Good morning. My name is Deborah McCurdy and this is my last presentation at Youngstown State University. My topic this morning is Negotiating China: The shift to individualism.

In America, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. In China, the nail that sticks out the farthest gets pounded down. Welcome to the world of the cultural divide.

America and China have become standard models for comparing cultural individualism and collectivism because of their cultural diversity and economic growth. Parker, Hayto and Hermans, 2009 define individualism as putting oneself ahead of the group, as is common in America, and collectivism as putting the group ahead of oneself, as is common in China. Historically, these labels have been widely accepted without challenge, until now.

Researchers have identified certain variables that suggest a cultural change is happening. According to Hamamura, 2012, the new generation of Chinese is experiencing dialectic tensions where tradition is being challenged by modernization.

Today's lecture will discuss how culture shapes individualism and collectivism, the effect that individualism and collectivism have on conflict behavior and how modernization is changing the playing field.

SLIDE – Individualism-Collectivism

Kitzmann, Cohen & Lockwood 2002 tell us that socialization is a learned behavior. Kitzman and Hamamura 2012 found that parents are the primary socializing agents responsible for teaching behavior styles that have been carried across generations as part of one's cultural heritage. Hamamura and Warden 2009 define cultural heritage as a collection of beliefs, norms, values, attitudes and behaviors that are associated with the group in which one is raised. Liao and Bond 2011 found that people's exposure to culture shapes how they perceive and behave, in essence … who they are … individual or collective.

Let's see how culture influences conflict behavior.

SLIDE – Conflict Behavior

Oetzel et al. (2001) defines conflict as an incompatibility of values in which there is an interference with the realization of goals. Conflict can either be perceived or actual, which influences a person's assessment of the situation and selection of conflict behavior.
In today's business environment, dyadic relationships between Chinese and American individuals are occurring more frequently, giving the parties the opportunity to influence each other.

There are many concepts and variables associated with conflict behavior. Today, we are going to examine four of them. The first is face.

SLIDE - Facework

Oetzel et al., 2001 tells us that face is a concept that originated with the Chinese culture. Face is the public image people display and it is instilled in Chinese children by their parents. It involves prestige, honor and reputation. It is a social value that functions differently across cultures because **culture** **manages** **identity**. In individual societies, the face of the individual is more important than the face of the group. The opposite is true of collective societies.

Liao & Bond, 2011 reported that face plays an important role in regulating interpersonal communication. Self-construal, is a result of one's cultural upbringing, which influences face. Oetzel and Toomey, 2003 define self-construal as how one sees oneself; in other words self-image.

Independent self-construal is associated with dominating conflict behavior (America) and interdependent self-construal is associated with avoiding and integrating conflict behavior (China).

Oetzel and Toomey (2003) found that the Chinese displayed a shift to independent self-construal which has, up until now, always been associated with individualistic cultures.

Next is Ingroup/Outgroup Status.

SLIDE – Ingroup/Outgroup Status

Forbes et al., 2011 define ingroup status as the group a person feels a part of (family) and outgroup status is a group that a person doesn't feel a part of.

In Chinese culture, they say that conflict with ingroup members is generally forbidden. However, with outgroups, conflict is not only tolerated, but sometimes even encouraged.

Liao & Bond, 2011 found there is an expectation of the Chinese people to avoid conflict; and Liu (2009) suggests that when conflict occurs with outgroups, the tendency is to use a conflict style that is usually associated with **learned** **behavior**.

Next is Power Distance.

SLIDE – Power Distance

Forbes et al., 2011 define power distance as the degree to which a culture accepts or rejects unequal distribution of power.

America is a small power distance culture. We believe that authority is earned, power is equally distributed, and everyone's opinion matters. The individual is highly valued. China is a large power distance cultures. They believe authority is inherited, power is from top to bottom, and opinions are guarded. The group is highly valued.

And, finally we'll look at Gender.

SLIDE – Gender

Forbes et al., 2011 defines gender as being either male or female and reports that it greatly influences facework and conflict behavior. It was found that conflict behavior in men is more aggressive, is influenced by gender in outgroups, and is based on the tendency in society for men to hold positions of higher authority than women, according to Bowles & Flynn, 2010.

In addition, based on the research of Warden and Chen, 2009, men behave more competitively than women. In fact, Bowlby, McDermott and Obar (2011) revealed that Chinese

men have a high inclination toward Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is defined as using any means possible to maintain power through the use of craft, deceit and cunning. This appears to be incompatible with traditional Chinese values.

National cultures may be slowly converging due to modernization.

SLIDE – Modernization

Hamamura, 2012 defines modernization as the change, which occurs in the cultural landscape due to social and economic development. It was found that following Chinese tradition is seen as less important and has become an obstacle to the goals of the younger generation. Smaller family size, urban living, new technology, consumption, mobility and Western influence are consequences of modernization that change cultural individualism-collectivism. Parker et al. (2009) found that cultural, social and psychological changes may be indicative of a shift toward a more individualist society in China. They believe that as China experiences rapid economic growth and progresses as an industrialized nation, their culture will be under pressure to adopt individualist ways.

Ralston et al. (1999) found that the generation one grows up in is crucial to further understanding modernization. Bowlby et al. (2011) concur as they found that convergence, divergence and crossvergence play a role in the changing rates of individualism and collectivism. **Convergence** is the acceptance of new values as a result of economic growth; **Divergence** is the theory that culture dictates values, and **crossvergence** is a mixture of both. So you see, traditional roles are changing.

SLIDE - Summary

In summary, we are born into a family who teaches us behaviors that have been handed down by generations through cultural heritage. Those behaviors form who we are and how we perceive, which then influences our assessment of situations and selection of conflict behavior. Modernization adds to the influence, causing a change in social behavior patterns due to cultural crossvergence. It's changing the way we think, it's changing the way we perceive; it's changing the very foundation of individualism and collectivism. It's changing the face of tradition as we know it.

SLIDE – Limitations and Future Research

Which leads me to my research questions and the reasons I selected this topic to begin with. I was very fortunate to visit China for two weeks last August. In America, we talk about overpopulation and the problems associated with it but I don't think it has as great an impact as when you step off that plane and begin to share the same space with 1.3 billion people. That's when it hits you. Then I started thinking about China's one child policy as the solution to overpopulation and realized they were creating an entire society of only-children, which is very interesting to me **because I am an only child**.

The funny thing about research is that you start off thinking you know exactly where you're going to end up. I didn't find what I was looking for because the research hasn't been done yet.

So, while these articles did a fair job at dissecting cultural variables, there was no evidence of sibling status and the possible effect status may have on conflict behavior or sibling status and gender as a combined effect.

Let's set the stage.

SLIDE – Only Children

Kitzman et al. (2002) found that behavior learned from family interaction **creates the guidelines for conflict behavior.** Only children have less social competence than children who have siblings, may be better versed in adult interaction, and tend to be dominated by more self-seeking interests. Children with siblings may be better versed in conflict negotiation due to interaction with more family members.

SLIDE – Same Gender Situations

Bowles and Flynn (2010) studied adult social interaction in negotiation and found that differences between men and women were more pronounced in **same-gender situations**. Men are considered competitive and women are considered cooperative. Strategy and choice of conflict behavior depends on the gender and status of the opponent.

SLIDE – One Child Policy

China is an enormous laboratory for social research. Harrison, 2006 tells us it is a country that is home to the largest population on the planet: 1.3 billion people. In an effort to control the population, China instituted the One Child Policy in 1979, which limits one child per family. Myers, 2005 reports this law has greatly modified the family composition. (Demonstrate: the family tree has turned into a twig.)

In addition, cultural ties to tradition remain important **so much so** that boys are still viewed as more valuable than girls because they will carry on the family name. If a daughter is born, she

is most likely given up for adoption or abandoned. One out of every four children who are adopted in America come from China and almost all of them are girls.

I interviewed a woman who moved to America from China so she could have more than one child. She says "the new generation of only children is self-centered and not traditional. There are many more boys than girls. There is discrimination in the workplace if you are an only child because only children have no team concept and are very hard to manage."

There is also an intense pressure to have a son in China. Ebenstein, 2011 tells us that gender selection is a strategic part of family planning in China, which has caused a gender imbalance. In 2007, a higher ratio of male to female births was reported, which meant that for every 118 boys, there were only 100 girls. Myers (2005) reported that out of 39 children in a classroom, 28 were boys. My business partner in China told me that 7% of men in China may never find a wife. This equates to 91,000,000 men or 10 times the population of New York City.

SLIDE – Research Questions

China's population of only-children is just coming of age and behavioral research is virtually non-existent.

RQ1: Will China's OCP have an effect on conflict behavior, particularly as it applies to its creation of a society of male-dominant only children?

RQ2: Will China's OCP be partially responsible for a shift from traditional collectivism to contemporary individualism?

SLIDE - Conclusion

To conclude, a paradigm shift is occurring in cultural individualism and collectivism in America and China because of modernization. Economic development paves the way for increased consumption, new technology and emphasis on individual rewards and we are becoming products of our environment. Will the nuclear Chinese family of three contribute to a more individual society? And what about the unintended consequences of an entire society of only children who are predominantly male? The effects on China's future have yet to be determined.

I can't help but wonder what price China will pay for this whirlwind of change.

I guess that's for the next research student to discover.