

Updated Cross Cultural Entry Model for China – Jeff Hottinger

Some of what has worked for me before will not be as possible going to China, and thus I require a new cultural entry model. However, I had several strengths in my previous plans and experiences that will still be relevant, and I will maintain those features as I prepare to spend time working in China.

Key for my previous cultural entries within the MSOD program, as well as my general tendencies when travelling or otherwise interacting in social space, is a high drive to understand and when possible emulate and participate in the key societal behaviors. I am fascinated by human behavior in general, am compelled to try to fit in when I can, and deeply interested in learning more about any environment I visit. In France and Costa Rica, that meant with some preparation I could almost pass as a local at a glance. Adding a scarf and a sport coat and learning a handful of French phrases helped me feel pretty average wandering around town and taking public transit in a way that I really enjoyed and I may have even slipped by a couple of shopkeepers unnoticed in Lyon and San Jose with a well-pronounced “merci” or “gracias” and the right amount of cash payment.

There will however, be no slipping by unnoticed in Beijing nor Datong. I won't be able to blend in physically and I have almost no mandarin skills save the knowledge of how complex the pronunciation is. While I will work on some basic phrases to hopefully show appreciation and make an effort to conform to my environment rather than expect the opposite, overall this will be a lesson in knowing myself and leaving space for discomfort and standing alone in ways that I have not in other travels.

There are some additional areas of experiencing China that I will be on the lookout for too. One aspect that served me in my visit to France especially, but also in Costa Rica to an extent

was a favoring of the local culture as compared to my own. I wouldn't hesitate to say that while visiting Lyon I felt I was in an outright superior place to live compared to the mixed but still appreciative stance I take towards my homeland. I can't presume that I will feel the same way in China, although in some dimensions I might.

Comparing Hofstede's cultural indices for China and the United States, I think the high power distance in China and low individualism will be the areas that activate me the most, although I am also super interested in understanding more about the high long-term orientation that I may see facets of. Other dimensions such as a lower uncertainty avoidance may be comforting to me, while much lower indulgence scores I anticipate and am looking forward to seeing how I react. The similar masculinity rating between China and the United States I'm sure I will find tedious and familiar.

At large I've come to think that the best way to prepare to enter another culture is to be aware of where my personal values lie and that they are indeed personal and not universal. I think I will be well served by my personal interest in exploring and learning about different cultures and have loosely held assumptions that will set me up to learn quickly and deeply and adapt rapidly to whatever I may encounter. The preparatory readings and videos I've watched have fundamentally inspired an expanded curiosity and reduced the assumptions I am carrying with me as this trip nears. I believe that I can do a few things to prepare myself such as learning key phrases as any tourist might, being ready to not be one amongst the crowd, and learning as much as I can before I arrive; but my biggest preparation will be in accepting what I don't know and creating personal space for taking in new, unexpected, contradictory, and hopefully amazing information that I did not have before.