged that there were times when it was difficult not having a space that was their own. Jacob found this especially challenging during his first few months at the school. Sometimes he would be upset and would just want to be alone so that he could Skype with his family. His roommate was not always willing to leave the room for him to be alone and this was frustrating for Jacob. Paul experienced some difficulties regarding the cleanliness of his room. He was much more conscious of maintaining a clean room than his roommate. He expressed his frustration when his roommate would “leave dirty clothes from practice out. It always make room smell bad and I don’t like see sweaty clothes.” Robert enjoyed having a roommate who he could talk to when he was upset but also felt that it was difficult to find time to just be by himself. His roommate spent most of his time in the dorm room playing games on the computer. Robert explained that “sometimes I so tired and just want to lay down, quiet, but it was hard to be alone. My roommate always there on computer.” Robert also felt that having a roommate

who spent significant time playing computer games encouraged him to spend time playing games instead of doing school work.

***Time management.*** Time management was also identified as a challenge by four of the five participants. Issues with time management involved using study hall time effectively to complete all of their school work. There were 13 specific references to time management issues.

Jacob experienced difficulty in taking responsibility for managing own time, especially during study hall. He explained that:

even though we have study hall we can study in our room so sometimes in the beginning I would play computer games or watch videos but that did not help because my grade was kind of bad so it, it make me have to manage my time better and get more self-control to do my work that I need to do.

Paul and Robert also identified issues with taking responsibility for their own study habits during study hall. Paul had difficulty managing the freedom of studying on his own. He would often spend time during study hall playing games on the computer instead of working on his English. Robert experienced difficulty in focusing on his homework without his parents or a teacher supervising him. He explained that:

in the beginning I have a little problem but then I learn to work by myself. I have a little bit because in China when I go home my mom would always tell me to do homework and see tutor but in here it is myself. Dorm staff say to, but it is not like my mom telling me.

Seth felt that he would not have spent as much time studying if not for the study hall time. He would often spend study hall in the resource center instead of his dorm room because he would complete more of his work if he were in the resource center.

Time management issues also related to sleeping habits. Jacob would regularly stay up late studying vocabulary for the SAT test because he had wasted time during study hall. Paul said that sometimes he would watch videos on his computer instead of going to bed at the appropriate time. He had a wireless card through his cell phone company that allowed him to bypass the school internet restrictions. The school's internet service restricted the web sites that students visited, blocked computer games from accessing the internet, and was only accessible during certain hours. Robert also experienced difficulty in going to bed early. He explained that it was "easy to play video game because your parent not there to check and can hide from dorm staff if you hear. So just have to be careful to still sleep." He could hear when the dorm staff were coming through the hallway checking the rooms for lights still being turned on so he would cover his computer so they would not see any light under his door.

### **Application of Conceptual Framework**

The application of the conceptual framework provides for a stronger understanding of the findings. Environmental constructivism is essential for understanding that the Chinese students' experiences at St. Anthony will be different than the experiences of their American classmates because of differences in their prior experiences. Social justice is essential in understanding the vulnerability of this student population. Catholic Social Teaching is essential for framing the responsibilities of a Catholic school in aligning their mission and beliefs with the practices in regards to international students.

Environmental constructivism provides a foundation for understanding the experiences of the Chinese students. Teachers and administrators must be aware that the prior experiences of this student population were different than those of the American students. Constructivism helps

to explain some of the challenges that the Chinese students faced in adjusting to the daily routine of both life in America and the classroom environment. Their experiences in the PRC provided the background knowledge that they brought with to St. Anthony. Experiences like turning in homework, changing classrooms during the school day, managing money, and washing their own laundry were all new experiences that did not fit with their previous knowledge. This presented a challenge to them in adjusting to these tasks and developing an appropriate place for their own knowledge of these new tasks with their existing knowledge of life from the PRC.

Social justice provides the foundation for understanding how students are members of a vulnerable population. All the participants came from privileged socio-economic backgrounds in the PRC. Once they arrived in the US they became a vulnerable population. They had to adjust to challenges such as life away from their families, studying in a second language, developing new friendships and relationships, and caring for themselves. This created an environment where they become a vulnerable population in the US despite their privileged situation in the PRC. The school must acknowledge that the Chinese students are a vulnerable population in order to successfully implement the policies and practices necessary for ensuring that the Chinese students do not become an oppressed or marginalized group in the school environment.

The application of Catholic Social Teaching is essential for ensuring that the practices of the school align with its mission and values. A Catholic school has a higher obligation to care for vulnerable student populations because of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. St. Anthony needs to make sure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are being applied and implemented in the policies and procedures of the residential and academic programs so that the Chinese students are not being utilized as financial tool for the school.



## **Conclusions**

Although my research question originally specified the three domains of academic adjustment, social adjustment, and cultural adjustment, the emergent domains of emotional adjustment and autonomy were essential for understanding the experiences of the participants. The cultural adjustment domain was insufficient to adequately address the importance of cultural differences in adjusting to life at an American boarding school. Culture is more appropriate as a lens for understanding the experiences of the Chinese students. The conceptual framework also serves as a means for understanding the importance of these findings.

## **Recommendations**

My recommendations for change fall into three categories: 1) adjustments to the orientation program; 2) academic support; 3) school policies and professional development. Adjustments to the orientation program could help to provide important information to the incoming students and serve as a platform for developing relationships with other international students and American students. Appropriate academic support can help to ease the difficulties the students face in studying in English. Reviewing school policies relating to the residential program and professional development promoting general cultural awareness can help the faculty and staff to be more aware of the challenges facing these students.

## **Orientation Program**

The new resident student orientation program (see Appendix E) could serve as an opportunity to provide support for a number of the challenges that were identified in this study. Four areas where the orientation program could be modified to provide better support for the

Chinese students are: 1) involvement of American day students; 2) practical issues in living away from home; 3) a simulated school day; and 4) food.

**Involvement of American day students.** All five participants identified experiencing difficulty in developing friendships with American day students. Although there is no single way to guarantee that particular students will become friends, St. Anthony could be more proactive in encouraging the development of friendships between Chinese and American students through increased American student involvement in the orientation program. The orientation program provides many opportunities for American students to interact with Chinese students.

American students could serve as student leaders during some of the academic and introductory sessions. Different service clubs at the school could volunteer to be involved during the orientation program to allow the Chinese students to work together with the American students in small groups before classes begin. Returning American students could help to lead the Chinese students around campus and provide their own perspective on some of the general challenges in being a high school student. American students could also be involved in some of the social activities that occur during the orientation program. The two orientation program sessions that covered the issues of homesickness and making friends and bullying and hazing could both provide opportunities to include American students from one of the service clubs or from campus ministry. Including American students throughout the orientation program could help the Chinese students to be more comfortable around their American classmates and hopefully to develop friendships with American students.

**Practical issues in living away from home.** All the participants experienced some degree of difficulty in living away from home for the first time. The orientation program addressed the issues of cleanliness and laundry but missed other key elements of living away from home. Two specific challenges that could be addressed in the early stages of the orientation program are money management and time management. Students could be taught how to create a budget for the money their parents have deposited into their sundry accounts. This can help the students to avoid situations where they have to ask their parents to deposit additional money into the account. The students need support identifying the daily household items that they need to purchase in living away from home. The issue of time management could be addressed during the orientation program. Students could create calendars to gain an understanding of how much free time they will have and how much time they will have for studying. They need to receive guidance in budgeting their time for homework at St. Anthony differently than when they were in China. Although the quantity of homework is likely to be less than what the students experienced in China, the amount of time required to complete the homework is likely to be greater because the homework is being completed in English instead of Chinese. This could be addressed when study hall is introduced to the students during the orientation program

**Simulated school day.** One component of the orientation program could be a simulated school day. This could address some of the challenges that the participants experienced in adjusting to a school day that is structured different than the Chinese school day. A simulated school day could help familiarize the students with the process of moving from one classroom to the next. This could help the students to adjust to using a locker for storing their school books

and to practice bringing the appropriate materials to each different classroom as opposed to having all of their materials in one classroom as they had in China. A simulated school day could also help the students to become familiar with the campus and the best routes for crossing the campus quickly in the four minute passing period. This could help to prevent confusion in classroom locations and help them to be better prepared with the appropriate materials for each class.

**Food.** Food was identified by all participants as an element that contributed to their feelings of homesickness. All participants chose to order familiar types of food as opposed to eating the dining room food during their first two to three weeks at St. Anthony. Considering that over half of the students are Chinese, St. Anthony could investigate possible options for providing ethnic food during the first two weeks of the orientation program. The school could strive for a balance between providing Asian food for the large Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean population while also offering appropriate dining options for the non-Asian students. Providing ethnic foods during the initial adjustment period could help to alleviate some of the feelings of homesickness, show the students that the school is sensitive to the challenge they face of immediately adjusting their diets, and reduce the possibility that students are eating separately from the rest of the resident population.

### **Academic Support**

Achieving success studying in English was a challenge for the participants. Providing greater academic support during the initial adjustment period could help the students to be more successful over the course of their academic career at St. Anthony. Two ways that the school could provide greater academic support are to have English language development classes

instead of traditional English classes and to require all first year students to attend a supervised study hall.

**English language development classes.** All participants identified low levels of confidence in their English language abilities upon arrival at St. Anthony. They were also all enrolled in an English support class that corresponded with their traditional English class. Even with the support class, all of the participants experienced challenges in studying in English. One tool that could be utilized to help the Chinese and other international students who do not possess a certain level of fluency in the English language would be to implement an English language development class that the new international students would attend instead of the traditional English class. Although this could present a challenge in scheduling, creating a strong English language foundation is essential to the long-term success of these students at St. Anthony. This class could help to alleviate some of the stress that the Chinese students experience in trying to study and complete coursework in English while they are still developing the foundations of their English language abilities. This class should be taught by an English as a second language specialist to provide the students with an expert on English language learning. An additional benefit provided by an English language development class is that the support period could be utilized to provide English language support for their other academic classes. This class could help to alleviate the challenges that Chinese students face with plagiarism in research papers as found by Kingston and Forland (2008).

**Supervised study hall.** Supervised study hall should be mandatory for all first year residential students. Time management was identified by four of the five participants as a challenge, especially in regards to the effective use of study time. Requiring supervised study

hall for all first year residential students could help to ensure that the students maximized their study time. Mandatory supervised study hall could remove any negative stigma associated with visiting one of the two resource teachers during the evening study period and could provide the students with greater access to support from the resource teachers or their classmates because they would be in a group environment instead of by themselves in their dorm rooms. Supervised study hall could also help to eliminate the challenge the students faced in spending their time studying as opposed to watching movies or playing video games on their computers. Coleman (2002) found that mandated study periods were one tool that boarding schools utilized to provide academic support for international students.

### **School Policies and Professional Development**

As long as the residential population at St. Anthony continues to be predominantly Chinese, the school should review its policies relating to the residential program and implement some cultural awareness professional development that focuses on Chinese cultural and educational practices.

**School policies.** St. Anthony should review some of their policies relating to the residential program. The school should review the practices of the residential program to check for alignment with the mission and values of the school. St. Anthony should also establish a protocol for reviewing the experiences of students in the residential program and include that protocol in their assessment and evaluation of the residential program. A standardized protocol could help to ensure that the school meets the needs of all students in the residential program. The school also could look for methods to incorporate this element of social justice and

vulnerability into the religion classes to raise awareness of the social justice aspect of international students studying in American schools.

**Professional development.** American and Chinese cultures are very different and the school faculty and staff could benefit from focused professional development. Focused professional development could help account for differences in how the Chinese students and American teachers construct knowledge of events and experiences based on their backgrounds. This professional development could be different for new and returning faculty with an extended introduction to Chinese culture and education provided for new faculty members. Increasing the cultural awareness of the faculty and staff could help them to provide better support for the Chinese students.

### **Future Research**

Future research is also needed to determine if the challenges faced by female Chinese students and students of other international origins are similar to those faced by male Chinese students. Although all international students are likely to experience similar challenges, the differences between cultures could influence the experiences of students from different ethnic groups. This study could be replicated for other student populations to determine the challenges those students face in adjusting to life at an American boarding school.

If I were to replicate this study in the future, one of the elements that I would choose to focus on would be the comparison of experiences based upon gender. Although this study provides insight into the experiences of male Chinese students, I would be interested to see if female Chinese students experienced similar social and emotional challenges or if their challenges were significantly different based upon gender. Observing the participants in the

classroom and the residential program also could have possibly provided some different insights into their lives. Observations were omitted from this study because I judged that my presence in their classrooms or around their activities outside of the classroom could have altered their normal behavior in those situations.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an analysis of the domains that were anticipated and also emerged throughout the research process. This chapter also provided recommendations in three categories that resulted from the shared experiences of the research participants. Through implementing these recommendations, St. Anthony could provide better support to their male Chinese students and ensure that the students have a positive experience transitioning to life at their new school and truly become a part of the school community. Chinese students are becoming an integral part of the American boarding school community because of the economic conditions in China. More research is needed to trace the experiences of these students and the structures being put in place to support their transition to American schools. This research is just a small step towards the goal of providing social justice for this vulnerable population.



## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol Session 1 – Social/Cultural/Initial Adjustment Elements

*The purpose of this interview is to explore the question of challenges that international students face in adjusting to life at a boarding school in the United States. Today will focus on initial adjustment and some social and cultural elements. The second interview will focus on academic adjustment and will expand on some themes discussed in this interview. Remember that you can choose not to answer any question and may stop at any time. In my dissertation your name will be changed. In the report given to the school, all identifying information will be removed.*

1. Tell me about your background – age, any previous boarding school experience, extracurricular activities and interests, do you have any family living in the United States, any previous travel to the United States
2. Why did you come to St. Anthony? (do you have any family or friends that have attended St. Anthony or a different boarding school in the US)
3. Did you have any say in the decision to attend school in the United States?
4. What was your initial reaction when you found out that you were going to be attending a school in the United States?
5. Did you experience any homesickness during your first six months at St. Anthony? (What were some of the signs that you were experiencing feelings of homesickness? How did you cope with that homesickness?)
6. How often do you communicate with your parents or other family from your home country? (And by what means, what do you talk about?)
7. When you first arrived at St. Anthony, did you have enough time to adjust to the time zone difference before classes started? (Is this still an issue when you travel home?)
8. What was your experience in interacting with the residential life staff?
9. What was your experience in making new friends at St. Anthony? Did you make many friends outside of your own cultural group? Did you experience any bullying or hazing from other students?
10. Before coming to St. Anthony, did you have much experience with different types of food? Has it been a challenge adjusting to the food and dining structure at St. Anthony?
11. What were the most significant changes that you had to make in your daily life in adjusting to life at St. Anthony?
12. What are the religious traditions of your family? Had you attended a Catholic mass before coming to St. Anthony? (How did you feel when you first attended mass here?)

13. Do you think attending a boarding school will have better prepared you for college? Why or why not?
14. Think back to when you arrived at St. Anthony. What was something that happened that you found to be especially challenging. Try and imagine it in your mind. Imagine what happened, when and where it occurred, who was involved, and any words, actions, and feelings that you remember.
15. I would like you to again think back to when you arrived at St. Anthony. What was something that happened that you found to be especially helpful to your adjustment. Try and imagine it in your mind. Imagine what happened, when and where it occurred, who was involved, and any words, actions, and feelings that you remember.
16. If you had the opportunity to make one recommendation to an incoming Chinese student about the daily life at St. Anthony, what would it be?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your initial adjustment to St. Anthony?

*Thank you and closing*

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Protocol Session 2 – Academic & Other Elements

*The purpose of this interview is to explore the question of challenges that international students face in adjusting to life at a boarding school in the United States. The first interview focused on initial adjustment and some social and cultural elements. This interview will focus on academic adjustment and will expand on some themes discussed in the first interview. Remember that you can choose not to answer any question and may stop at any time. In my dissertation your name will be changed. In the report given to the school, all identifying information will be removed.*

1. Tell me about your academic background. Did you attend public or private school? What language was the primary language of instruction at your previous schools?
2. Describe a typical school day at the last school you attended in your home country? How long was the school day? What classes did you take? Were there many extracurricular activities? How large were the classes?
3. What role did homework play in your previous school? Was homework considered to be important? How does that compare to the role of homework at St. Anthony?
4. What type of technology was available to you at your previous school? Has adjusting to the use or lack of use of technology been difficult?
5. How did you study in your home country? Did you study individually or in groups? Was study time primarily at home or school? How late would you stay up studying?
6. How old were you when you began to study English? Did you have confidence in your English language abilities before attending St. Anthony?
7. What was your experience in interacting with the teachers in the classroom? Did you ever visit a teacher after class to ask questions or receive additional help? Why or why not?

8. What were the most significant changes you had to make to your academic life in attending St. Anthony?
9. Has preparing for the SAT been a factor in your study habits? (For 9th grade students: Have you begun to prepare for the SAT? Do you think preparing for the SAT will influence your study habits?)
10. Think back to when you arrived at St. Anthony. What was something that happened that you found to be especially helpful to your academic adjustment. Try and imagine it in your mind. Imagine what happened, when and where it occurred, who was involved, and any words, actions, and feelings that you remember.
11. I would like you to again think back to when you arrived at St. Anthony. What was something that happened that you found to be especially challenging to your academic adjustment. Try and imagine it in your mind. Imagine what happened, when and where it occurred, who was involved, and any words, actions, and feelings that you remember.
12. If you had the opportunity to make one recommendation to an incoming Chinese student about academics at St. Anthony, what would it be?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your academic experiences at St. Anthony?

*Thank you and closing*

## APPENDIX C

### Faculty Questionnaire

Faculty Questionnaire

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Study Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide a data triangulation point in my research study exploring the question of challenges that Chinese students face in adjusting to life at a Catholic boarding school in the United States. This questionnaire focuses on the student's behavior in the classroom. Remember that you can choose not to answer any question and may stop at any time. In my dissertation any identifying information will be removed.*

1. Please describe the social interactions of this student. Does he spend most of his time by himself or is he involved with other students? Does he interact with primarily Chinese students or with students of other nationalities? Does the student primarily speak English or Chinese in the classroom?
2. Please describe the English language ability of this student. Is the student comfortable in speaking English in the classroom? Please describe the English language writing abilities of the student.
3. Does the student often appear tired in class? Does the student ever sleep during class?
4. Please describe the student's interactions with you. Does the student ask questions in class? Does the student come by after school for additional help?
5. How often does the student miss class? Does the student usually arrive to class on time?
6. How well does the student work in small groups? Does he take an active role in small group work? Does he choose to work with other Chinese students or students of other nationalities?
7. Is there any other information that you feel would be helpful in this study?

*Thank you*

## APPENDIX D

### Residential Staff Questionnaire

Residential Staff Questionnaire

Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Study Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide a data triangulation point in my research study exploring the question of challenges that Chinese students face in adjusting to life at a Catholic boarding school in the United States. This questionnaire focuses on the student's behavior in the residential program. Remember that you can choose not to answer any question and may stop at any time. In my dissertation any identifying information will be removed.*

1. Please describe the social interactions of this student. Does he spend most of his time by himself or is he involved with other students? Does he interact with primarily Chinese students or with students of other nationalities? Have you seen this student involved in any incidents of hazing or bullying? How does he interact with the residential life staff?
2. Please describe the study habits of this student. Does he tend to study by himself or with other students? Does he try to stay up studying past "lights out"?
3. Please describe the behavior of this student during dinner. Does he regularly order food to be delivered to the campus or eat his own food as opposed to the food provided?
4. Please describe the behavior of this student during free time. Is he involved in extracurricular activities? Does the student spend most of his free time by himself or with other students?
5. Does the student demonstrate any signs of homesickness (i.e. signs of depression, mood swings, isolation, emotional outbursts)?
6. Is there any other information that you would like to provide that you feel would be helpful in this study?

*Thank you*

## APPENDIX E

### New Resident Student Orientation Schedule 2011

- August 3:
- New Residents arrive on campus
  - New residents go through different stations in the administration office to make sure health forms, tuition, and academic schedules are in order. Then they are escorted by student ambassadors to the dorm where the resident life staff checked them in and gave them their key and room assignment. Resident life staff completes any missing paperwork with parents or guardian.
  - One resident life staff greeted new residents and their families at the Los Angeles International Airport.
  - Quick meeting with all new residents on basic safety procedures for the night.
- August 4:
- Resident life staff and director of admissions led new student treasure hunt around campus. The treasure hunt aided in orienting them to different locations on campus, through the history of Villanova, and helped them to get to know each other and the resident life staff.
  - Resident life topic: Health, safety, and emergency procedure practice.
- August 5:
- Local trolley tour and ice cream.
  - Resident life topic: chores, cleanliness, and laundry
- August 6:
- Trip to Century 16 Movie Theater
  - Open pool: new residents did a swim evaluation and learned pool safety rules with a life guard, students that did not attend were mainly those that either do not like to swim or did not know how to swim.
- August 7:
- Open pool
  - Open gym
  - Mass
- August 8:
- English support classes
  - 3 on 3 basketball tournament.
  - Resident life topic: typical weekend, typical weekday, weekend checkout procedures.
- August 9:
- English support classes

- Wildcat tribe introduction
- August 10:
- English language classes
  - Trip to county fair.
- August 11:
- Trip to Griffith Observatory and Los Angeles Museum of Natural history
- August 12:
- English language classes
  - Pool party and BBQ
- August 13:
- Beach day in Santa Barbara
  - Mass
- August 14:
- Trip to Dodgers vs. Astros Baseball game
- August 15:
- English language classes
  - Mock study hall
  - Resident life topic: emergency procedures practice and campus boundaries, including walking tour of boundaries.
- August 16:
- English language classes
  - Open gym with the girls' volleyball team
- August 17:
- English language classes
  - Trip to Ventura Harbor
  - Resident life topic: homesickness and making friends
- August 18:
- English language classes
  - Trip to Santa Barbara Mission and UCSB tour
  - Resident life topic: bullying and hazing



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