

“To know the system and know the culture is difficult”
Understanding the cultural adjustment process
of teachers from China working in U.S. K-12 schools

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, both teachers, who instilled in me a high level of respect for the teaching profession; and to my Chinese host family, who opened their home to me when I was sixteen years old, and who witnessed and guided many of my early attempts to understand Chinese culture. It was during that time that the seeds of this research were first planted deep within me.

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Abstract

This qualitative case study investigates the cross-cultural adaptation that teachers from China and Taiwan encounter during their careers as Chinese language teachers in K-12 schools in the United States (U.S.). The theoretical framework draws on Hall's (1959) integrated theory of culture and Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions theory to frame a review of existing literature about the growth of Chinese language instruction in the U.S. and the ways in which teachers from China and Taiwan adapt and adjust to U.S. school culture. Through interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, this research highlights the extent to which cultural difference plays a role in how teachers from China and Taiwan understand and interpret U.S. K-12 school communities. This research also identifies challenges and support systems that teachers from China and Taiwan encounter during their early years as teachers. The findings indicate that there are significant cultural differences between the K-12 school cultures in China and Taiwan and those in the U.S. School administrators should be more aware of the cross-cultural adaptations that are required of teachers from China in order to teach in U.S. schools. The process of identifying their common challenges and understanding support systems will help schools identify ways to improve the cultural adjustment process for new teachers from China. Recommendations include conducting a pre-service orientation for new teachers from China, specifically one that addresses differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures; assigning new teachers from China to mentor teachers; providing principals, mentor teachers, and other U.S. American colleagues with opportunities to learn about Chinese culture; and offering ongoing professional development opportunities for

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teachers from China, including sessions on cross-cultural topics in education and opportunities for teachers to discuss these topics in their native language. These measures will help these new teachers understand, adjust, and adapt to U.S. K-12 school culture and become highly qualified teachers of Chinese language and culture.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The research problem

Over the past 30 years China has seen unprecedented economic growth and increasing influence on the world stage. In order to remain competitive, the United States (U.S.) has identified a need to increase the number of U.S. Americans who are familiar with Chinese language and culture. As a result, Chinese language instruction is growing in popularity in K-12 schools across the United States. To meet the increase in demand for Chinese language teachers, many schools hire native Chinese speakers who have not previously worked as teachers in the United States. In many cases, these native speakers were born and educated in China or Taiwan and do not have first hand experience in the U.S. K-12 education system or its workplace culture.

The cultural differences between the Chinese and U.S. education systems are significant. It should not come as a surprise that teachers who have not been introduced to the U.S. K-12 education system are often under-prepared for their new jobs. New teachers might be surprised by many differences in school culture, including knowing the roles of teacher, student, and parent; learning to manage student behavior; understanding cultural differences associated with grades and test scores; and recognizing that Chinese language instruction is not included in the core curriculum at most U.S. K-12 schools. Their success may be supported by strengthening a variety of English language skills; developing a strong relationship with mentor teachers and fellow Chinese language teachers; and by getting support from U.S. American co-workers and principals who are

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aware of the differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures. Teachers from China and Taiwan may also need to adjust the expectations they have of their students, colleagues, administrators, and themselves.

Related research

Many scholars and researchers in the fields of education and psychology have addressed cultural difference in teaching and learning. There is a significant body of literature about teaching methods for diverse and multicultural classrooms, including the important theories of culturally responsive teaching (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Another related body of literature addresses the construction of identity among teachers working in schools where they are considered a minority (Benyon, Ilieva, Dichupa, & Hirji, 2003; Galindo, 2007; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). Additionally, the cross-cultural challenges faced by U.S. people teaching in China have been documented in popular literature and memoir (Hessler, 2001; Holm, 1990; Mahoney, 1990). While these sources would provide interesting topics for investigation, these bodies of literature are beyond the scope of this research, as they do not specifically address the cultural differences faced by Chinese people teaching in K-12 schools in the United States.

This study is specifically interested in the cultural differences between Chinese and U.S. K-12 schools, and the ways that these differences influence the relationships that teachers from China and Taiwan form with their U.S. students, colleagues, and supervisors. This study does not address methods of instruction, but rather focuses on the workplace environment of U.S. K-12 schools and the importance of supporting Chinese language teachers in their careers. This in turn supports the growth of quality Chinese

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language instruction and the development of U.S. students who have an understanding of Chinese language and culture.

To understand the cultural differences that teachers from China face when they start teaching in U.S. K-12 schools, it is important to first understand their culture of origin. Literature is used to illustrate how teachers in China form a professional identity, and the role of school as a workplace in contemporary China (Light & Works, 1984; Paine & Ma, 1993; Su, Hawkins, Huang & Zhao, 2001). These works explain the specific cultural situation of teachers who work in China and illustrate some of the cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese K-12 education systems.

Cross-cultural issues in education are not unique to the situation of Chinese teachers working in the United States. This paper draws upon research about other immigrant teachers in Australia, and Canada (Benyon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001; Benyon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2004; Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006; Peeler & Jane, 2005). This body of literature helps to situate this study within a larger context of cross-cultural challenges in education and can provide examples of how teachers from other countries and cultures respond in similar situations. Some existing literature does address the cross-cultural experiences of teachers from China working in U.S. American schools, which were particularly valuable to this research (Gao, 2010; McGinnis, 1994; Wang, 2009)

In addition to scholarly articles, this paper also draws heavily upon practical publications. The Asia Society has published several handbooks designed to support the growth of Chinese language programs in the U.S., specifically addressing the needs for capacity building through teacher recruitment and teacher development. One guide

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specifically addresses the logistics of hiring teachers from China and preparing them for success in U.S. K-12 schools, but it does not discuss the cultural adjustment process that is the focus of this paper.

Deficiencies in the related research

The literature reviewed for this paper provides a foundation for understanding both visible and invisible aspects of the U.S. and Chinese education systems. It also provides insight into the challenges faced by teachers who are not native to the cultures in which they teach. Unfortunately, there is very little research that addresses the cross-cultural differences that teachers from China and Taiwan encounter during their U.S. teaching careers. Recommendations for how U.S. K-12 schools can address the problems related to the adjustment and adaptation of teachers from China—including recruitment, development, and retention of teachers—are also missing from the literature.

I argue that the specific differences between Chinese and U.S. school cultures must be identified and discussed in the practical literature about preparing new teachers from China for teaching in the U.S. classroom. Culture-specific content will provide practical information for teachers and administrators who are involved in developing and strengthening Chinese language programs in K-12 schools. Edward T. Hall cautioned, “simply talking about ‘cultural differences’ and how we must respect them is a hollow cliché” (1976, p. 63). This paper admittedly includes extensive discussion about cultural differences in education and encourages respect among teachers from different cultures. However, these detailed descriptions are intended to help readers understand that teachers from China and Taiwan enter the U.S. American educational culture with little transferable knowledge. The two-way exchange of information about cultural differences

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between U.S. and Chinese educational cultures can reduce the number of assumptions that teachers and administrators make about both cultures. Ultimately, the betterment of U.S. K-12 Chinese language programs is at the center of this investigation.

The significance of this study

The increase of Chinese language education programs in the U.S. is directly related to China's rapid economic growth. Because the relationship between the U.S and China is based on mutual understanding, both the U.S. and Chinese governments have created initiatives and designated funding to increase the number of U.S. K-12 students learning Chinese language and culture. In the U.S., Chinese is considered a critical language. Several federally- and privately-funded initiatives have been designed to encourage more U.S. citizens to interact with China, a country that represents a mix of opportunities and threats to U.S. interests. In China there is an interest in expanding the number of U.S. Americans who have an understanding of and appreciation for Chinese language and culture. The Chinese government provides funding to support Chinese language initiatives worldwide, an activity that is sometimes referred to as growing China's soft power (Kurlantzick, 2007). These specific initiatives to increase the study of Chinese will be described in the literature review.

Chinese language instruction at the K-12 level is one major component of the initiatives designed to increase the U.S. population's understanding of Chinese language and culture. In the education community it is widely accepted that the teacher plays an important role in producing students who are motivated and successful. In order for more U.S. students to be motivated and successful in learning Chinese, it is critical that schools recruit, develop, and retain good Chinese language teachers. Their successful adaptation

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and adjustment to U.S. K-12 school culture is critical to the development of quality Chinese language programs, and to the success of U.S. American students as future linguists, diplomats, and cultural specialists.

Many U.S. schools with growing Chinese language programs have difficulty recruiting and hiring trained and certified Chinese language teachers. Duncan, Stewart and Wang (2006) acknowledge that teacher recruitment and development is a challenge because the “infrastructure for Chinese language teacher preparation is not yet systematically established” in the United States (p. 22). Stewart and Livaccari (2010) state “the most significant barrier to the expansion of opportunities for students to learn Chinese is the lack of trained and certified teachers” (p. 5). One way that communities have attempted to overcome this lack of infrastructure and expand Chinese language offerings is by hiring native Chinese speakers who have not yet been trained or certified to teach in the U.S. While native speakers are valuable to any foreign language program, there are several concerns to this approach. Many native Chinese speakers did not receive their K-12 education in U.S. schools, and do not have personal experiences with the culture of primary and secondary education. In addition, those that have not gone through a teacher education program lack the theoretical framework and the practical experience that is learned and practiced in a formal teacher education program. Without these experiences and skills, teachers from China and Taiwan may experience difficulties during their first years of teaching, which may dissuade them from continuing in the profession.

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In order to maintain and expand the teaching of Chinese language and culture in U.S. K-12 schools, colleagues and school administrators must provide support to Chinese teachers who are new to the U.S. K-12 school culture and have not yet been trained or certified. This support for Chinese language teachers is important at the level of the school community, as well as on broader levels of public policy and international relations.

At the school level, retention of Chinese language teachers is important to schools and communities. Previous research has demonstrated that the first year experience has an influence on teacher morale, commitment to teaching as a career, and the number of years they intend to stay in the profession (Weiss, 1999). Native Chinese speakers may leave the field of teaching if they are unclear about expectations, marginalized, or isolated during their first years. Individual teachers who are unhappy may move from state to state and district to district until they find a supportive community. Both scenarios lead to situations in which schools must hire and train a revolving door of under-trained language instructors to teach their students. This type of constant change and inconsistent instruction puts strain on individual learners as well as their schools and school districts.

At the level of national policy and international relations, there is a critical demand for growth in the number of U.S. Americans who understand Chinese language and culture. The U.S. government has officially identified Chinese as a critical language, a designator given to languages of which the demand for bilingual speakers outpaces the supply. These languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Portuguese,

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Persian, Russian, Swahili, and Turkish, are considered critical to U.S. national security and economic competitiveness. The U.S. falls far behind the rest of the world when it comes to systematic foreign language education (Simon, 1980). In China, students from urban areas begin learning English by third grade, and rural students begin learning English by their first year of middle school. Chinese college students who do not major in English still achieve enough fluency to read an English language newspaper (Lin, 2002). Developing a community of successful Chinese language teachers is one critical piece of the broader goal to develop a community of U.S. Americans who are skilled in communicating across the cultural barriers that separate U.S. American and Chinese populations. Efforts should be made to ensure that we do not alienate these teachers.

The statement of study purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand more deeply how teachers from China and Taiwan adjust and adapt to K-12 school culture in the United States. This study will specifically investigate the situation of eight Chinese language teachers in one suburban Minnesota school district. It aims to explain that cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese K-12 education systems drive the expectations and behaviors that challenge teachers from China and their U.S. American colleagues and administrators. It draws upon Hall's theory of culture to frame a discussion of cultural difference and uses Hofstede's dimensions of cultural difference as a framework to explain teachers' expectations and experiences working in U.S. K-12 schools.

Research questions

The central question that will be addressed in this paper is "How do teachers from China adapt to teaching in U.S. K-12 schools?" This question is explored through the lens

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of cultural difference by asking additional questions, including: “how do teachers from China describe the cultural differences between Chinese and U.S. schools,” and “what resources do teachers from China use to seek to understand the differences between school cultures?” Additionally, I will attempt to answer specific questions including “what assistance does the K-12 school community provide to new teachers from China?” and “what resources and information can be helpful to new teachers from China?” and “how can U.S. American colleagues and administrators support new teachers from China to improve the teaching and learning experience?”

Research methods

This research presents the results of a case study of teachers from China and Taiwan who work in one suburban Minnesota school district. The case study includes interviews with eight teachers, observations of two Chinese language teacher meetings, and document analysis, including a review of the materials provided at a new teacher orientation at the beginning of the school year.

This chapter introduced the research problem, discussed related research, and identified deficiencies in the related research. It provided a brief overview of the significance of the study, the research questions, and the methods that will be used in the research. The next chapter provides a review of literature that summarizes the growing demand for Chinese language education in the U.S. and the shortage of trained and certified Chinese language teachers. The chapter then outlines the theories of cultural difference that may explain the challenges faced by teachers from China when working in U.S. K-12 schools. Finally, the chapter identifies some of the key differences between the U.S. and Chinese education systems and provides a comparative examination of teacher

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education and teacher socialization in each country.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the situation of teachers from China and Taiwan working in K-12 schools in the United States (U.S.). It briefly introduced relevant literature, discussed gaps in the literature, and explained the significance of this research. This chapter provides a more in-depth review of the related literature. This chapter begins with a discussion about the recent growth of Chinese language instruction, the increased demand for Chinese language teachers, and an overview of several ways that U.S. K-12 schools are recruiting and retaining teachers to meet this critical need. The next section includes a discussion of theories of cultural difference and specifically explains the theoretical framework that is used to identify the specific cultural differences between the U.S. and Chinese education systems. The next section includes descriptions of the educational systems in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. The final section includes literature about the effects that cross-cultural situations have on different groups of teachers, including short-term guest teachers, and teachers who are recent immigrants.

The growth of Chinese language instruction in the U.S. and in Minnesota

Chinese language instruction is growing in popularity across the United States. While the nation-wide tracking of K-12 foreign language enrollments in Chinese continues to be non-systematic, several measurements can be used to illustrate this growth. In 2010, the Center for Applied Linguistics published the results of a national survey conducted in 1997 and 2008, which found that there was a statistically significant

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increase in the number of elementary schools and secondary schools teaching Chinese.

Elementary programs rose from 0.3% to 3% of schools with foreign language programs and secondary programs rose 1% to 4% of all secondary schools offering language programs. The study found that 7% of private secondary schools with language programs offered Chinese (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010). The Asia Society and College Board collected data that indicated that Chinese language was being taught in 263 U.S. K-12 schools in 2004, and by 2008 that number had risen to 779 schools, demonstrating an increase of more than 200% in a period of four years (Stewart & Livaccari, 2010). While these studies are helpful in illustrating the growth in the number of schools offering Chinese, they can only be used as a proxy to indicate an increase to the number of students studying Chinese. Draper and Hicks estimated that in 2000 there were approximately 5,003 students in grades 7-12 studying Chinese in U.S. public schools (2002, p. 19). In 2010 a survey funded by the U.S. Department of Education found that there were 59,860 public K-12 students studying Chinese during the 2007-08 school year (Stewart & Livaccari, 2010).

While consistent data on the number of students studying Chinese in U.S. K-12 schools is hard to find, data on the number of students studying Chinese in Minnesota is more comprehensive. Data collected by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota indicate that in 2007-08 there were 5,572 K-12 students studying Chinese in Minnesota's public schools. By 2009-10 that number had grown to nearly 10,000 (The Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota, 2009, p. 2). Minnesota's rapid growth in the number of students studying

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Chinese may suggest that there has been a significant rise in the number of U.S. K-12 schools teaching Chinese in the five years since the Center for Applied Linguistics conducted their most recent national survey.

The rapid expansion of Chinese language instruction in Minnesota during that two-year period was a direct result of U.S. and Chinese government initiatives that supported the development of new and expanded Chinese language programs in Minnesota K-12 schools. These initiatives have helped expand Chinese language instruction around the U.S. and are one reason that the supply of qualified Chinese language teachers cannot keep up with the demand. These initiatives are described more fully in the sections below.

U.S. initiatives to increase Chinese language instruction. Several U.S. initiatives have helped increase the number of K-12 students studying Chinese language and culture and provide professional development for their Chinese language instructors. These initiatives are funded by a variety of government agencies with an interest in world language education, including the U.S. Department of Education, the National Security Agency, the Department of Defense, and the State Department. Private funding has also supported several of these programs.

In 1988 the U.S. Congress passed the Foreign Language Assistance Act, which included funding to create the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), a program to provide grants to “establish, improve, or expand innovative foreign language programs for elementary and secondary school students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Beginning in 2006, FLAP grants were refocused on funding instruction in critical

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languages, including Chinese (Richey, 2007). From 2005-2010 this program provided approximately \$8.4 million to states and to local school districts across the country to develop and strengthen foreign language instruction at the K-12 level. In 2008, 59% of these grants were specifically designated for Chinese language programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Unfortunately, funding for FLAP was eliminated in 2012 and several multi-year grants were left underfunded.

In 2006 the United States government launched the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), a program of the National Security Agency with an initial request of \$114 million in funding. This project was tasked to “increase the number of Americans learning critical-need foreign languages,” including Chinese (Richey, 2007). NSLI’s initiatives include the STARTALK teacher training and student-learning programs, which between 2007 and 2010 served 7,937 students and 2,659 teachers of critical languages, including Chinese (Ingold & Wang, 2010). Additionally, NSLI created NSLI-Youth (NSLI-Y), which provides opportunities for U.S. high school students to study abroad in countries where critical languages are spoken. Since 2006, over 2,500 high school students have spent summers or academic years on NSLI-Y programs, including many in China and Taiwan (NSLI for Youth, 2011).

Other government initiatives to expand Chinese language instruction in the U.S. are funded by a mixture of public and private funding. The Language Flagship program is a partnership between U.S. Department of Defense, education departments, and business, which aims to “change the way Americans learn languages” by integrating advanced language skills with coursework in a non-language academic major (The Language

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Flagship, 2013). Chinese Language Flagships have been established at nine universities including Arizona State University, Brigham Young University, Indiana University, The Ohio State University, and the University of Oregon. The Chinese language flagship at the University of Oregon includes a partnership with Portland Public Schools, which provides a pathway for students in Oregon to study Chinese from kindergarten through university. These students begin their study of Chinese in Portland Public Schools' Chinese immersion program and achieve professional level Mandarin proficiency by the time they graduate from the University of Oregon.

In November 2009 President Obama announced that the U.S. Department of State would establish the 100,000 Strong Initiative to dramatically increase the number of U.S. students who study abroad in China. From 2001 to 2007 the number of students studying abroad in China increased by 30% annually. Despite this growth the actual number of students studying in China remained relatively small. In 2007-08 only 13,165 U.S. college students and an estimated 1,000 high school students participated in study abroad programs in China. The aim of the 100,000 Strong Initiative is to increase U.S. student participation in study abroad programs in China, reaching 100,000 students by 2014. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton officially launched this program in May 2010 as a program of the State Department. In January 2013 the initiative formally transitioned to an independent non-profit organization, the 100,000 Strong Foundation, which relies on private philanthropic support to promote, enhance, and expand the study abroad offerings in China for U.S. students, particularly for under-served students including high school students.

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In addition to these nation-wide initiatives, some U.S. state governments and school districts have dedicated funding to increase Chinese language instruction in K-12 schools. In 2006, following Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty's trade mission to China, the governor tasked the Minnesota Department of Education to initiate a state-wide research effort to provide recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature on how and why to encourage the expansion of Chinese language programs in Minnesota's K-12 schools. The results of this investigation, including a request for more than \$4.5 million over a two-year period resulted in the report *Chinese Language Programs Curriculum Development Project* (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). In 2007, the Minnesota government allocated \$100,000 towards the project, which helped fund the development of Yinghua Academy, the first Chinese immersion school in Minnesota and the first Chinese immersion charter school in the United States.

Additionally, many local school districts have initiated Chinese language instruction without the presence of statewide initiatives. At a time when foreign language instruction often does not survive budget cuts, Chinese has not seen a reduction in programs (Dillon, 2010a). In many communities with significant Chinese-American populations, Chinese language is emphasized to support the learning of a heritage language. In another example, the *New York Times* and National Public Radio reported that the school district in Bibb County, Georgia recently made Mandarin language a mandatory course for all students, starting in kindergarten. Superintendent Romain Dallemand explained the rationale for the district's new language policy, explaining that today's elementary students "will live in a world where China and India will have 50% of

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the world GDP. They will live in a world where, if they cannot function successfully in the Asian culture, they will pay a heavy price.” (McDonald, 2012). These descriptions of U.S.-funded initiatives to increase Chinese language instruction demonstrate that the growth of programs is motivated by a variety of interests, including national security, educational excellence, and global competitiveness.

Chinese initiatives to increase Chinese language instruction. The Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban (commonly referred to as the Hanban), a not-for-profit agency under the Chinese Ministry of Education, provides funding to increase Chinese language education worldwide. The largest project of the Hanban is the establishment of Confucius Institutes at universities around the world. These institutes initiate other Hanban programs in their local communities and support the growth of Chinese language and culture learning worldwide. The first Confucius Institute opened in Seoul, South Korea in 2004, and by 2011 there were 353 Confucius Institutes and 473 Confucius Classrooms in 104 countries across the world (Hanban, 2011).

In the U.S., Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms provide resources based on the needs of their local community. The Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota was established in 2008 with the mission to promote Chinese language and culture learning in the state of Minnesota, with a particular emphasis on supporting Chinese language instruction in K-12 schools. In 2009, twelve Confucius Classrooms were established in Minnesota schools. These two Hanban activities supported the nearly 100% increase of students studying Chinese in Minnesota between the 2007-08 and the 2009-10 school years.

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Many U.S.-based Confucius Institutes have contributed to the growth of K-12 students studying Chinese through the support of several Hanban programs. One of these programs is the Chinese Guest Teacher Program, which partially subsidizes the cost to hire teachers from China to work as Chinese language teachers in the U.S. for one to three years. Many schools use this program to temporarily resolve the staffing problems caused by the shortage of certified Chinese language teachers. Since 2006, more than 700 visiting Chinese teachers have taught Chinese in U.S. schools (College Board, 2012). These teachers fully staff the Chinese language program in Bibb County, Georgia that was mentioned previously. Confucius Institutes also provide teaching materials and proficiency tests for use by Chinese language teachers. In addition, they fund opportunities for secondary students to travel to China, including a high school summer camp and a worldwide Chinese language competition. In 2012 the Confucius Institute Headquarters pledged to support the United States' 100,000 Strong Initiative by funding opportunities for 20,000 U.S. students to study abroad in China (U.S. Department of State, 2012, May 4). These initiatives in the U.S. and China reaffirm that both sides have an interest in increasing the number of U.S. students who have studied Chinese language and culture.

The Chinese language teacher shortage

As illustrated in the previous section, efforts by both the U.S. and Chinese governments have resulted in the rapid growth of K-12 Chinese language programs across the United States. However, the current supply of trained and certified Chinese language teachers does not meet the demand, which has led to a Chinese teacher shortage. There are several reasons for this shortage including the limited number of

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Chinese speakers within the teacher population and the small number of teacher education programs that can provide potential Chinese language teachers with training and credentials. The rapid growth of Chinese language instruction has unearthed these challenges, and several agencies and organizations have taken steps to help address the teacher shortage. This section provides an overview of some of these challenges, and details some of the resources available to help resolve the teacher shortage.

Chinese is considered a less commonly taught language. More commonly taught languages generally attract teachers from a pool that includes a combination of English speakers who have studied the language as well as heritage or native speakers. In the U.S., the pool of English speakers who have studied Chinese is relatively small. In 2006, the Modern Language Association found that while Chinese language course enrollment in higher education had increased significantly since 2002, the percentage of language students in Chinese courses was still very low, at 4%. Comparatively, 63% of higher education language students were studying Spanish and 16% studying French (Wang, Jackson, Mana, Liao & Evans, 2010). Research has demonstrated that Asian-Americans (Rong & Preissle, 1997), and specifically Chinese-Americans (Sheets & Chew, 2002), are under-represented in the United States teaching population, which is predominantly white. These findings provide a preliminary explanation of why there are few U.S-born heritage speakers of Chinese who are teaching Chinese in U.S. schools.

There are additional challenges that reduce the size of the already small pool of U.S. Americans who speak Chinese and are interested in becoming teachers. Compared to other world languages like French and Spanish, “the infrastructure for Chinese

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language teacher preparation is not yet systematically established” (Wang, 2009). In 2010 there were only 17 U.S. colleges and universities in 15 states with Chinese language teacher education programs (Wang & Livaccari, 2010). These programs were primarily housed at large public research institutions in the northeast, west coast, and great lakes regions. With so few teacher-training programs available, many potential Chinese language teachers would need to move to a new city or state to become trained and certified to teach Chinese, adding another roadblock to the teacher certification process.

The Chinese language teacher shortage has led federal and state governments to experiment with alternative teacher preparation pipelines in order to help meet the demand. One method is to recruit short-term language teachers through visiting teacher programs, like the Hanban’s Chinese Guest Teacher Program. Some states have developed other alternative teacher certification programs to help entice heritage speakers and native speakers of Chinese to enter the teaching profession without requiring additional years of schooling. These programs allow teachers to start teaching right away, but often their teaching contract is contingent on their making continuous progress towards standard licensure or certification. Many Chinese immigrants and short-term visitors have used these alternative routes to become Chinese language teachers in U.S. K-12 schools.

There are drawbacks associated with using short-term teachers and alternative certification programs. Since the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, there have been efforts to define what makes a “highly-qualified teacher.” Studies have found that teachers who go through the process of teacher preparation courses and earn

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certification have a greater impact on student achievement than those who do not go through this formal process (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005). In order to develop strong Chinese language programs in U.S. K-12 schools, steps will need to be taken to increase the number of Chinese language speakers within the teaching profession, and to develop more Chinese language teacher training programs in colleges and universities around the country. Both efforts will lead to an increase of highly qualified teachers of Chinese and higher student achievement in Chinese language education across the U.S.

There are a few programs in place to improve Chinese language teacher preparation in the U.S. STARTALK provides grants to schools and universities to provide professional development opportunities for current and prospective Chinese language teachers. These short-term summer teacher-training programs are held across the U.S. and many provide travel stipends and residential options for teachers from other parts of the country. In addition, many of these programs provide teachers with the opportunity to earn professional development credits.

An analysis of STARTALK-funded teacher-training programs found that these programs attracted a pool of Chinese language teacher candidates that was very different from the more commonly taught languages. In a pool of 222 Chinese teachers attending STARTALK trainings in 2007, 96% were native speakers of Chinese and 96% were not born in the United States. These teachers in training were also older (46% age 40 or older) and highly educated (60% had a master's or doctorate degree), though not necessarily in an education-related field (Wang, 2009). These findings suggest that

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prospective Chinese language teachers might have a unique set of needs and require a different kind of training from the typical 20-something language teachers-in-training, who grew up in the U.S. and learned their foreign languages in a classroom similar to the ones where they will teach (Wang, 2009). These demographic characteristics should be considered when developing strategies to recruit and retain Chinese language teachers for U.S. K-12 schools.

There are some resources available to help schools understand the challenges they may face when recruiting teachers for their Chinese language programs. The Asia Society has published two handbooks for K-12 schools with Chinese language programs.

Creating a Chinese Language Program in Your School (Duncan, Stewart & Wang, 2006) provides practical information for administrators, including a chapter focused on staffing the program. This chapter identifies six qualifications of “good” Chinese teachers, including:

Has a solid background in Mandarin and speaks the standard variety (Putonghua); is well-versed in American foreign language pedagogy; is knowledgeable and skilled in managing students in a U.S. classroom; is certified or willing to pursue certification and continuing professional development; is willing to work with the school and community at large; and is proficient in English (p. 22).

As established earlier in this section, finding a Chinese teacher who exemplifies all six of these characteristics presents a challenge to many Chinese language programs. Another handbook, *Meeting the Challenge: Preparing Chinese Language Teachers for American Schools* (Stewart & Livaccari, 2010) looks more specifically at the challenges schools

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face when developing Chinese language programs. This resource provides brief descriptions of several success stories and addresses specific challenges related to recruiting and training effective Chinese language teachers. This handbook also provides recommendations to schools, universities, states, and the federal government that could help to increase the capacity to teach Chinese language education in U.S. K-12 schools.

Additionally, the white paper *The Teachers We Need: Transforming World Language Education in the United States* (Ingold & Wang, 2010) provides a blueprint for state and local governments and other educational institutions to develop stronger language education policies and programs. This white paper calls for increased language education programs, including those of critical-need languages, as one way to prepare U.S. citizens to be able to respond to the needs of an increasingly globalized world.

My research is specifically interested in the experiences of Chinese language teachers who received their K-12 education in China or Taiwan and have not had a formal introduction to the cultural differences between the Chinese and U.S. K-12 education systems. These teachers face unique challenges as they adjust and adapt to U.S. school culture while also struggling with all of the normal challenges that novice teachers face during their first few years in the profession.

In the next section I introduce the theories and frameworks that are used in this study to conceptualize and identify cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese cultures, including those of Edward T. Hall, and Geert Hofstede. I also discuss the visible and invisible differences between the Chinese, Taiwanese, and U.S. K-12 education systems.

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Cultural difference is culture-specific

The previous section discussed the growth of Chinese language instruction and the increased demand for Chinese language instructors in the United States. It discussed the trend toward hiring teachers from China to teach Chinese language in the U.S., and suggested that these new Chinese language teachers may find that they need to adjust and adapt to cultural differences when they begin working in U.S. K-12 schools. In this section I introduce Hall's integrated theory of the culture, and Hofstede's theory of cultural difference. The section on Hall provides historical information about the need to create a theory of culture and introduces his theory of high versus low context communication. The section on Hofstede's culture dimensions provides definitions of each of the dimensions and includes some examples of the culture-specific differences between the K-12 education systems in China, Taiwan, and the U.S.

Hall's integrated theory of culture. Edward T. Hall was a U.S. American cultural anthropologist whose research on cultural difference was first informed by his service in the U.S. Army during World War II, when he was stationed in Europe and the Pacific. Hall was an astute observer of human interactions and expressed disappointment with the U.S. government's ethnocentric approach to cross-cultural communications during his time in the foreign service. He claimed that as Americans, "we are not only almost totally ignorant of what is expected in other countries, we are equally ignorant of what we are communicating to other people by our own normal behavior" (Hall, 1973, p. xiii). The suggestion that our "normal behavior" reflected our culture, and that all cultures could be studied through the field of communications rather than the fields of language, history, and government was a new and important idea. Hall explained "culture

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controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual” (p. 25). This important statement, which set him apart from other anthropologists who were more focused on tangible aspects of culture including religion, language, art, and material culture, is an important foundation for this study on the cultural adjustment of Chinese language teachers.

Hall suggested that culture could be called “the silent language.” In his first book by the same name, he proposed an “integrated theory of culture” based on concepts from cross-cultural communication including theories of space and time. In later books Hall expanded on his theory of culture with the observation that culture appears in both manifest and latent forms, and that his model of culture emphasized “the nonverbal, unstated realm of culture” and that his purpose was “to raise some of the latent to conscious awareness and to give it form so that it can be dealt with” (1976, p. 16). This paper attempts to raise awareness of specific cultural differences and to give voice to the silent language of culture, in an attempt to improve the success and sustainability of Chinese language programs in U.S. K-12 schools.

High context versus low context communication. One of Hall’s important theories of culture is the identification of high and low context cultures and the related high and low context methods of communication. Hall defines high context communication as “one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” and defines low-context communication as “just the opposite; i.e., the mass

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of the information is vested in the explicit code” (1976, p. 91). Hall explains that U.S. American culture is relatively low context, meaning specific detail is often shared and direct communication is valued. China, on the other hand is an extremely high context culture where knowing the system and values is crucial to understanding what is being communicated. Hall explains that high context communication is “economical, fast, efficient, and satisfying; however time must be devoted to programming. If this programming does not take place, the communication is incomplete” (p. 101). This “programming” could also be referred to as that process of learning another culture. In the case of Chinese teachers (high context) working in U.S. schools (low context), Chinese teachers may find that their U.S. coworkers and administrators do not easily understand things that they try to communicate because they do not share this “programming.” Hall also explains the corollary challenge, that “it is often necessary in an intercultural situation for the [low context] person to have to go into much more detail than he is used to when he is dealing with [high context] people” (p. 127). This indicates that U.S. teachers and administrators who work with teachers from China and Taiwan may find that they need to provide much more detail in their communications.

Cultural comparisons. While Hall’s early research was largely theoretical and multicultural in nature, his later publications address the differences between specific cultures. Two of these comparative studies, *Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese* and *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French, and Americans* provide researchers examples of how Hall applied his general theories to the differences between specific cultures. Hall’s groundbreaking integrated theory of culture and life-

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long commitment to the discussion of specific cultural values from the perspective of cross-cultural communications opened the door for many other researchers. One of those scholars was Geert Hofstede, whose model of cultural difference will be discussed in the following section.

Hofstede's model of cultural difference. Geert Hofstede is a Dutch researcher who works primarily in organizational psychology. Hofstede's research in the fields of human resource management and cultural psychology has attempted to define and quantify some of the anthropological theories of culture that were suggested by Hall. In 1980 Hofstede introduced his four-dimensional model of cultural difference, a large-scale attempt to quantify cultural values and measure the extent of differences between cultures. Hofstede's original model was based on responses to more than 116,000 questionnaires collected from IBM employees in 40 different countries. The questionnaire asked respondents to rank their values. Hofstede used this data to identify and index values using each country as a unit of analysis. The four values he identified included individualism (as opposed to collectivism), power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity (as opposed to femininity). This model essentially provides an index of values by country, which helps to explain how culture and value systems drive behavior. Hofstede's claim is that by understanding where a country or culture falls within the model, people can better understand the cross-cultural situations that may develop in the international work environments.

Neither China nor Taiwan is among the 40 cultures included in Hofstede's original 1980 model. However, China and Taiwan have been incorporated into the model

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in subsequent research (Bond, 1988; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Hofstede has continued to refine the model. The fifth dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation was first discussed by Hofstede and Bond in 1988 and formally added to the model in 1991. The sixth dimension of indulgence versus restraint was introduced in 2010 but has not yet been fully incorporated into the model. The section that follows provides an introduction to the first five dimensions of culture difference. Each section also provides a comparison of the measurements of the U.S., China, and Taiwan for each dimension, and discusses the dimensions in an educational context. Figure 1 provides a comparison of the dimension measurements for the U.S., China, and Taiwan.

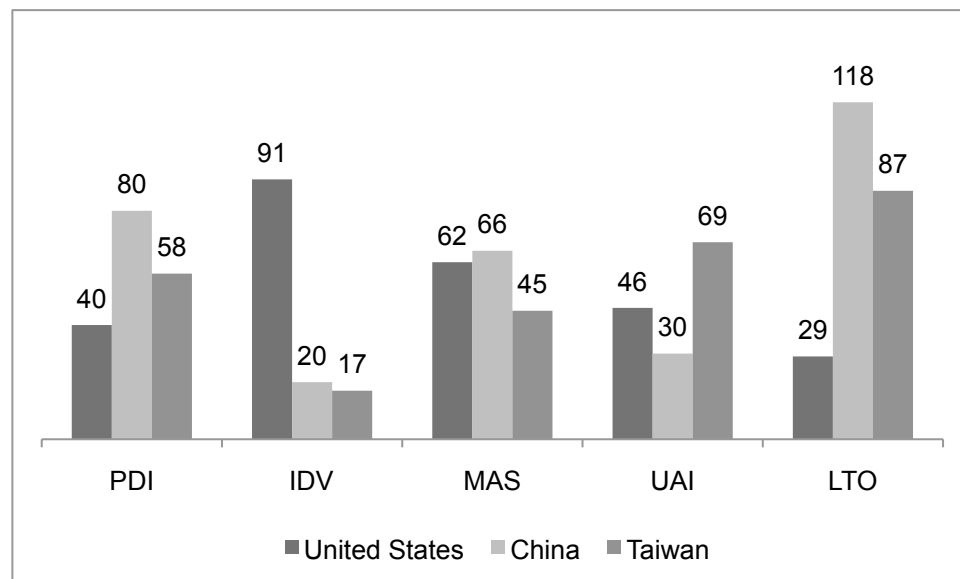


Figure 1. Hofstede's value measures. This figure illustrates Hofstede's value measures for the United States, China, and Taiwan.

Dimension: Power Distance (PDI). Hofstede describes power distance as the extent to which the people are accepting of the inequalities between those with power and

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those without. A higher score in power distance indicates that the culture is more accepting of this inequality. In line with its egalitarian values, the U.S. is considered to have low values of power distance. In China, power distance is relatively high. Taiwan's power distance is higher than in the U.S., but measures quite a bit lower than China.

From an educational perspective, cultures with low values of power distance like the U.S. would have student centered education. This lack of hierarchy encourages interactive lessons and a classroom style that is more collaborative. In the U.S. teachers place a high value on student participation, which is often more important than providing the right answer. If a teacher encounters trouble with a student, parents will typically advocate for their child rather than take sides with the teacher. Meanwhile, teachers are highly respected in cultures with relatively higher values of power distance, like Taiwan and China. The classroom style is instructive and teacher-centered, and students follow their teacher's instructions and advice. If a teacher encounters trouble with a student, the parent will likely side with the teacher and may punish the child (Hofstede, 1986).

Dimension: Individualism/Collectivism (IDV). Hofstede describes individualist cultures as cultures where individuals look out for their own interests and the interests of their immediate family members and are loosely integrated societies. By contrast, collectivist cultures are cultures where membership or belonging to a group provides security, and loyalty to the group is expected. There is a significant distance between the individualist culture of the U.S. and the collectivist cultures of China and Taiwan.

When Hofstede evaluated teacher/student interaction based on the values of individualism versus collectivism, he found strong differences between cultures. In

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individualist societies like the U.S., new ideas are encouraged, and education is often seen as a way to improve abilities and demonstrate competence. In individualist school cultures, students are encouraged to speak up and share their opinions and educational conflicts can be discussed openly. Individuals may pursue learning opportunities for self-improvement and this practical education is often more valued than degrees or certificates. In highly collectivist cultures like China and Taiwan, the educational tradition is highly respected and education is one way to gain prestige. In the Chinese or Taiwanese school culture, students only speak when they are called on, and should not contradict their teachers or question the content of a lesson. A student's educational attainment brings pride to the entire family, and degrees and certificates are highly valued and are often displayed prominently in the home (Hofstede, 1968).

Dimension: Masculinity (MAS). Hofstede describes the dimension of masculinity as being associated with the social roles typically attributed to men, and that masculine cultures strive for a stronger distinction between the roles that men and women are expected to hold in society. The cultures of China, Taiwan, and the U.S. are all considered relatively masculine.

In an educational context masculine societies encourage competition. Teachers will commend high-achieving students and academic achievement is rewarded. Students are encouraged to focus on subjects that are more closely correlated to career opportunities. In the educational context, in feminine societies classmates are encouraged to get along rather than to compete against one another. Teachers may not praise high achievers and academic failure is less likely to carry strong consequences. Academic

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subjects that do not have obvious career paths are still encouraged and considered valuable. (Hofstede, 1986). Schools in all three cultures tend to encourage competition and reward high achieving students. In this dimension, distinctions between the three cultures may not be strong.

Dimension: Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI). Hofstede describes uncertainty avoidance as a measure of the extent to which people of the culture become unsettled when they are faced with situations that are unpredictable, ambiguous, or disorganized. Generally, China is considered weak in measures of uncertainty avoidance; meaning people are relatively comfortable with higher levels of uncertainty. In the U.S., people are less comfortable with uncertainty. Interestingly, people in Taiwan have strong measures of uncertainty avoidance and are most comfortable when things are organized and predictable.

In Hofstede's exploration of this dimension in the context of teaching and learning across cultures, he explains that people in strong uncertainty avoidant cultures like Taiwan expect teachers to know all of the answers. Teachers themselves consider themselves the experts, and parents and students typically do not question their knowledge or their decisions. Students are rewarded for accuracy. When measures of uncertainty avoidance are lower, as they are in the U.S. and China, teachers are more likely to be collaborative, and students are more comfortable in unstructured learning environments. There are some questions about this dimension and debate over whether this accurately describes the Chinese educational context.

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Questions about the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. The characteristics of teaching and learning in uncertainty avoidant cultures described above contradict several of the characteristics that were used to describe teaching and learning in the first three dimensions of cultural difference. Those measures indicated that in China and Taiwan, teachers are respected and students are generally orderly and obedient. That description closely matches actual descriptions of China's educational culture. However, according to Hofstede's measures, the dimension of uncertainty avoidance in China and Taiwan should be dramatically divergent. This measure suggests that education in Taiwan should be teacher-centered and didactic, and education in China should be characterized by a teaching environment that is less structured, and where creativity and problem solving carries more importance than correct answers. Hofstede and others noted these contradictions within the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Researchers attempted to test the cross-cultural validity of Hofstede's model, which had been created by a team of Western researchers and from a Western value lens.

While Hofstede was refining his dimensional model of cultural difference, a team in East Asia was also conducting research on cultural values. In 1982, a research group administered a modified version of the Rokeach Values Survey (RVS), a U.S. instrument, to individuals in nine Asian and Pacific countries (Ng, et al.). In 1987, a research group called The Chinese Culture Connection produced the Chinese Values Survey (CVS), a survey written by Chinese scholars and based on values that were "deemed to be of fundamental importance in Chinese culture" (Bond, 1988). These scholars administered the CVS to 100 students (50 male and 50 female) in each of 22 cultures across the world.

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Hofstede and Bond reviewed the CVS data and noted that while PDI, IDV, and MAS had correlating measures in the CVS, the dimension of uncertainty avoidance was missing (Bond, 1988). Bond compared the results of the CVS to the results of the RVS results collected by Ng, et al. in 1982. His results indicated that UAI was particularly relevant in Western countries, but that an additional value dimension was at play in East Asian countries, including values that were related to the teachings of Confucius. In 1988, Hofstede & Bond suggested that there might be a fifth dimension, and named it Confucian Dynamism. The results of this study led to a strong collaboration between Hofstede and Bond, a Hong Kong-based social psychologist, and eventually to the addition of Hofstede's fifth dimension, which was officially named long-term orientation.

Dimension: Long-term orientation (LTO). Long-term versus short-term orientation is related to the search for virtue. Cultures with a strong long-term orientation feel that truth is contextual and can be different based on the situation. In these cultures, people tend to be adaptable, to value perseverance, and are more likely to save for the future. People in cultures with a short-term orientation are concerned with finding an absolute truth, value traditions, and have a desire for quick results. Based on the origins of the fifth dimension, it should not come as a surprise that China has one of the strongest measures of long-term orientation. Taiwan also measures relatively high on long-term dimension, while the U.S. is strongly associated with a short-term orientation.

This fifth dimension was not included in Hofstede's evaluation of cultural differences in teaching and learning. However, a clear understanding of the values associated with the fifth dimension might indicate that in China, schooling is considered a

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long-term investment where students are consistently working towards a final end goal demonstrating educational attainment. Conversely, in U.S. American schools, teachers and students would be more focused on short-term goals and continuous progress.

This section provided an overview of Hall's theory of culture and an introduction to Hofstede's dimensions of cultural difference. Hall's research paved the way for researchers like Hofstede to attempt to measure values and quantify the differences observed among national cultures. The review included definitions of Hofstede's five dimensions of cultural difference and explanations of how these dimensions might play out in an educational context. In the next section I will provide explanations of cultural differences in education from a practical and historical context and outline the key differences between U.S. and Chinese educational systems.

Educational systems in China, Taiwan, and the U.S.

The cultural values identified by Hall and Hofstede provide a theoretical framework and a tidy way to describe cross-cultural differences. These theories identify important aspects of cultures, and provide comparisons based on culture and history. However, education systems in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. possess many additional particularities that are practical in nature, and not specified in theoretical studies of culture. This section will provide an overview of elementary and secondary education in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. in a contemporary context.

Overview of education in China. China's compulsory education system covers nine years of education, which includes six years of primary school and three years of middle school. This stipulation was put into law in 1986 and fully adopted across China by 1990 (Su, 2002). Kindergarten and high school are not included in the compulsory

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education and families must pay tuition to attend. High schools are assigned based on student performance on an exam they take at the end of middle school. Class sizes vary by region and grade level. In 2010 the average Chinese primary classroom had 37.1 students and the average lower secondary classroom had 54 students (OECD, 2012).

A teacher in China focuses on teaching one particular subject, and will move from classroom to classroom throughout the day teaching different groups of students.

Teachers will teach several periods per day, but they also have multiple class periods that are set aside for lesson planning and grading exams. Teachers in China typically have a desk in an office. During preparatory time, teachers use their office to plan lessons, grade papers, and socialize with their coworkers. If any teacher has a question or concern about a student, they will contact the students' homeroom teacher, who is responsible for all communication with that student's parents.

A student's school day includes lessons in several academic subjects, and at least one longer free period for lunch, recess, and other organized activities. Students get a ten-minute break between each class, during which time they can go outdoors, use the restroom, or visit with their friends. After school, students have additional responsibilities such as cleaning the classroom. Students may also participate in after school activities such as athletics teams, performing arts groups, or other clubs.

At the end of high school Chinese students face pressure to score well on the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), a highly competitive test also known as *gaokao*, which includes tests in Chinese language, mathematics, and foreign language. Students have a choice of their fourth subject, either "comprehensive arts," which

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includes history and political science; or “comprehensive science,” which includes chemistry and physics. Scores on the *gaokao* determine if a student will be admitted to college or university, and if so, at which hierarchical rank. The four levels of colleges or universities, from most to least prestigious include National Key Universities, Provincial Common Universities, Local Common Universities, or 2- or 3-year colleges (Yu & Suen, 2005). The *gaokao* is only offered once per year and the stakes are high. In 2010 the OECD (2012) found that while 69% of young people in China graduated from high school, only 17% of young people entered university-level education programs.

Overview of education in Taiwan. The educational culture in Taiwan closely resembles the educational culture in China, but several recent policies have been introduced to encourage higher levels of educational attainment. Compulsory education currently includes six years of elementary school and three years of middle school. However, compulsory education is expected to increase to twelve years by the 2014 school year (Ministry of Education, 2011). The Ministry of Education also stated that typical class sizes in Taiwan are smaller than in China and have been significantly reduced since the 1970s. Currently the typical primary school class has 26 students and the typical junior high school has 33 students.

Until recent years Taiwan used a single standardized test, the Joint University Entrance Exam (JUEE), to determine university admissions. In 2001 Taiwan changed their policy and introduced a multi-channel system for college or university admissions. Under this system, students may be admitted to a university based on one of three methods: being recommended by their high school as a “highly qualified” candidate;

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through a placement exam for a specific academic program at a specific university; or through the standard college entrance exam, which can then be used to apply for college application. Statistics indicate that enrollment at the secondary and tertiary level remains high. The OECD does not measure Taiwan's educational statistics, but statistics provided by Taiwan's Ministry of Education indicate that in 2010 the gross enrollment ratio at the secondary level was 99% and at the tertiary level it was 84% (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Overview of U.S. education. Free public education has existed in the U.S. since the 1840s, but access to public education and the length of study has been dependent on location, region, and race (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1999). Today, compulsory education in the U.S. includes 13 years of schooling. This typically includes one year of kindergarten, five years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and four years of high school. In 2010 the average U.S. primary classroom had 20.3 students and the average lower secondary classroom had 23.7 students (OECD, 2012).

A teacher in the U.S. typically has a classroom where they teach all of their classes. At the elementary level, the homeroom teacher will stay with their students for most of the day, teaching a variety of subjects. At the high school level, the students rotate into the classroom of their teacher for each of their lessons. Teachers have a desk in their classroom where they might work during any periods when they do not have students. At most schools teachers hold parent-teacher conferences once per semester, and provide parents with an opportunity to communicate with their child's teacher about their academic achievement and any behavior issues.

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A student's typical day usually includes lessons in several subjects and a short midday break for lunch. Elementary students also have a short break for recess. At the elementary grades, students learn most of the subjects of the elementary curriculum from a homeroom teacher. Additional teachers, often known as specialists, are responsible for teaching specific subjects including art, music, physical education, and foreign language. Middle and high school students have a short passing time between class periods, during which they move between classrooms. High school students study the subjects required at their grade level, as well as optional subjects in their areas of interest, which are often called electives. In middle school and high school it is common for some students to stay after school for extracurricular activities, including athletics, performing arts, and academic clubs.

In the U.S. students who plan to go to college will submit applications to each college of their choice during the beginning of their final year. The application generally requires students to provide a transcript of their high school grades; the results of one of the two major standardized exams, the SAT or ACT; recommendation letters from teachers; information about participation in extracurricular activities and volunteer experiences. In addition, most universities require students to write an essay on a specified topic. University admissions offices review the application materials and admission is generally granted based on several metrics and measures. Among high school graduates, university enrollment is strong and includes a variety of academic and vocational options. In 2010 the OECD found that 77% of young people in the U.S.

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graduate from high school and that 74% of young people enter university-level education programs (OECD, 2012).

This section provided a general overview of elementary and secondary education and the cultural context of education in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. The next section will look specifically at teacher education and teacher socialization in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. and will provide some comparative examples related to teacher training programs, teacher retention, and the concerns of teachers working in cross-cultural contexts.

Comparative examination of teacher education and teacher socialization

The previous section provided basic information about school cultures in China, Taiwan, and the United States. Another context that is relevant to this study is an international comparison of teacher education. Visitors to a school generally do not see aspects of teacher training or the teacher socialization process, which may include credentialing, hiring, team building, teacher collegiality, and the organizational structure of the school. This section uses existing literature to highlight some challenges faced by teachers in the first years of their career, and to illustrate how cultural differences influence a teaching career. The first part of the section includes a discussion about first year teachers and the induction process. The second part of this section includes a comparative review of teacher identity and teacher socialization in China and the U.S., including particular focus on the first year experience. The third part of this section provides a review of literature about teachers from China working in cross-cultural environments. The literature in this part is multinational and covers many contexts, including short-term guest teacher programs, as well as members of immigrant populations who pursue teaching careers in their new home countries. Together, these

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three parts provide a base for understanding the cross-cultural challenges that Chinese teachers face when they begin a teaching career in the United States.

New teachers as migrants. A study of novice teachers in Israel who participated in a first year support group provides an interesting perspective on the challenges faced by teachers in the early years of their career. Sabar (2002) interviewed teacher candidates intending to learn more about the problem of retention and adjustment in the teaching profession. She found that the interviews she conducted with new teachers were reminiscent of an earlier study in which she had conducted interviews with members of immigrant communities. This realization led Sabar to explain:

Novice teachers seem to resemble immigrants who leave a familiar culture and move into a strange one that is both attractive and repellent... The decision to emigrate, or to go into teaching, leads them on a long voyage during which they experience the new and the unknown (p. 147).

Sabar compared the four stages that beginning teachers go through as they adjust to their career including “fantasy, survival, master, and impact” to four stages of adjustment that people experience when moving to new country “fascination; crisis and hostility towards the host culture; adjustment; and genuine biculturalism” (p. 157). While the teachers in Sabar’s study are not immigrants in the process of making a cross-cultural adjustment in their life and career, her analysis illustrates that it can be just as difficult for new teachers to adjust to the organization of a school as it is for a new immigrant to adjust to a new culture. These findings suggest that new teachers from China and Taiwan are faced with two distinct but similar challenges during the first years of their careers, to learn their

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school's organizational culture while also learning to adjust to the U.S. culture of education.

A comparison of teacher socialization. Confucian heritage cultures like China and Taiwan place a high value on the relationship between teacher and student. China is also known for the rigor of its educational system and academic success of high-achieving students, including top scores on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam (Dillon, 2010b). For these reasons, many international researchers have sought to better understand Chinese schools and teaching. The literature reviewed in this part provides cross-cultural comparisons of the socialization of teachers in China, Taiwan, and the U.S., including the choice to become a teacher; the development of teacher identity; and examples of how teachers associate with their colleagues. The U.S.-based research provides information about norms within U.S. culture. The cross-cultural research focuses on education in China and cross-cultural research teams provide comparisons between Chinese and U.S. cultures of education.

The choice to become a teacher is part of the formation of a teacher's identity. A comparative study of U.S. and Chinese teacher candidates by Su, Hawkins, Huang, and Zhao (2001) found that teacher candidates from both cultures indicate they are drawn to teaching for intrinsic rather than extrinsic reasons. However, while most U.S. teacher candidates choose to enter teacher education programs, "many Chinese teacher candidates enter the teacher education program reluctantly, often as a result of lower test scores on the college entrance examination or because of practical financial and economic considerations" (p. 620). Further, they suggest that "Chinese teacher candidates

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are much less committed to teaching as a lifelong career than their American peers, even though the Chinese teachers have much less mobility in their jobs than the American teachers” (p. 624).

Despite the low expectations of prospective Chinese teacher candidates, as discussed above, other research on teachers in China indicate that once Chinese teacher candidates enter the profession they are supported by a team of teacher colleagues. Paine and Ma (1993) illustrate the important role of collegiality and collaboration among Chinese teachers in Chinese schools through their work on the *jiaoyanzu*, or teaching research group, which “serves as the intermediate level between the individual teacher and school administration” (p. 678). Their study indicates that the goal of the teaching research group is the “improvement of educational practice” and activities commonly include studying the national curriculum; designing lesson plans; discussing their subject matter; comparing teaching methods; reviewing each other’s lesson plans and student work; organizing opportunities to observe fellow teachers’ classes; writing tests; organizing professional development activities; and providing leadership for student teachers and first-year teachers (p. 678-679). These group activities create a supportive team atmosphere for new teachers with a focus on continuous professional development.

It is said that you can determine the value a culture places on education by measuring the social status of teachers. Taiwan shares China’s cultural and Confucian heritage, which places a high value on teachers and the teaching profession. Research on the social status of teachers in several countries demonstrates that most teachers in Australia, England, New Zealand and the United States “are satisfied with the intrinsic

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aspect of teaching... but are dissatisfied with the extrinsic factors such as inadequate compensation, stressful workload, increased community criticism and a poor public image of teaching” (Fwa & Wang, 2002, p. 212). However, teachers in Taiwan express satisfaction with both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of their jobs. The researchers explain that Taiwan has a long history of encouraging talented students to enter the teaching profession, including offering incentives such as tuition-free education and guaranteed job placement. While those two policies are no longer in place, teacher education remains a competitive field and one that provides teachers with generous employment packages and a relatively high level of prestige.

Comparatively, research on teachers in the U.S. indicates that teachers do not enjoy a high social status, and that there is a low retention rate among first year teachers. One U.S.-based study of first year teachers’ reasons for leaving found that “new teachers are exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of unsupportive workplace conditions; precisely because of never having taught before, they lack the resources and tools to deal with the frustrations of the workplace” (Weiss, 1999, p. 869). This research suggests that U.S. teachers who are supported by colleagues and administrators during their first year are more likely to plan to stay in the career, but that those who do not receive support are more likely to leave the profession. Another study about retention among U.S. teachers identifies three professional cultures in schools: the veteran-oriented culture, the novice-oriented culture, and integrated culture (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman & Liu, 2001). The integrated culture, in which “communication and cooperation in the service of improving instruction were the norm, and teachers shared a collective responsibility for

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educating all students” is considered the most supportive model for new teachers in the U.S. (p. 274). This integrated culture shares some of the characteristics that Paine and Ma describe in their discussion of the benefits of the teaching research group, and the high levels of retention among new teachers in China.

This review of the socialization of new teachers demonstrates that people in many communities are drawn to the profession for intrinsic reasons, and that support during the first years contributes to teacher satisfaction and retention. The relatively high social status of teachers in Taiwan also suggests that providing extrinsic support to teachers may help improve retention.

When teachers from China teach abroad. Cultural conflicts are particularly likely when teachers find jobs in cross-cultural contexts. While not much research has been done on Chinese teachers working in U.S. K-12 schools, comparisons can be made to research on other populations of teachers working in cross cultural situations. This section includes a review of literature about Chinese natives teaching Chinese language at the university level (McGinnis, 1994), and the experiences of immigrant and visiting teachers working in Australia, Canada and the U.S. (Benyon, Ilieva & Dichupa, 2004; Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006; Peeler & Jane, 2005). This section concludes with a review of a study on teacher identity that is more closely related to the participants in my research, two Chinese language teachers from Taiwan working in Minnesota’s K-12 schools (Gao, 2010).

Until recently, the most common way that Chinese teachers might have found themselves teaching Chinese language in the U.S. was as a teacher or teaching assistant

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in Chinese language class at a U.S. university. As a teacher of Chinese but a native speaker of English, McGinnis observed the challenges faced by his colleagues who were born and educated in China or Taiwan and suggested “there is clearly the potential for a conflict in the cultures of instruction for those involved in Chinese language education in the United States” (1994, p. 18). McGinnis observed:

If the way we were taught is significantly different from that of the students we are teaching, much of what we may view to be of value in the learning of a given language may be at best irrelevant and at worst useless.

His research into the most and least important features of language learning for teachers and students identified three potential areas of conflict between Chinese language teachers and their U.S. American university students. These include the value of accuracy versus creativity; the importance of interaction with native speakers; and the role of authentic materials in the classroom. McGinnis also found areas of agreement among language teachers and their students; both valued the teaching and learning of new vocabulary words and grammar points. Through his research, McGinnis demonstrates that teaching methods are a product of culture, and that changing those methods can challenge teachers from China.

Peeler and Jane (2005) found that immigrant teachers who work in Australia’s elementary and secondary schools faced challenges learning and adapting to the local culture of schooling. Moreover, they discovered that teacher education programs did not provide the social knowledge of education that was needed by immigrant teachers. This disconnect was never taught because it is “innate to those familiar with the culture and

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often unspoken within school communities” (p. 328). Peeler and Jane recommend that administrators should establish mentoring relationships for all immigrant teachers, explaining that having a mentor can help immigrant teachers develop their identity as a teacher and can act “as a bridge between their cultural identity and their professional identity” (p. 332). This study reinforced the value of having a mentor teacher, a topic that was discussed by research participants and will be summarized in chapter four.

At the K-12 level, teachers from China encounter additional challenges outside the classroom. One common challenge faced by immigrant teachers is that teaching in public schools often requires licensure or credentialing by a national or regional authority. Benyon, Ilieva & Dichupa (2004) provide insight into the ways that the Canadian credentialing process affected immigrant teachers, including three from China, seven from Hong Kong, and one from Taiwan. This study examined the recredentialing experiences of teachers with attention to the sociocultural topics of voice, agency, and identity in teachers who had earned initial teaching credentials in their home country. In the Canadian context, the teacher education requirements included academic coursework as well as a classroom practicum, which required significant contributions of time and money. The researchers found that “overall many of the interviewees mentioned the complete one-semester practicum requirement as an opportunity (albeit costly and time-consuming) to gain useful experience in Canadian cultural/pedagogical practices” (p. 436). However, the stringent requirements of the credentialing authority alienated this population and created an inflexible environment. Teachers described credentialing as a “humiliating process that negated their professional identities” and demonstrated

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“complete disregard for teaching experience from their native countries or for graduate work and university teaching experience in Canada” (p. 439). Teachers from China may encounter similar roadblocks and experience similar levels of frustration when attempting to earn teaching licenses in the United States.

A study by Myles, Cheng & Wang (2006) investigated an alternative teacher accreditation program in Ontario, designed specifically for immigrant teachers with previous experience teaching in other countries. The one-year training program included coursework on theories and methods used in Canadian education, as well as a school-based practicum. Interviews with teacher candidates revealed four themes that presented challenges during the year of preparation. These included “adapting to a different school system and teaching philosophy; experience in elementary education; English language proficiency; and establishing a healthy relationship with associate teachers” (p. 237). This study illustrates that while there are benefits to alternative teacher licensing programs, immigrant teachers must still negotiate a variety of challenges based on their social identity as education professionals and the process of adapting to a new culture.

As demonstrated by the research summarized above, teacher identity is a central concern for groups of immigrant teachers. Teacher identity can be shaped by cultural knowledge, cultural adaptability, and the teacher’s sense of agency. In her doctoral dissertation, Yunli Gao (2010) looks specifically at Chinese immigrant teachers’ professional identity using a case study approach. Gao uses social identity theory to investigate the cultural and educational practices of two immigrant teachers from Taiwan. She also investigates the professional identities teachers created through the use of

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cultural artifacts and improvisation, and how the storylines of being “Chinese” and “American” were incorporated into their classroom practices. This research was based in the classroom experience, with special attention to the ways that teacher identity interfaced with students in the classroom. Gao’s study filled an important gap in existing research about Chinese immigrant teacher identity in a U.S. context. Gao’s study also identified a need for additional research on immigrant teacher relation to colleagues, the teaching community, and the profession in general. My research specifically attempts to fill some of those holes, and provide practical recommendations for schools that hire teachers from China and Taiwan.

This section provided a review of how teachers adapt to and interpret cross-cultural teaching environments. The literature provides detail about Chinese teacher identity in China, as well as rich examples of how cross-cultural teaching experiences are viewed and dealt with in sites around the world. In the next section I return to Hofstede’s model and his discussion of how the model could be applied in educational contexts.

Applying Hofstede’s model to education.

This chapter ends with a discussion of how Hofstede’s model of cultural difference can be applied to the situation of teachers from China working in U.S. K-12 schools. While Hofstede’s model was originally applied to research in the areas of international business and human resources, he suggests that the model can also be applied to educational contexts. Educational applications of the model might help Chinese teachers better understand the educational culture of U.S. K-12 schools. It may also help U.S. education administrators understand the ways that their Chinese and Taiwanese employees relate to their careers as teachers, as well as explain the cultural

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origins of how they build relationships with fellow teachers, administrators, and with their students.

Hofstede's evaluation of the archetype of the teacher student pair claims that "cross-cultural learning situations are fundamentally problematic for both parties" (1986, p. 303). He identifies four problem areas in teaching, including "differences in social positions of teachers and students in society," "differences in the relevance of the curriculum," "differences in cognitive abilities," and "differences in processes of teacher/student and student/student interaction" (p. 305). These four problem areas are relevant to this discussion, in that they help explain the cultural differences between teachers who were raised and educated in the U.S., in China, and Taiwan.

The social positions of teachers in Chinese and U.S. societies are very different, and this difference is directly related to the dimension of power distance. In China, the title 老师 *laoshi* (teacher) is an honorific; teachers are generally highly regarded members of society. Chinese teachers working in the U.S. may initially expect that their social status will be relatively high, but will likely find that any level of reverence or respect for teachers is earned, not automatically bestowed on the basis of title or position.

Schools in China and the U.S. typically have very different approaches to designing and implementing curriculum, which can be related to the dimension of individualism versus collectivism. In the U.S., curriculum varies by state, school, and classroom, which reflects the high value the U.S. culture places on individualism. While most states establish curriculum standards at each grade level, teachers are given a relative amount of freedom in how they teach the required content. Reflecting China's

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strong value of collectivism, teachers in China follow a national curriculum for subjects including Chinese, mathematics, English, integrated liberal arts, integrated science, which prepares students for the national exams. However, schools in China increasingly have more autonomy over curriculum, including the option to teach additional subjects (Zhao, 2007). The differences between the two cultures' approach to curriculum means that new teachers from China working in U.S. K-12 schools must quickly learn to write curriculum, a culturally relevant task that may conflict with cultural values of collectivism.

Differences in the cognitive ability of students are also particularly relevant in the context of U.S. and Chinese educational cultures. Memory and rote learning are important cognitive skills that are valued in Chinese schools. These skills are particularly important in the learning of thousands of distinct Chinese characters that students must memorize in order to be considered literate. In the U.S., schools are more likely to emphasize skills related to creativity and critical thinking. Chinese teachers may find that U.S. students respond more favorably to styles of teaching and learning that are culturally familiar.

There are also cultural contexts that drive teacher-student and student-teacher interactions in both countries and reflect values of power distance and individualism versus collectivism. Chinese classrooms are teacher-centered, where the teacher presents the curriculum and students respond only when they are called upon. The value of collectivism supports the cultural idea that the teacher is correct, and students should follow the teacher's instructions. U.S. classrooms tend to be student-focused and

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collaborative. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning, and often engage and interact with students in a way that reflects the U.S. value of individualism. Hofstede claims that the differences in processes of teacher/student interaction is "probably the least obvious" of the problem areas, and deeply rooted in values, which "lead to feelings of good and evil, right and wrong, rational and irrational, proper and improper; feelings of which we seldom recognize the cultural relativity" (1986, p. 305). This explanation reinforces the need to better understand the cross-cultural interactions that happen everyday between students and teachers.

As described above, each of the problem areas that Hofstede identified in educational contexts are reflected in comparisons of U.S. and Chinese educational cultures. Hofstede suggests that the only solution is to increase awareness of these differences is by "focusing on new abilities demanded by societal changes of the moment and patience" (1986, p. 305). This suggestion provides explicit direction for my research. My study aims to identify cultural differences faced by Chinese teachers working in U.S. K-12 schools and to educate both Chinese teachers and their U.S. coworkers and administrators about the origins of these cultural differences. The study also suggests teachers in cross-cultural situations should be provided the time and support necessary for them to adapt to working in the new culture.

This chapter has provided a review of relevant literature about the recent growth of Chinese language programs in the U.S., the development of a Chinese language teacher shortage, and the phenomenon of hiring teachers from China and Taiwan to fill the gaps. It also provided an introduction to applicable theories, including Edward Hall's

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integrated theory of culture and Hofstede's dimensional model of culture, which was discussed in the context of education. Following the discussion of theories, I provided a basic outline of the characteristics of Chinese and U.S. education. The discussion then turned to literature about immigrant teacher populations, including some that specifically addressed the cultural differences between educational cultures in China and the United States. The chapter concluded with a return to Hofstede's dimensional model of culture applied to educational contexts. The next chapter will describe the case study research methods that were used to conduct this study on how teachers from China and Taiwan adjust and adapt to teaching in U.S. K-12 schools.

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Chapter Three: Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the methods that were used to investigate how new Chinese language teachers adapt to teaching in U.S. K-12 schools. This exploratory case study used qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews with teachers from China and Taiwan, direct observation of team meetings, and document analysis. These sources were analyzed to determine how differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures presented challenges to eight teachers from China and Taiwan who taught in one suburban Minnesota school district.

For the purpose of this study teachers from China were defined as teachers who were born in and received their elementary, secondary, and undergraduate education in The People's Republic of China (China) or the Republic of China (Taiwan). As discussed in the previous chapter, China and Taiwan share a Confucian heritage and many other cultural values. People in China and Taiwan tend to use high context communication styles, and share similar values along the dimensions of individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and long term versus short-term orientation. Additionally, the research problem is relevant for practical reasons. The population of new Chinese language teachers working in U.S. K-12 schools includes teachers from both China and Taiwan. These teachers face similar challenges during their first years working in U.S. K-12 schools. For these reasons, this study includes teachers from both the Chinese and Taiwanese cultures.

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Exploratory research

I gained insight to this problem while working with new K-12 Chinese teachers as a staff person at the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota. While Minnesota's rapid increase in Chinese language instruction at the K-12 level is a source of pride, it is also clear that new Chinese teachers experience significant cultural adjustments during their first years teaching in the U.S. My experience suggests that school administrators often do not have enough understanding of the differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures, and therefore they do not anticipate the cultural adjustments that will present challenges to teachers from China and Taiwan. Likewise, teachers from China and Taiwan often have some knowledge of U.S. school culture, but are still challenged by implicit cultural differences that are subtle and often site-specific. This research intends to investigate these specific cultural differences and to bring about discussion on the issue of cultural adjustment at schools that hire teachers from China and Taiwan.

Research design

This qualitative case study included semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. I chose to work with one particular school district because they had an extensive Chinese language curriculum spanning twelve grade levels, and because they had a significant population of Chinese language teachers, with eleven teachers from China or Taiwan working in the district during the 2011-12 school year. Using criterion sampling, I worked with the district to request the participation of the entire Chinese language teaching team. Eight of the eleven teachers agreed to participate in this study.

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Case study

The method of this study was a multiple-sited embedded case study. Yin defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2008, p. 18). Researching teachers’ experiences in their workplaces requires a method, such as case study, that allows for an investigation of the real-life context of teachers in their schools. In this case study, the experiences of individual teachers are embedded in the context of the schools where they taught, and within the larger framework of their entire school district. Specific research methods included semi-structured interviews with teachers from China, direct observation of Chinese teacher team meetings, and document analysis of the materials provided at a new employee orientation.

The case study method has several benefits. Interviews allowed me to learn about the perspectives that new Chinese teachers had towards the cross-cultural challenges they faced in their school communities. Semi-structured interviews provided me with the flexibility to follow leads that developed during the course of the interview conversations. This flexibility provided the opportunity to explore topics that the participants felt strongly about, and probe into ideas that surfaced during the conversation. Direct observation of team meetings provided an opportunity for me to observe how Chinese teachers interact within the community of Chinese language teachers, and with their supervisors including the Chinese team leader and the district’s world languages coordinator. Observations from these meetings provided additional information about teacher support networks, and informed the interview process.

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Document analysis provided an opportunity to identify what information about U.S. schools is shared with teachers from China in an explicit way. Document analysis was also used to evaluate the content of a packet that all first-year teachers received at the district's new teacher orientation. Comparing the information that was provided at orientation to the information that participants suggested they would provide to new incoming teachers helped me suggest information that could be included in the future teacher orientation packets.

Research site

The research was conducted in one suburban Minnesota school district, which included more than 17,000 students in grades K-12. A snapshot profile indicates that in 2012 the students in this school district performed above the statewide average on tests of math, reading, and science. Data also show that students in this school district had less financial need than the state-wide average (14% versus 37%), and that their percentages of students who were English language learners and who received special education services were a few percentage points lower than the state-wide averages (4% versus 8%, and 13% versus 15% respectively). The ethnic diversity of students in the district closely reflected state-wide averages (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013).

Across the district either Spanish or Chinese were taught to students from grade 1 through grade 12. Each of the fifteen elementary schools provided one world language. Chinese was offered at five of the elementary schools, where students had approximately 60 minutes of Chinese language instruction per week. Chinese was offered at each of the four middle schools, where students rotated through exploratory language classes in sixth grade, and then had the choice to select between Chinese or Spanish language classes in

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seventh and eighth grades. Chinese was offered in each of the three high schools. At the high school level students had more language options. Chinese was one of five languages students could select from, also including Spanish, French, German, and American Sign Language. While languages were optional at the high school level, most college-bound students chose to study a language for at least two years.

Participants

Eight of the eleven teachers who teach Chinese in the district participated in this research. All eight research participants are native speakers of Chinese; were born and raised in China or Taiwan; and completed, at minimum, an undergraduate degree in China or Taiwan prior to moving to the United States as adults. Five of the eight participants were originally from China and three were from Taiwan. One participant was male, and seven were female. The research participants ranged in age from 23 to 52, with an average age of 36 years old. The length of time they had lived in the U.S. varied, ranging from less than one year to 22 years, and with an average of approximately 10 years. The teachers had a range of previous teaching experiences. Five teachers had previous experience teaching in China or Taiwan, including one who had extensive experience teaching elementary students in Taiwan and another who spent fourteen years teaching in a university setting in China. The other three participants had experience teaching during short-term internships or at for-profit English languages schools in China. The teachers interviewed also had varied lengths of experiences teaching in K-12 schools in the U.S., from less than one year to five years. Only one of the eight teachers had earned a Minnesota teacher's license at the time of the interviews. A profile of the participants is shown in Table 1.

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Pseudonym	From	Sex	Age	Graduate degree	No. of years having lived in U.S.	No. of years having taught in U.S.	Experience teaching in China	MN Teaching License
Fang-Yi	Taiwan	F	49	No	22	5	Yes	No
Fengwen	China	F	44	No	6	5	Yes	No
Hsuan-Wen	Taiwan	F	40	Yes	18	4	No	No
Huijuan	China	F	52	No	22	4	No	No
Jingting	China	F	23	Yes	3	1	Yes	No
Tzu-Ying	Taiwan	F	26	Yes	4	2	Yes	Yes
Yongbing	China	F	26	No	1	1	Yes	No
Yuhui	China	M	29	Yes	3	1	No	No

The profile of the Chinese teachers who participated in this study closely matches the profile of Chinese teachers who participated in STARTALK teacher education programs in 2007, whose unique characteristics were discussed by Wang (2007). Similar to the STARTALK participants, these participants are older (defined as age 40 and older), predominantly female, native speakers of the language who immigrated, and are highly educated. A table showing the comparison is included in Table 2.

	STARTALK participants (n=222)	Research participants (n=8)
Native speakers	96%	100%
Female	81%	87.5%
Age: 40 and older	46%	50%
Highest degree: BA	38%	50%
Highest degree: MA or above	60%	50%

Each participant represented a unique story and brought interesting prior work experience to the research. Five of the eight teachers had gained experience in U.S.

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school environments before they became teachers. These experiences included teaching Chinese at Saturday school for heritage students, teaching Chinese as an afterschool community education course, and volunteering in U.S. classrooms. Four of the participants were parents, all of whose children had attended at least some of their K-12 schooling in the U.S.

A brief introduction of each participant. The participants' personal information is included here to provide a snapshot of the diversity represented in this sample population. Hsuan-Wen is a female who had originally come to the U.S. from Taiwan to get a graduate degree and work in an unrelated field. While raising her children in the U.S., a friend had approached her and asked her to become a Chinese teacher. Yuhui, the one male participant, had originally come to the U.S. to get a graduate degree in an unrelated field. He gained experience teaching Chinese at a Saturday school while earning his graduate degree. He was in his first year as a full time teacher, and he did not intend to stay in the profession. Tzu-Ying is a female who had originally come to the U.S. from Taiwan to get a graduate degree in an education field. She began her teaching career during the previous school year as a long-term substitute for a Chinese teacher who had taken a mid-year maternity leave. During her first partial year of teaching she was also a graduate student. Upon graduation she continued teaching in the district on a full-time basis. Tzu-Ying was the only participant who had earned licensure to teach in Minnesota. Fang-Yi is a female teacher who had had a career as an elementary teacher in Taiwan before moving to the U.S. for her husband's career. She had previous experience teaching in several academic settings in the U.S. and was considered the "lead" Chinese

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teacher in this district. Fengwen is a female teacher who had earned a degree in education in China and had taught at the university level in China for fourteen years before moving to the U.S. She had been teaching in the district for five years and had completed all of the coursework for a Minnesota teaching license, but she had not yet passed the basic skills exams. Huijuan is a female teacher who had earned an advanced degree in China in an unrelated field. She originally moved to the U.S. and continued to work in this field, but she later discovered a love for teaching Chinese through her volunteer work. She had been teaching in the district for four years and had completed all of the coursework for a Minnesota teaching license, but still needed to pass the basic skills exam. Yongbing is a female guest teacher from China who came to Minnesota in August 2011 for a one-year assignment to teach at this school. Yongbing had prior experience teaching secondary and university students in China and was also working on a master's degree at her university in China. Jingting is a female teacher from China who came to the United States for a graduate degree in an education field. She did not intend to continue teaching, as she was planning to enter a doctoral program the following year. These brief snapshots of the research participants hint at the diversity of experiences teachers from China and Taiwan bring to their teaching careers. They also provide some examples of reasons for the high potential for turnover in the Chinese language teaching community.

Researcher positionality

I conducted this research as a graduate student doing independent research, but I must also acknowledge my role as an employee at the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota. The mission of the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota is to promote the study of Chinese language and culture in the state of

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Minnesota. In my position at the Confucius Institute I communicate regularly with Chinese language teachers in Minnesota regarding professional development opportunities provided by the Confucius Institute. Additionally, each year the Confucius Institute coordinates several Chinese language and cultural opportunities that are made available to K-12 students. Many of the participants knew me through my regular email communication with Minnesota's Chinese teachers, through my attendance at these events, and as an employee of an organization that provides funding and support to the growth of Chinese language programs in Minnesota. Most participants were also aware that I am a white U.S. American and several were aware that I have been a student of Chinese language and culture.

It is unclear how the participant's knowledge of my connections to Chinese language education influenced the way I was perceived as a researcher. I might speculate that my interest in Chinese language and culture and my prior experiences living and working in China and with Chinese colleagues might have influenced the interview discussion in various ways. Some research participants might have assumed I had some understanding of the cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese schools, and responded to interview questions based on this assumption. Others may have believed I lacked cultural knowledge, and provided detailed explanations of cultural phenomenon. I have attempted to address these assumptions in the research design.

Pilot testing

Prior to data collection, I requested feedback from two Chinese graduate students in the field of education and from one Chinese teacher working in another school district. The two Chinese graduate students reviewed preliminary versions of my interview

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questions. This review resulted in suggestions for additional questions that could potentially yield important information related to the research topic. A pilot interview was then conducted with a teacher from China who was employed in a different school district. A pilot interview was chosen because “pilot case study helps investigators to refine their data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2008, p. 74). This pilot interview also allowed me to test the interview process, including the use of the audio recorder, the impact of distractions and background noise, and the flow of the questions. Most importantly, the pilot testing of interview questions resulted in an honest discussion about how to ask questions about sensitive topics, particularly when asking about difficulties encountered in the profession and conflicts with coworkers. This conversation allowed me to refine the interview questions and process before officially starting the process of data collection. The interview questions are included in the Appendix.

Data collection

The primary data source for this research was the data collected during individual interviews. In April 2012 I visited each of the participants in their classrooms and conducted interviews that ranged from 38 to 97 minutes in length. Interviews were then recorded and transcribed. Each interview transcription was then sent back to the participant for member checking, a strategy that is used to ensure internal validity. Two participants provided edits for accuracy and clarification. During the same month I also observed the elementary and secondary Chinese language teacher meetings. The document analysis included a review of materials that were provided to teachers during the district’s new employee orientation in August 2011. The materials were reviewed to

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determine the kinds of cultural information that was provided by the district

administrators at new teacher orientation.

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were reviewed to identify themes and subthemes that came up in the participants' interviews. After identifying a list of themes, the transcripts were re-read to verify that all themes and subthemes were reflective of the discussions. Each interview was then read a third time, in order to classify comments under the themes and subthemes before being coded for analysis. Notes taken during observations of teacher meetings were also reviewed for these same themes and subthemes and coded for analysis. The new teacher orientation packet was reviewed for relevant information.

Ethical issues

As with any research with human subjects, ethical issues have been addressed during the course of this research. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted for this project. In accordance with IRB regulations, all research participants were fully informed of the risks and benefits associated with their participation. This research was also approved by the school district's office of research and evaluation. The district's World Languages Coordinator provided administrative support by sharing teacher contact information, extending the invitation for me to attend team meetings, and by providing the materials that were used in the document analysis. Pseudonyms were used to disguise the identity of the research participants.

Limitations of the study

As with most research, this case study is limited by a number of factors. Issues particular to this type of research include the limits of the case study methodology, the

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impact of cross-cultural interviewing, the existence of a language barrier during interviews, and the influence of the existing relationship between interviewer and interviewees. This research study was designed to account for these limitations and attempted to intentionally avoid them, to the best of my ability. The limited amount of time and money dedicated to this research also meant that this research is limited in scale. The small sample size indicates that this research only provides a detailed look into the inner-workings of eight teachers in one school district. As a result, the details illustrated in the research are of unique, and not universal, experiences of eight teachers from China. The following sections respond to some of the specified limitations of the case study method.

Case study methodology. Three common critiques of case study methodology include their potential lack of rigor, their inability to translate to scientific generalization, and the fact that they require considerable work and result in large amounts of data (Yin, 2008). By acknowledging an awareness of these critiques, this research attempts to avoid these pitfalls. Through careful consideration of case study research design, I introduce rigor to this particular study. Through careful design of my particular research, I expect that the result will be “generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 15). While the case study method presents some limitations, it also presents opportunities. The case study method is an appropriate choice of methods, in that it allows me to condense the information collected in a concise way. My hope is that the story told by this case study provides a highly readable portrait of the experiences of eight teachers in one school district and that this portrait will provide valuable

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information to future populations of new teachers from China and the school districts that seek to hire them.

Cross-cultural interviewing. Cross-cultural interviewing also presents limitations to this study. Potential challenges of cross-cultural interviewing include the role of the researcher; the perceived status of the researcher; cultural knowledge including perceptions of time and the meanings of physical cues and gestures; and language barriers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 180-182). This research followed several of Rubin and Rubin's recommendations for researchers conducting cross-cultural interviews, including preparing for the interviews by gathering cultural knowledge, selecting an appropriate location, and carefully selecting the wording of the interview questions (p. 182-185).

In this study, cultural knowledge was considered prior to conducting interviews. Gathering knowledge of Chinese culture presents an enormous task for any interviewer who is not of Chinese heritage, but it is one for which I was well suited. My background provided a solid base; I am a life-long student of Chinese language and culture, and I have traveled to China for study abroad, work, and for personal enjoyment nine times over the past seventeen years. This knowledge was not relied upon exclusively. Often, the more you learn about a culture, the more you realize you have yet to learn. Cultural informants were used throughout the research design process. The cultural content and context of the interviews were discussed when Chinese students from the university reviewed my initial interview questions and during the pilot-test of the interview with a Chinese teacher from another district. I do believe that this research was facilitated by my

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understanding of the U.S. culture of education and by my known identity as someone who works to improve the situation of Minnesota's Chinese teachers. However, despite my attempts to enter into this research with cultural knowledge, I must acknowledge the limitations I faced as someone who is not from the Chinese culture. A cross-cultural research team might have provided a more nuanced analysis of cultural differences.

Selecting an appropriate location is an important step in designing a research study. A poor choice of location can lead to challenges ranging from noise levels, frequent disruptions or distractions, and discomfort of the participant. In this study, interviews were conducted in the participants' classrooms at their schools during after-school hours. This decision was intended to provide convenience and comfort of the teachers. In addition to being convenient it also allowed for teachers to reference things in the classroom during the course of the interview and allowed me to reference visual cues and descriptions during the interview process. While the decision to interview in the classroom provided many benefits, there were also limitations. Several interviews encountered minor disruptions, including students entering the classroom, announcements made over the loudspeaker, and phone calls to the classroom.

The challenge of using the appropriate wording in crafting interview questions is important for any interview, but particularly in cases that involve cross-cultural content and a language barrier. Rubin and Rubin explain that interviewers "might need to adjust the responsive interviewing model by asking somewhat more often for explanations because there will be more answers that you do not understand for lack of background" (p. 185). Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask for clarification and

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move away from the questioning route if necessary, which helped to mitigate this limitation. In the case of the white U.S. American researcher and the Chinese research participants, potential cultural misunderstandings might include intercultural communications issues including the use of direct versus indirect language, and high context versus low context communication styles. These different styles of communication may be used intentionally as a “face-saving” technique. Interestingly, these are some of the same dimensions in the theoretical framework of this research study that are used to explain cultural differences.

Language barriers. Language barriers present challenges with all forms of communication. When the interviewer and interviewee do not share the same native language, language fluency presents a potential limitation to the study. In this case, interviews were conducted in English, my native language. Participants responded in English, which was not their native language. While all participants worked and lived in English-speaking environments, their degree of English language fluency was variable. One participant responded to the first interview question in Chinese, but because I knew I did not have the fluency needed to transcribe and analyze an interview conducted in Chinese, I had to request that she respond in English. This likely influenced the specificity of that participant’s responses. In all cases, requesting English language interviews may have influenced the accuracy or specificity of the content of the interview.

Conversely, the team meetings that I observed were conducted mostly in Chinese. As an observer who has only intermediate fluency in that language, I may have

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misunderstood some of the discussion. However, I felt it was more important that the participants conduct the meeting in an authentic way rather than change their language for the observation period. In this research, the language barrier is a known limitation.

Role of the researcher. The previous paragraphs provided information about how knowledge of the potential challenges of cross-cultural interviews helped me to prepare for the research process. In addition, I prepared for potential cross-cultural issues by reflecting on my role in the participants' community of Chinese language teachers. As an employee at the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota, and as someone who has a perceived role in the participants' field of work (and maybe even perceived influence on their future career), the concept of saving or losing face may play a role in the level of openness and honesty shared by research participants. Prior to beginning the interview, I addressed these issues by explaining that the interviewee does not have to answer any questions and could opt to end the interview at any time. I also explained that while the interview would be recorded, the recording would not be shared with anyone, including the staff at the district that approved the research project. In doing this I established boundaries intended to ease any nervousness caused by the presence of the audio recorder or the anticipation of being asked to answer questions that made the participant feel uncomfortable.

In this section I have provided an overview of some of the limitations that were considered when designing this research project, including the challenges of the case study method, of conducting cross-cultural research, of addressing the language barrier in interviews, and of the role of the researcher. While attempts were made to reduce the

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impact of these limitations, unexpected limitations presented themselves during the course of the research, particularly around the language barrier. In addition to these known limitations, other unidentified challenges may have limited this research.

This chapter provided an overview of the case study research methods used in the study. The overview explained that this topic was raised during exploratory research. It explained the research design and the motivations for using the case study design. It introduced the research site and the research participants. It described the pilot test, and the process of data collection and data analysis. The chapter concluded with a discussion of limitations. The next chapter presents the research analysis and findings from the participant interviews, and provides rich descriptions of the common themes that were raised by the participants.

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Chapter Four: Findings

The previous chapter introduced the case study research methods that were used to identify the ways in which teachers from China adjusted and adapted to teaching in U.S. K-12 schools. In this chapter, the themes and subthemes that emerged from the participant interviews, direct observation, and document analysis are identified and then discussed. The themes are organized into three sections. The first section includes discussion about differences that participants observed between Chinese and U.S K-12 school cultures, including the role of the teacher; differences in student behavior; Chinese language as an academic subject; the importance of testing and grades; and the influence of parents. The second section includes discussion about the challenges and supports that teachers found during their first years as a teacher in the U.S., including the need to have strong English language ability, using mentor teachers as a resource, participating in the district's Chinese teaching team, and participating in social activities with other teachers. Investigating these themes helps to illustrate some of the needs and resources of the participants, and helps to identify the circumstances that were difficult for or supportive to participants. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of advice for teachers and administrators at schools with Chinese language programs, which was provided by the participants at the conclusion of the interviews.

Differences between school cultures

Some major differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures were introduced in the literature review. Several of these cultural differences were raised during interviews and examples are discussed in this section. Five key cultural

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differences, which were discussed by the majority of the participants, will be discussed at length. These include the role of the teacher, expectations for student behavior, testing and grades, the status of Chinese as an academic subject, and the influence of parents. The examples provided illustrate the ways that cultural differences can influence teacher adjustment.

Role of the teacher. In China the respect for the teacher as an authority figure is deeply rooted in Confucian heritage and philosophy. As mentioned in chapter two, the title of *laoshi* or “teacher” is an honorific and automatically commands respect in Chinese cultures, as teachers are responsible for the important task of educating children. Two participants specifically referenced China’s Confucian heritage in their explanation of their respect for teachers. Huijuan explained “in Chinese culture, Confucius philosophy has deep root[s] in people’s mind[s].” Yuhui provided a cultural comparison, “Americans don’t teach kids to respect teachers. But in our culture teachers get a lot of respect. It’s like we were born like this. We were born to respect teachers. It’s... Confuc[ian] philosophy.”

Fang-Yi, the participant who had the most prior experience teaching elementary school in Taiwan, explained that this deep respect for teachers also affected the way society viewed the teaching profession:

When I was a teacher in Taiwan I was always very careful about what kind of language I use, what kind of clothes I wear, because it’s kind of model for the students and also a model for the parents or the whole society. But here it seems

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everybody is free... It's not so serious because in American culture... they don't put high expectations on teachers.

Fang-Yi also referenced this deeply held respect for teachers when discussing student behavior. She explained "for Chinese we are very respectful of teachers, so students are very quiet... Only when you ask [a] question and ask them to raise their hand, then they will raise their hand."

While the participants had learned that U.S. school culture did not share this same Confucian heritage and respect for teachers, they still expressed surprise and frustration when describing some of their experiences in U.S. schools. Jingting explained the challenge in adjusting to the new educational culture: "we were educated like 20 years in the Chinese way and suddenly you are here, you don't know how to behave yourself." Even the teachers who had sent their own children through U.S. schools struggled to adjust their expectations. Hsuan-Wen, a parent of two school age children, had already lived in the U.S. for 18 years, but still experienced culture shock in the classroom:

This year when I started in teaching high school I noticed that unconsciously I still have the frame of the teacher's authority, that [students] should listen and follow because the teacher knows better than the students... I still have my own background of being Chinese and what teachers should be like.

Tzu-Ying explained, "It's not easy to get used to it, but I think that's probably because I would not have treated my teacher like that."

For these teachers, changing their teaching methods was one of the first challenges they faced. Two elementary teacher participants described that they had an

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early realization that they needed to use student-centered teaching methods in U.S.

classrooms. Huijuan explained, “In the beginning I talked all the time and then give students a little time to do all the activities. I thought, I am a language teacher, if I don’t talk, how can they learn?” Similarly, Jingting explained:

When I first started teaching here the biggest challenge was I don’t know how to interact with the kids... I probably talked too much... [my Chinese teacher coworkers explained] the teacher is not always the center of the American classroom, but the students are, so you need to let the students do the work.

Two of the high school teachers expressed frustration with the student centered focus of U.S. education and described the relationship between teacher and student as transactional, where students and parents are the customers and teachers the service providers. Hsuan-Wen explained, “teachers here it is their job and [students] are your customers and you are going to help them and teach them to learn the language.” Tzu-Ying explained, “teachers [are] more like people who give service. You need to treat your customers well.”

As demonstrated in this section, many teachers interviewed expressed deep frustration with the lower level of respect for teachers in U.S. culture. However, they also described their attempts to learn the culture and a sincere desire to provide a high level of service to their students. The topic of respect for teachers cannot be separated from the topic of student behavior, which will be further explored in the next section.

Student behavior. Schools in China are characterized as having a strict code of behavior, and a deeply held understanding of the role of teacher and student. In contrast,

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managing the behavior of students in U.S. schools is complicated and often messy. Many participants explained that managing student behavior in China is simple compared with the complex methods of classroom management they found in U.S. schools.

Participant comments help describe how student behavior differs between the two cultures. Two teachers provided strong generalizations regarding student behavior in China. Huijuan explained “in China we don’t have classroom management issues at all... the teachers just talk and ask students to write or speak... students will do it. That’s the culture.” Hsuan-Wen explained “in Taiwan from elementary to high school, [teachers] are all strict. And students are all organized and respectful.” Using a personal example, Fang-Yi explained that she was first surprised by U.S. classroom management techniques when observing her daughter’s kindergarten class “The kids were just walking around, and the teacher doesn’t mind. I mean in our Chinese culture... The student needs to sit in their spot. They cannot move around.” Yongbing gave a very simple explanation, that in China, the “teacher standing here is management.” She added a simple comparison: “we don’t have to use candies or something.” Yuhui simply observed, “Americans don’t teach kids to respect teachers.”

Some specific behaviors of U.S. students seemed to cause particular frustration to the participants. Participant interviews were rich with descriptions of students who cannot sit still, put their feet on chairs, sleep in class, raise their hand even though they do not know the answer, or ask to go to the bathroom during class. Yongbing explained, “Students here can suddenly stand up and walk around and go to sharpen their pencil, take a tissue... But in China, no, you can only stand up when teacher calls you to answer

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questions.” These examples illustrate the amount of freedom that U.S. students often have in the classroom, which challenged these teachers’ expectations.

Three of the participants mentioned one activity common in schools in China and Taiwan, which they felt explained why Chinese schools had fewer problems with student behavior. In Chinese schools it is common for both students and teachers to have a ten-minute break between each class. Fang-Yi explained, “For every fifty minutes we have ten minutes break... [the students] can go out of the classroom, they can relax, talk, go to the restroom.” Fengwen fondly remembered this part of the school day, explaining, “I enjoyed this so much when I was young... I would sit in the classroom... [waiting] for the ten minutes recess so I can talk and run and then come back and sit quiet.” The three Chinese teachers agreed that U.S. students have a difficult time sitting still and focusing on their teacher because they do not have this hourly “recess” built into their schedule.

In addition to the freedom of movement that teachers witnessed in U.S. classrooms, some teachers described the disruptive behavior of specific students. All three middle school teacher participants mentioned that U.S. students intentionally try to make teachers angry. Fang-Yi, a middle school teacher, described her frustrations with one frequent troublemaker who once stood on his desk and pretended he was surfing. She explained “even if I send him to the office, write an email to his parents, his attitude does not change... he is the kind of person, always disrupts the whole classroom.” This challenging behavior caused her a lot of stress and she explained, “everyday when I saw him come to my classroom my heart is very tight.” Fang-Yi explained in the U.S. students “will try to challenge you. Especially middle school students. They always want

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to challenge you [and] make you angry on purpose.” Yongbing became audibly emotional when she described her initial experience as a middle school teacher, explaining “some students here at first they try to challenge me. You know they make some noise and do some weird sounds in class. They want to make you angry, they mean to do that.” Yuhui, who taught at a middle school and a high school, explained that he experienced more challenges from the middle school students and that his high school students were generally well-behaved.

Despite their exasperation, participants’ discussions about troublesome students’ behavior were often paired with descriptions of effective classroom management strategies that teachers had learned during their first years teaching. Yuhui, a middle school teacher, explained that he used a warning system that he learned from a Spanish teacher: “I give them first warning if they misbehave. If they won’t change I give them second warning, second chance. If they still don’t change I send them to the front office with a referral or a behavior slip.” Another middle school teacher, Yongbing explained that she had learned several techniques from other teachers, including some she found effective and others that did not work so well. The effective ones included the three warnings system described by Yuhui and a reward system in which the classroom earns smiley faces for good behavior, and once they have fifteen smiley faces they earn free time or the chance to watch a video. Jingting, an elementary teacher, explained one classroom management technique she had used in her classroom: “They like to move around a lot... so you have to let them stand up and do some activity and then they can

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go back to the seat and listen to the instruction.” Jingting also described the different ways teachers in China and the U.S. would talk to a student about their behavior:

Back in China the teacher might tell a kid... ‘You should stop doing this, you are not allowed to do something and you are going to stay here suspended at school.’

But here the teacher might talk to the kids in an adult way. It’s like ‘I’m telling you why you need to do this, and how you are going to do this, and this is what I’m going to do, and this is what you are going to do.’

These examples demonstrate that teachers knew that in order to be a successful teacher in the U.S. they must learn to adapt to the U.S. styles of teaching. Tzu-Ying explained how she still held fast to her culture while trying to work in another: “in my opinion teachers should be giving instruction and... help you grow instead of control your behavior... But now it’s more like OK, that’s how it works [in the U.S.]. Oh well, just work like that and see what way works.” These rich descriptions of how teachers managed to balance their expectations with reality help illustrate the process of cultural adjustment.

Grades and test scores. As mentioned in chapter two, grades and test scores play a very important role in Chinese educational culture. Beginning in elementary school, grades are used to determine class rank and test scores determine a student’s future academic opportunities. Participants’ descriptions of the importance of testing and grades in China and Taiwan provided a stark contrast to what they found in U.S. K-12 schools. Frustration with the U.S. culture of grades and testing was particularly strong among the three middle school teachers who were interviewed. Participants who taught at the high

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school and elementary school level spent less time talking about this aspect of U.S.

educational culture and were less exasperated when talking about grades and test scores.

Several teachers described the importance of testing in Chinese school culture.

Study skills are also very important because students prepare a full year for a single exam that will determine their future educational opportunities. This fact seemed very salient to all the teachers who mentioned it, and the lack of a similar situation in the U.S. also provided some explanation of middle school students' poor behavior. Yuhui explained the value at stake: "for Chinese schools the admission test to the middle school or the high school is very strict... If you test out you may go to an advanced level high school or middle school." Yongbing explained that in China "the whole year you should work for this exam. For example you will learn twenty questions, we will choose two for them as the final exam, so we will test how well you studied." These examples demonstrate that study skills and test scores are still the way to gain access to education in contemporary China.

All four middle school teacher participants expressed particular frustration that U.S. middle school students were not motivated by their grade point average (GPA). As discussed in chapter two, compulsory education in China and Taiwan ends after middle school. Middle school GPA will help determine if a student will be admitted to high school. Participants were surprised to learn that in the U.S., middle school GPA did not have anything to do with high school admission. Tzu-Ying explained, "I heard that GPA is not graded when you enter to high school." Yuhui said, "they don't count GPA. When they come to eighth grade they don't have any motivation to study." Fang-Yi added, "in

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middle school, because their grade doesn't count, so the students doesn't care if they get an F or a D." Yuhui, one of the middle school teachers, expressed a strong opinion about a college readiness initiative that had been adopted by the middle schools. He explained that this program allowed struggling middle school students to get additional opportunities to turn in homework or retake a test. Yuhui felt this method was:

The most stupid idea in your education system... The message I got... is 'can you help the students to change and improve their grade?' And most time the way I can do this is help them to retake or let them retake the test and most time it is the same test. They do it a second time and they get a better grade and then probably it was supposed to be a D or C and they got an A. And then they got a good grade and the GPA will look better..., but actually you know they don't really study.

Fang-Yi also described a scenario in which a middle school student refused an opportunity to retake a test, and that she realized: "you know America is a free country. If my students say I don't want to retake the test. I say OK... if you don't care then I will respect your choice... I need to respect a different culture."

These teachers' exasperation around students lack of concern about completing homework or achieving high grades may also have been partially fueled by the district's newly implemented middle school homework and grading practices. Two middle school teachers specifically mentioned these practices and Yongbing explained "our school's policy is that there is no deadline for students to turn in homework, anytime they want." The document analysis of new employee orientation materials revealed that in the 2011-12 school year, the district had implemented a new Middle School Model, with the goal

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to “transform grading practices to include a focus on learning, not behavior; provide meaningful feedback; and high-quality assessments.” The new homework practice stated that no more than 20% of any end-of-term grade could be based on homework. The new grading practice eliminated the practice of giving zero points for missing assignments, and strongly discouraged giving an “F” grade to any student. The middle schools had developed this model based on an article that explained that giving a zero grade for missing work was an unfair punishment to students (Reeves, 2004). The district provided a three-page explanation of the new Middle School Model and homework and grading practices, as well as the two-page article in the orientation packet.

While middle school teachers in the study dominated the discussion about grades and teaching, elementary and high school teachers in the study also mentioned grades and testing. High school teachers generally felt that grades and GPA motivated their students. Yuhui, who taught both middle and high school, explained, “I really like high school. You feel like you really achieve something, because they are eager to learn. They have better learning ability. And they also count GPA so they care about their grade.” However, Tzu-Ying was surprised that some of her students did not prioritize homework and study skills. She recalled one day when she announced it was time for their scheduled quiz and one student proudly said, “I didn’t study at all.” She felt no Chinese student would have said this out loud.

Elementary teachers did not discuss grades, but two of the three elementary teacher participants did mention the function of standardized tests at the elementary level. In discussing similarities between cultures, Huijuan explained that she thought teachers in

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both cultures “work hard to see kids growing. And if there are standardized tests, they want to see their students get higher scores... teachers feel rewarded by see students be successful.” Jingting, the youngest of the participants, explained that she saw a growing similarity between U.S. and Chinese school cultures, in that U.S. schools are increasingly focused on standardized testing and other metrics demonstrating student achievement. However, she acknowledged “I’m an elementary school teacher so I don’t have the pressure to let them pass the test.” These examples show that the topic of testing was discussed differently among different teacher populations.

Chinese as an academic subject. Related to grades and testing, nearly all participants mentioned that they felt Chinese language is not considered an important academic subject at all levels in U.S. schools, and that there is a general lack of commitment to teaching and learning world languages. In contrast, Chinese schools begin English instruction in elementary grades, and it is one of three mandatory subjects tested on the *gaokao* college entrance exam, alongside Chinese and math. Several participants expressed frustration that Chinese was not an “important” or “valued” or “tested” subject in their schools. Alongside these claims, participants often used the word “fun” to describe the only way to engage their students in the subject. This section will explore the participant’s attitudes toward the district’s methods of and commitment to teaching Chinese and comparisons of foreign language learning in the two cultures.

One way that teachers explained the perceived value of Chinese was by explaining their role as a “specialist” or “encore” teacher. Jingting, an elementary teacher, described how she came to understand her role as a specialist:

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When I just started teaching here I know my name is “specialist” and I’m a little confused about my what are the expectations for me... I’m called specialist, but the subject I’m teaching is different from music and art and phys ed. Do I need to teach this Chinese as a very serious subject or do I just do like a specialist and just let them have fun?

Jingting also explained that classroom teachers are “competing [for] time with the specialist because they need more time for their kids to do math problems and to read and to do social science.” Fengwen felt that elementary schools “think the subject is not so important.”

Seven of the eight teachers mentioned that in the U.S. it was necessary for teachers to make their lessons more interesting and “fun” in order to engage students.

Yongbing explained the difference between the two cultures of education:

[In China] we think students should work hard and [be] very, very serious in learning, but here it’s totally different. [In the U.S.] they think the funny thing is the best, so they don’t care about those kinds of knowledge; they just care about the interesting things.

Tzu-Ying explained that middle school students are “probably the hardest to teach because they are in between and more energetic and don’t care about grades, so you can only engage them with activities or fun.” One thing Tzu-Ying learned about U.S. school culture is that “mostly [students] are learning for interest. Especially for the language class. So it’s important to engage them and to interest them and to let them know language is important for their future.” In these explanations, the need to make learning

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“fun” seemed to indicate that the subject was not important to the students, and teachers felt the subject was not valued by students or the school administration.

While several teachers expressed frustration that Chinese had to be presented as a “fun” subject, other teachers expressed concern that U.S. schools did not encourage students to take their education seriously. High school teacher Tzu-Ying cautioned:

I think students are much more busier with extracurricular activities, which is good, makes your student life richer. But if the student cannot balance well then that makes it a drawback... Because in Asian countries... whatever is academic is the most important thing... But here [there are] more activities, events... and that makes you wonder what school is for.

Despite all of the frustration around students’ behavior and attention to academics, some of the teachers did express that they felt there were benefits to the U.S. educational style. Fang-Yi expressed some gratefulness that her own children had attended school in the U.S., stating: “I’m very happy my own kids were born here and grow up here because they don’t have a lot of academic stress.” Jingting explained, “I’m just really jealous of the kids here... they get a lot of encouragement. They get support... I feel like here you have very individualized plan for each kid.”

Influence of parents. Similar to the role of teacher in Confucian hierarchy, Chinese parents have a very specific role in their child’s education. Parents respect the teacher and allow teachers to have authority over their children. When these participants began teaching in the U.S. many were surprised to find that the parents of their students did not automatically give them this respect. Several participants provided direct

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comparisons of Chinese and U.S. parents. Hsuan-Wen explained that in “Asian culture the teacher is like your parents, or actually [they] have more power or authority than your parents because they teach you things.” Fengwen said that “in China the parents [are] always very supportive of the teachers... especially if the teacher is being strict. The parents will be more appreciative because they think you are doing your job if you are strict.” Huijuan explained “In United States... many parents focus on pick[ing at] teachers imperfections instead of focus[ing] on push[ing their] students to work hard.”

Several participants learned the hard way that, like their children, U.S. parents do not automatically respect teachers by virtue of the title. Tzu-Ying, who had a conflict with a parent earlier that year, explained, “there are some times when the parents attitude is not so polite.” Yongbing, who had to interact with many parents following an error in the electronic grade book, felt that U.S. parents “trust in their kids more than school or more than their teacher.” Regarding homework, Fang-Yi explained, “some parents they just think, ‘that’s your job’... They don’t think they need to take the responsibility [for their child’s homework].” Huijuan provided this illustration: “A parent emailed me and asked ‘why [didn’t] my daughter... get A?’... In China, no parents dare to ask these kinds of questions. These are the kinds of questions that teachers will ask the parents.”

While most of the participants discussed the influence of parents, a few were hesitant to explain specific situations they had encountered. Huijuan mentioned that she had had a confrontation with a parent, but was not comfortable providing any specific details during the interview, other than to explain that she resolved the issue with the help of the assistant principal, who was supportive. Along these lines, Jingting expressed

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concerns about the U.S. dependence on law suits to resolve problems: “Here it is probably not good [to use sarcasm or hurt the kids’ feelings] because the sometimes they say the parents are going to sue you and the kids might cry and tell their parents saying the teacher probably did something not good to the kids.”

This section provided examples of some of the major differences between U.S. and Chinese school cultures that were raised during the case study. Five key cultural differences were discussed including the role of the teacher, expectations for student behavior, testing and grades, the status of Chinese as an academic subject, and the influence of parents. The examples provided illustrate the ways that cultural differences can influence teacher adjustment. The next section will focus on the teaching community in a cross-cultural context.

Challenges and supports

The previous section provided examples of the differences between Chinese and U.S. school cultures that had been observed by the participants. These examples helped to shape an image of the differences in day-to-day operations at a school and interactions with students. In this section, the world of the teacher is investigated more deeply, including the ways in which new teachers from China integrate into their school and district’s teaching community, especially in their relationships with colleagues and administrators. Specific topics that will be addressed in this section include the need for English language ability, the influence of formal and informal mentorships, the role of the Chinese language teaching team, and integration into social activities among teachers.

English language ability. One area where the majority teachers expressed some discomfort and uncertainty was with their level of English proficiency in K-12 teaching

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environments. Many new immigrants to the U.S. encounter difficulties communicating in English. Huijuan recalled the difficulty she experienced when she first moved to the United States more than 20 years ago: “After one week, I started to feel the pain because I couldn’t read, speak. I don’t understand the sign, what people said, just as [if] I’m handicapped.” While Chinese language teachers have typically achieved a high level of English proficiency before they are hired to teach in U.S. schools, certain aspects of English language fluency still present challenges. Some of these aspects that were discussed by participants included the ability to use age-appropriate language; the skill to adjust vocabulary for different audiences; the need to know specific subject-area vocabulary; the need to have the writing skills to communicate with colleagues and parents by email; and to be able to understand the colloquial and culturally-specific language that teachers use when they socialize with one another, including slang.

Some participants explained that their students had difficulty understanding their English instructions. Yuhui, a middle school teacher explained the challenge of communicating with his students: “You know if I talk to an adult, the communication is not a problem at all. But even [after] I have been [in the U.S.] for more than two years... my sixth graders all had a tough time in understanding me in the beginning.” Jingting generalized that for many teachers from China “language, that’s one of the obvious [challenges]... [We] need to communicate effectively with the kids and [we] need to communicate effectively with [our] coworkers and [our] boss... you need to know the language that the classroom teacher is using.” These two quotes demonstrate that there is

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a specialized vocabulary in teaching, and that teachers are constantly adjusting their language and patterns of speech depending on with whom they are talking.

Specific vocabulary is also necessary to teach certain topics and manage behavior within the Chinese language classroom. Hsuan-Wen, a high school teacher, provided an example of the challenges she had faced when teaching about Chinese culture: “when we talk about the culture we need to use more deeper words, more complicated words to explain things.” Jingting, an elementary teacher provided an example, which highlights specific vocabulary that is used at her school to manage student behavior:

As a teacher you need to know certain language... like say you want the kids to line up... So if you tell them they need to stop talking, be quiet, you probably need to say like ten sentences, but if you say, ‘now show me line basics’ it’s probably worth ten sentences, so you need to know certain language that might help you teach.

Two teachers specifically mentioned that they had difficulty reading and responding to the high volume of email communication sent by the school district and coworkers. Yongbing, explained, “at first [when] I read my emails it caused me too long time... At first I read very carefully... two hours a day.” Tzu-Ying explained that when she wrote email to the principal, colleagues, or parents she was very conscientious about using direct language, but in a polite manner, and explained that “most email is like a little writing [assignment] for me.”

Email was also a common way that teachers in this district communicated with parents. Yongbing, the visiting teacher, was surprised by the amount of email that she got

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from students' parents. Responding to these messages became a time-consuming burden that kept her up late at night. She learned that "if you send kids to the office you should send email to their parents" and also that parents "keep sending me email to talk about the late assignments." Communicating with parents of her students was not one of the tasks that she had anticipated, because as a subject teacher in China, she would only need to communicate this information to the students' homeroom teacher, and the homeroom teacher would maintain communication with each student's parents. Other teachers carefully composed their email messages, especially those going out to parents. Huijuan mentioned that she had her husband read her drafted emails before sending them to parents whose students had misbehaved.

English language fluency also had some influence on teachers' communication with their U.S. American co-workers. Yongbing, the visiting teacher, expressed a hesitancy to speak with her colleagues: "I should communicate more, but you know because my bad English and new people so maybe sometimes I hesitate to ask questions from other teachers." Several other teachers mentioned that it was sometimes difficult to understand the conversations that teachers had in the staff lunchroom. Fengwen explained:

I like to sit and listen to other teachers talking at the lunchtime and sometimes I can understand a lot so I can talk with them, but sometimes when they talk about some topics, then I don't understand, then I cannot say anything. Sometimes even the whole time I couldn't say anything! I just sit there and listen and maybe understand maybe 70, 60% of the conversation.

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Yongbing explained that in the lunchroom teachers made attempts to include her in the conversation:

At first they will, you know say something special to me. Because when you are talking there it's hard for me to catch. Especially the jokes, I don't know what they are laughing about. But when I was there they will say slowly and they will ask me some questions... I know they do this special to me. So I feel sometimes [it's tiring] for me and [tiring] for them. I know it is free time... It is OK for me to listen.

Hsuan-Wen recommended that new teachers coming from China should “watch more TV to learn the language.” Participants explained that as these specific English skills improved, their careers as Chinese language teachers became easier.

Mentorships. Mentor teachers are frequently used to provide a support system for new teachers and to help them learn the school culture. A question about the role of mentors was included in the list of interview questions, so each interview included some discussion about mentors. In this school district each new teacher was assigned a mentor teacher during their first year at the school. The mentor teacher was responsible for their own class and lessons, but was also supposed to observe their mentee teaching at least once per year, and provide guidance to their mentee on an ongoing basis. In addition to this formal mentor relationship, several teachers mentioned having an informal network of teachers in the school that they sought out when they had problems. This section provides examples of how teachers from China experienced mentor relationships.

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Participants overwhelmingly valued their mentorships. Huijuan, who had already been teaching at her school for five years explained: “when I have a question I still run to her... She answers all my questions. If she cannot answer, she will direct me to other people.” Several participants mentioned that their mentors assisted with practical considerations. Fang-Yi explained, “my grade book always has problem to showing up the grade. So [my mentor will] always fix my problem.” Jingting approached her mentor with questions about classroom management, “like how do you manage the kids? How do you create a learning-friendly classroom?”

Others, while appreciative of their assistance, felt that mentor teachers were not particularly well chosen. Yongbing expressed her frustrations with her mentor relationship: “I’m not quite sure what her work is... She has a lot of meetings to attend every day. Sometimes she is not in this building.” While mentorships provided teachers with a formal support network, Yuhui explained that the support network for teachers in China is stronger:

If I was a teacher in China I would have a better relationship with other coworkers or colleagues because they all have a separate office. They all need to work together in the office rather than in the separate classrooms. So they have to see each other more.

Interviews revealed that the majority of participants had also established their own informal network of mentor teachers that they were more likely to seek out when they had specific needs or questions. Many of these informal relationships developed out of convenience. Tzu-Ying, a high school teacher, explained “I prefer more immediate

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response so usually I find a person instead of email [my mentor].” Fang-Yi explained that she considered the teacher in the neighboring classroom one of her mentors, and explained they came to know each other: “At passing time we need to stand outside to supervise students... so that’s why we have the chance to talk.” Huijuan, an elementary teacher explained “When I eat in lunchroom, I will ask questions: ‘I have these things I don’t know how to handle, what do you think? If it was you, what did you do?’ Or ‘for this particular student, do you have any special strategy?’” Yongbing, the visiting teacher, found a teacher who had previous experience teaching English in Peru to be particularly helpful: “she knows the difference between cultures... the first day when I came here she told me... ‘I know how hard it is.’”

A few participants expressed concern that the Chinese teacher does not have any other peers at their school who teach Chinese, or even know anything about their subject. Yuhui explained, “I mean if you ask for something they will definitely help you. But for me... my subject is Chinese and all other teachers they are English speakers. So they cannot really help with my subject.” While each Chinese language teacher was on their own in their building, there were two established Chinese language teacher teams, which met monthly. The role of these teams will be discussed in the next section.

Chinese teaching team. In addition to the relationships that were built with colleagues, all Chinese language teachers belonged to either the elementary or secondary Chinese teacher team. These teams held monthly meetings during after school hours, for which they were compensated with overtime pay. Several interview participants mentioned the benefits that they gained by having regular meetings with the Chinese

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teachers in the district. In this section I draw upon interview content as well as my observations of the elementary and secondary Chinese language team meetings held in April 2012.

All participants discussed the monthly Chinese teacher meetings in their interviews, and they universally recognized them as an important part of their work. Several participants felt that the monthly meetings were not frequent enough, while others thought this was adequate and similar to the frequency of teacher team meetings in China. Huijuan provided a comparison between different groups of teachers at their school: “[Chinese teachers] are looking forward to the meeting. [Spanish teachers] don’t... The Spanish teacher meetings are not as harmonious as our meetings.”

The elementary teacher team’s April meeting was held in Jingting’s classroom during after-school hours. In a potluck-style, the group of six teachers and the Chinese team coordinator, who taught at the middle school, brought Chinese snacks and made tea. As mentioned in chapter three, this meeting was conducted in Chinese. The majority of the meeting agenda was dedicated to the discussion of curriculum, including a review of the March curriculum and a preview of the May curriculum. During the curriculum discussion, the teachers referenced a large three-ring binder that contained the district’s elementary Chinese language curriculum, which had been developed the previous year by a team of the district’s elementary Chinese language teachers. The discussions included strategies for teaching body parts and members of the family, and demonstrated that the teachers were aware of the need for sensitivity when teaching these topics to students with disabilities and among students who might have families that would be considered

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“non-traditional.” After the curriculum discussion, teachers moved on to a discussion of the upcoming Dragon Boat Festival. Jingting recommended reading an English language picture book that told the story of the Dragon Boat Festival. Another teacher, Fengwen, who was known to be artistic, shared a dragon boat craft activity that she had created. The final agenda item was to discuss classroom management skills and techniques. The meeting was scheduled to last two hours, but ended up lasting about two and a half. The teachers did not seem rushed to leave the meeting, but rather demonstrated that it was important to cover all of the material on the agenda. After the meeting adjourned several teachers stayed in the classroom chatting about work and their personal lives.

The secondary teacher team meeting was held in the library of one school. Like the elementary meeting, teachers passed around a selection of Chinese snack foods. The district’s world languages coordinator, who did not speak Chinese, attended the first half of the meeting and shared some announcements, and congratulated one of the teachers who had gotten into graduate school and would not be returning to the district the following year. This was followed by an announcement that the district would be hiring new Chinese teachers, and a request to spread the word within the community of Chinese language teachers. Once the world languages coordinator left the meeting, the remainder of the discussion was conducted in Chinese, and focused on the content of the final exams. In her interview, Tzu-Ying, a high school teacher, described the purpose of the monthly meetings: “that’s usually the time we will ask about how to teach a certain subject and what material they think is effective and how do you deal with students behavior.” In April the secondary team meeting focused on the content of the final exams

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that had been developed for each level of Chinese, and planned the district-wide test schedule.

Social activities. Social activities were explicitly brought up in each interview.

While mentorships and team meetings provided teachers the opportunity to interact with certain colleagues, many teachers mentioned other social activities that occurred within the teaching community. These included activities that happened both during and after school hours. Socializing during school hours included conversations during the teacher's lunch break, potluck lunches, and celebrations for teacher's birthdays. After hours activities included invitations to happy hour at a bar, and group outings to a Twins baseball game.

Several participants mentioned that lunchtime was seen as a potential time to socialize and meet friends. Yongbing developed one lasting friendship during this time: "at first I always had lunch together with the special ed[ucation] teachers because they have the same lunch as me... One of them... is my first American friend... We hang out together after school." However, rotating lunch schedules and distance to the staff lunch room sometimes made it difficult for teachers to participate in this daily social routine. Jingting explained:

I think part of the reason I don't get to socialize with the teachers is because my schedule... the staffs lounge is down there, so I don't like to waste my time.

Thirty minutes it is hard to finish my lunch so I'll probably stay here and eat my lunch.

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Yongbing echoed this complaint: “Sometimes I will join them, but not a lot because it is too far from here and I really want to do some work during this free time.”

Two teachers specifically mentioned learning about U.S. cooking traditions, including potlucks and chili contests at teacher lunches. Fang-Yi explained:

Every month we have a potluck... sometimes I will be assigned to prepare some particular food, so I will ask them... “How do I prepare this kind of food?” and they are willing to share with me how to prepare, give me the recipe.

Fengwen recalled participating in her first chili contest. She explained that she made fried rice with chili peppers in it, not realizing that in the U.S. chili refers to a type of stew. She recalled this experience with a good deal of laughter about the confusion.

Formal whole-school activities provided some participants with opportunities to socialize. Huijuan discussed taking on additional responsibilities as a member of the school’s social committee, and as a coordinator for the school’s annual Festival of Nations event. Yuhui participated in the students-against-staff basketball game, which not only brought him onto a team with fellow teachers, but also “helped [him] to be famous among students.”

Participants were more likely to participate in social activities that were organized by the school than they were to participate in activities organized by smaller groups of teachers. Several teachers mentioned declining invitations to social activities among smaller groups of teachers, including happy hour and other activities. Yongbing explained, “the first day there are two teachers, maybe they are about the same age as me, they invite me to the bar... but I say sorry because I need to take the ride home, they

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couldn't send me home." Jingting explained how she had responded to an invitation to a staff happy hour: "I thought about going [to happy hour] once or twice but then sometimes something pops up or my specialist team says they're not going so I say I'm not going." In another instance Jingting declined an invitation to a Twins baseball game with co-workers, aware that it would have been an opportunity to socialize with her coworkers. She explained "I'm not a big fan of watching baseball so I probably missed out on some social time with them." Participants were happy to talk about social activities, openly acknowledged the challenges they faced as members of another culture, and demonstrated an awareness of some of the benefits they might gain by participating in more social activities with their coworkers.

Advice provided by new teachers from China

Two of the final interview questions asked participants to give advice to a new teacher coming from China, and to provide suggestions for administrators who were working with teachers from China. These questions were designed to help identify which aspects of the adjustment process were considered the most important to the participants. These questions were also asked with the intent to develop recommendations for schools that hire new teachers from China. A summary of responses to these interview questions is provided in the two brief sections below.

Advice for incoming teachers. Participants were eager to suggest what kinds of advice they would give to a hypothetical new teacher from China. Many participants reiterated topics that were discussed earlier in this section, including adjusting to U.S. culture differences, improving English language ability, and teaching in a more engaging

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style. Some new suggestions included encouraging teachers to ask questions, and to adjust, or even lower, their expectations of students.

Many teachers advised new teachers from China to do as much as possible to adjust to U.S. culture inside and outside the classroom. In response to this question, Fengwen advised teachers to “prepare for culture shock.” Fang-Yi explained, “don’t bring our culture here, because here [they are] American kids, not Chinese kids, so you need to follow their culture to teach.” Tzu-Ying provided more detail about what to expect of U.S. students: “Don’t think the students here are the same as the students you were [in China]... Here the students are more individual. And more direct. And they would not just listen. They would ask. They would confront. And they would challenge you.” Yuhui specifically mentioned that teachers should have a sense of humor, and explained his surprise that “students are more interested in me than in this language.” Hsuan-Wen even suggested that schools should hire more native English speakers who have studied Chinese, similar to many of the schools’ Spanish and French teachers, so that the Chinese teachers could come in with knowledge of U.S. school culture and avoid many of the cultural challenges that she had encountered.

Two participants emphasized that it is important that new teachers feel comfortable to ask questions whenever there was something they did not understand. Yongbing explained, “The most important thing is to communicate, to ask, because... you will never know everything... I learned everything from other teachers... everyone is American they know this better than you.” Jingting added a cultural explanation for her suggestion to ask questions, “Chinese people they are really afraid of asking. Especially

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if there is someone who has never been to the U.S.... you are probably afraid of speaking.”

Several participants advised new Chinese teachers to adjust their expectations, or even lower them. Tzu-Ying explained, “I originally expected [students] to work hard, but that turned out to be my imagination.” Hsuan-Wen explained “set your expectations [of students] lower.” Yuhui echoed this, saying teachers should “lower expectations [of] student’s behavior and also academic performance.” Yuhui also suggested that teachers “need to lower their expectation about themselves. They are not like Confucius. They do not really deserve other people’s respect.” This overview of advice came directly from teachers’ first-year experiences, and provides suggestions for how we can prepare and support future newcomers in their first years of teaching in U.S. K-12 schools.

Advice for school administrators. Participants were not hesitant to give advice to school administrators. Many of their recommendations fell into three specific themes, including the need for a better introduction to U.S. K-12 school culture before they begin teaching, the need to know more about the terms of their employment, and the need for school administrators and other teachers to have some knowledge of and respect for the study of Chinese language and culture. Specific examples of these themes will be discussed in this section.

Among the teachers that identified a need to know more about the U.S. school system, several specific ideas were suggested. Several participants explained that teachers would be better prepared for teaching if they were allowed time to observe U.S. classrooms before starting their teaching jobs. Jingting recommended that new teachers

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should be shown a video of a “real classroom scene.” Fang-Yi suggested that new teachers should be given “time to adjust their culture to American culture.” Tzu-Ying and Yuhui suggested that schools provide teachers from China with stronger foundations in classroom management.

Another recommendation was that administrators should do more to help Chinese teachers understand the terms of their employment. Only one of the participants was fully licensed to teach in Minnesota. The others were using temporary community expert licenses. Community experts are not allowed to be union members, so these teachers did not receive information from the teacher’s union, which provided relevant human resources information to the unionized teachers in the district. Two teachers were particularly outspoken about this issue. Huijuan had been teaching in the district for five years, and was dedicated to the profession. She had made a career change and gone back to school to become a Chinese teacher. She explained that she still felt that it was difficult to understand the terms of her employment, including whether or not she had earned tenure or seniority at her school. This affected her attitude towards her employer: “The isolation bothers me. If I just want a job to earn money, I am OK with that... I just go home and take care of my family. But I’m not this kind of person. I am a team player. I want to participate.” Yuhui, a first year teacher who was leaving the profession next year to return to graduate school, suggested that administrators of Chinese language programs ...need to know [Chinese teachers] come to teach this subject it’s for other reasons. They probably want to get a green card or H1-B visa... I think the school wants teachers to teach here for three to five years to have a stable team... if you

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want a lower turnover rate you got to give people motivation to stay. It's not just about money. They need to know what Chinese teachers really care about.

These two teachers' opinions illustrate the variety of motivations that drive Chinese teachers to the profession and the breadth of questions that they may have for their human resources representative.

Another recommendation was that school administrators increase their understanding of Chinese language and culture. Jingting explained that the principal "needs to know more about the Chinese culture... Because that is a subject in your school. I mean we all know about math, social science, physics and chemistry." Jingting even suggested that the district could "organize some language training or some culture training stuff for classroom teachers because they know so little about it." She suggested that this might help build support for the study of Chinese language within the building and within the district. Yongbing described conversations she had with teachers that made her feel more comfortable at her school: "They ask me where is your country? What is your hometown? What is school in China like? They will ask me this and... may understand me more, about how hard it is." This curiosity made Yongbing feel welcome and part of the team.

Both Huijuan and Yuhui recommended that schools provide better Chinese language teaching resources. Yuhui expressed a need for more money to buy Chinese language and culture materials, which are difficult to find and often more expensive. Huijuan explained, "a lot of things I brought from home" while pointing to the sparsely stocked bookshelves and display cases in her classroom.

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This chapter synthesized the content of interviews with eight Chinese language teachers, observation of two Chinese teacher team meetings, and the content of the materials provided at the school district's new teacher orientation. The content was analyzed and then categorized into three themes, which were presented in the sections of this chapter. The first section identified many of the differences between U.S. and Chinese education systems that were observed by the research participants. The second section identified many of the challenges and support systems that Chinese language teachers encountered during their first years as teachers. The third section reviewed the responses to two specific interview questions, including what advice they would give to a Chinese language teacher and advice they would give to administrators in a school with a Chinese language program. Within each of these sections, quotes and interview content were used to illustrate the participants' feelings and opinions. The final chapter will include further discussion about these findings, suggest some implications of this study, identify some of the limitations of this study, and provide recommendations for further study.

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Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The previous chapter summarized and analyzed findings from the case study about how Chinese language teachers adapt to working in U.S. K-12 schools. This final chapter includes a discussion of the themes that were identified in the previous chapter, and reviews them in the context of the theories of culture difference and related research about immigrant teachers, which were introduced in the literature review. That discussion is followed by a discussion of the implications of this research. This chapter continues with a discussion of the limitations of the research. I then provide recommendations for schools that hire teachers from China and Taiwan and suggest directions for further research on this topic.

Discussion of themes

The central research question of this paper asked: “how do teachers from China adapt to teaching in U.S. K-12 schools?” This question was investigated through the lens of cultural difference. Clarifying questions, included: “how do teachers from China describe the cultural differences between Chinese and U.S. schools,” and “what resources do teachers from China use to seek to understand the differences between school cultures?” Additional questions included “what assistance does the K-12 school community provide to new teachers from China?” and “what resources and information can be helpful to new teachers from China?” and “how can U.S. American colleagues and administrators support new teachers from China to improve the teaching and learning

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experience?” These questions informed the literature review and the design of my research.

The premise of this study is that cultural differences influence how all people function in the world, and that newcomers to any culture find that they must make adjustments in order to work and succeed in the new cultural environment. The findings from this case study of teachers from China teaching in U.S. K-12 schools support that premise. Hall’s integrated theory of culture provided a foundation for this study by asserting that many differences are particular to a culture, and that these differences could be studied. Hall’s concept of high and low context communication was particularly relevant to this study of Chinese teachers working in U.S. schools. Hofstede’s dimensions of cultural difference provided a framework for better understanding the specific cultural differences between people from the U.S., China, and Taiwan. Several of the themes that were identified in the case study can be further explored through the lens of three of Hofstede’s dimensions: high versus low power distance (PDI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), and long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO). The four problem areas Hofstede identified in cross-cultural learning situations and related research about immigrant teachers also frame this analysis.

High versus low context communication. The challenges presented by high context versus low context communication were pervasive across all communications between teachers from China and their U.S. colleagues, administrators, students, and students’ parents. Communication difficulties were then compounded by the teachers’ lack of confidence in their English language ability, particularly for specific tasks like

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writing email to parents or coworkers. When participants were challenged by cross-cultural communication, they often expressed surprise at the amount of communication that was needed, but also affirmed that one of the best ways to resolve a problem was by asking questions. These examples support Hall's claim that people from high context cultures appreciate detailed information from colleagues when working in low context cultures.

Power distance. The difference between the U.S. and Chinese cultural values for power distance were resoundingly supported in participant interviews about the differences between the two educational cultures. Hofstede's dimension of power distance can be connected to many of the themes that were discussed in this research, including the role of the teacher, student behavior, the influence of parents, and the advice that new teachers from China should ask questions.

As discussed extensively in chapter four, teachers from China and Taiwan were particularly surprised that U.S. students did not show teachers the same kind of respect that is expected in a Chinese or Taiwanese classroom. This lack of respect included the absence of decorum in the classroom, with examples of students putting their feet on chairs and freely moving about the classroom. It also included the disrespectful ways that students behaved towards teachers, with examples of students who challenged the teacher or intentionally did things to make the teacher angry. Despite any preparation for U.S. culture, teachers from China still expected that students would behave in a way that reflected the social order that was established by Confucius, where the student respects the teacher.

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In participant interviews, several teachers explained that they were also surprised by the power dynamic that existed between students and parents, and parents and teachers. Hofstede discussed the role of parents directly in his research about applying his model to education. He provided the explanation that in large power distance societies, parents are expected to side with the teacher, but in small power distance societies parents are expected to side with the students. The stories of the two teachers who had experienced conflicts with parents, and shared their experiences during the interviews, provided examples that reflected Hofstede's theoretical explanation.

Individualism versus collectivism. The U.S. and Chinese values of individualism versus collectivism are highly divergent and present challenges in many cross-cultural situations. In this research, China and Taiwan's high measures for the value of collectivism were reflected in the ways that participants discussed their own professional development, and explained their participation in formally structured activities in their schools. All of the teachers expressed an appreciation of the formal mentorship process that the district established for new teachers. They also participated readily in the Chinese teacher team meetings, another professional development activity encouraged by the school district. My observation of the April meetings indicated that the meetings are collaborative and productive, and perhaps similar to the *jiaoyanzu* teaching research group meetings at schools in China, as discussed by Paine and Ma (1993). Chinese teachers also demonstrated an enthusiasm for other activities organized by the school, including birthday celebrations, potlucks, and the teacher versus student

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basketball game. These formal activities to interact with colleagues were widely accepted and appreciated among the research participants.

However, many Chinese teachers expressed less comfort with activities that reflected the U.S. culture's high value of individualism. While all participants expressed an interest in participating in school activities, very few expressed an interest in participating in informal social activities with other teachers. In addition, some of the teachers' concerns about student behavior in the classroom are related to individualism, where students are encouraged to express their opinions and look out for themselves.

Long-term versus short-term orientation. The short-term orientation of the U.S. culture, and the long-term orientation of Chinese and Taiwanese cultures can also be used to explain some of the themes that were raised during this research study. Attitudes towards testing are closely related to this dimension. The middle school teacher participants expressed acute frustration with regard to their students' lack of motivation during the middle school years. Middle school is a time of high stakes testing in Chinese educational culture. In China and Taiwan, students are motivated to do well on a single test at the end of their high school years, supporting the values of long-term vision and persistence. As several Chinese teacher participants described in their interviews, U.S. middle school students were not very focused on exams, and some even chose to accept a poor score, even when given the opportunity to retake the test.

Several Chinese teachers expressed concern that their schools did not place high academic value on Chinese as an "academic" subject. This concern can be explained in the relation to China's long-term orientation. As mentioned in the literature review,

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students in China begin studying English in the elementary grades, and it is one of three academic subjects that are required as part of the national college entrance exam. In many ways, learning English in China is a good indicator of the great levels of persistence that are a characteristic of China's long-term orientation. Participants in this research expressed confusion about their schools' motivations for teaching Chinese if it was not a tested, and therefore, "serious" subject. They questioned the value schools placed on Chinese language, particularly in relation to the status of Chinese teacher as a "specialist" and the Chinese language class as an "elective" or "encore" course. Elective courses were seen as opportunities for students to have "fun" while learning. The study by Myles, Cheng, & Wang (2006) also reflected a similar frustration with the Canadian education system's focus on "fun" classroom activities. In that study, one participant expressed his opinion that Canadian elementary education included "too much fun... ice skating, ballet, rock climbing" and later explained his reasoning that "things are not like that in the real world. From my personal perspective I think this in the long run affect them [students] as adults. They are not training the hard way" (p. 238).

Implications

The implications of this study are numerous and may be valuable to many populations. This study is particularly relevant to professionals in fields of teacher training and school administration, particularly those who prepare and hire Chinese language teachers for careers in U.S. K-12 schools. As Chinese language education programs grow, there is an increased need for educational professionals to understand cultural differences and how they play out in specific cross-cultural situations. Well-informed education professionals can help prepare new teachers from China for some of

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the challenges that they may face during their first years as teachers, perhaps helping them to avoid some of these situations altogether.

Teachers from China may also find value in this research. The descriptions of the cultural differences between China and the U.S. may highlight unknown aspects of the U.S. culture of education. The discussion of the challenges faced by other populations of immigrant teachers may also provide reassurance that other groups of immigrant teachers have also struggled with many of the same issues. Perhaps the contribution that is most important to immigrant and visiting teachers from China is the recognition that their contributions to education are valuable and that the challenges they face while working in U.S. schools are important for outsiders to understand. Several participants expressed enthusiasm for this research and expressed the hope that their participation in the study might help improve the situation for future teachers from China and Taiwan who take jobs teaching Chinese in U.S. K-12 schools.

Additionally, colleagues and coworkers of teachers from China may also find that this research helps them understand the Chinese culture of education and the cultural adjustments that are required when new teachers from China work in U.S. K-12 schools. The cultural information may encourage U.S. American coworkers to interact with their Chinese colleagues, and promote conversation between colleagues about their schools and their jobs. Additionally, the efforts that U.S. American coworkers make to understand and appreciate the differences between U.S. and Chinese cultures will help teachers from China feel welcome in their new school.

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Finally, this research may help to increase the quantity and improve the quality of Chinese language programs in K-12 schools across the U.S. The U.S. government has classified Chinese as a critical language and has encouraged more U.S. Americans to study the language at all levels of education. In order to respond to this need, local school districts need resources to support the development of strong Chinese language programs. Highly qualified teachers are an essential determinant of student success.

Limitations

Barriers of language and culture often limit cross-cultural research. As a native English speaker who does not read Chinese, I was limited to sources published in the English language. This language barrier meant I was unable to reference any of the related research that has been published in China. I am certain that this body of research would have provided valuable insight into the differences between Chinese and U.S. cultures of education. In addition, I was limited by my own cultural world-view. While this study is grounded in the idea that learning about cultural difference matters, I must also acknowledge the difficulty of that task. Hall defined culture as “a part of man’s behavior which he takes for granted – the part he doesn’t think about since he assumes it is universal or regards it as idiosyncratic” (Hall, 1973, p. 30). One of the greatest challenges of doing this research was to avoid making assumptions based on my own culture and world-view.

The barriers of language and culture also existed between my participants and me. The limits of the case study method, cross-cultural interviewing, the language barrier, and the role of the researcher were outlined in chapter three. Case studies are limited in scope and are only generalizable to the experiences of the research participants. Cross-cultural

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interviews often limit the amount of information that can be gathered, especially when someone from a low context culture interviews people from high context cultures.

Language barriers also limit the information that can be gathered. Chinese language interviews may have provided descriptions that were more nuanced and descriptive. The role of the researcher might influence the information that is shared during the interview.

Another limitation is the relatively small size and scope of this study. The eight participants included in this study provide only eight perspectives about their experiences as teachers. A review of one school district only reflects the cultures and practices of that school district. With additional time and funding, this research could have included participants from across the country, which would have provided breadth to the participant population, and could have helped increase the validity of the findings. The timing of the research, and the resources available also limited the depth of this study. Additional time and resources could have allowed me to conduct a series of interviews with the participants, which would have allowed me to measure change in attitudes and opinions over a period of time. Interviews with other stakeholders including the world language coordinator, school principals, mentor teachers, and/or students would likely have also revealed valuable information about the cultural adjustment of teachers from China, and would have added a second layer of cross-cultural perspectives to this study. Research is always limited by certain factors. The limitations of this research study can also be viewed as areas for improvement in future studies of this population. My recommendations for future research are included in the section below.

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Recommendations

This research provided insight into the cultural adjustment that is experienced by new teachers from China, a timely topic that responds to a current need in the Chinese language teaching community in the U.S. Existing research about the experiences of immigrant and visiting teachers is culturally-specific, and there is a lack of research about the training needs of immigrant and visiting teachers from China and Taiwan. This research provides a new perspective on the experiences of Chinese language teachers, and has resulted in a short list of recommendations for schools that hire teachers from China and Taiwan. However, these findings also raise additional questions that remain unanswered. This section provides recommendations to schools that hire teachers from China and Taiwan and provides recommendations for further research.

This research identified a few simple steps that schools can take to increase the comfort and success of a new teacher from China or Taiwan during their first years of teaching. These steps include conducting a pre-service orientation for new teachers from China that explicitly describes the school culture; providing the new teacher with mentor teachers and explaining the nature of their relationship; encouraging principals, mentor teachers, and other U.S. American teacher colleagues to learn about Chinese culture; and providing teachers with opportunities for ongoing professional development, including the chance to discuss the content of these lessons with other native Chinese speakers.

Individual schools can take measures to improve the situation of their Chinese language teachers, but it is also important to drive additional research on this topic. There is a shortage of research about teachers from China who are working in U.S. K-12 schools. Several of the studies of immigrant teachers I did find were from Canada and

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Australia, and the research participants included immigrant teachers from many cultures.

These studies contributed to this research, particularly because their participants included a sampling of immigrants from Confucian heritage cultures including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. My recommendation is that more research should be conducted about the cultural adjustment of teachers who come to the U.S. from China and Taiwan, and this research should include perspectives from immigrant teachers as well as the growing number of visiting Chinese teachers who are working temporarily in the U.S. A longitudinal study of teachers from China could measure changes in attitude and cultural adjustment over a period of time and would provide additional insight into the adjustment process. By following a teacher from pre-service orientation through the first years of teaching, researchers could gain valuable information about critical points during the adjustment process.

Another recommendation is for a team of researchers from the U.S. and China to conduct collaborative study on cultural adjustment. Yunli Gao's dissertation investigated the professional identities of two Chinese teachers and was an invaluable resource. Her four-month case study of classroom teaching included interviews, which were conducted in Chinese, and observations of the classroom, which were presented from the perspective of a Chinese citizen. Collaborative and cross-cultural research teams have the potential to reveal more nuanced and descriptive study of cultural differences in education.

Additional recommendations would be to expand the comparative nature of this study. Some suggested areas for strengthened comparisons include conducting parallel

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interviews with students, mentor teachers, and school administrators. A study with a larger scope could allow researchers to compare Chinese teachers based on specific criteria, including comparing immigrant teachers to visiting teachers, licensed teachers to community expert teachers, or first year teachers to experienced teachers. This type of study could also compare the experiences of teachers who work in urban, suburban, and rural U.S. settings.

Conclusions

Chinese language instruction is growing rapidly in U.S. K-12 schools, and the number of qualified Chinese language teachers currently does not meet the demand. Many of the newest Chinese teachers are underprepared when they begin teaching in U.S. K-12 schools. This qualitative case study investigated the ways that new teachers from China and Taiwan adapt to working in U.S. K-12 schools. Using literature about the experiences of immigrant teachers and theories of cultural difference, this study identified some of the challenges that teachers from China and Taiwan might face during this transition. A case study of eight teachers from China and Taiwan provided a rich illustration of the specific challenges of cultural adjustment to U.S. K-12 schools. This research resulted in several recommendations for schools that hire new teachers from China and Taiwan, as well as suggestions for additional research on this important topic. Improved understanding of the cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese cultures of education will improve teacher satisfaction and teacher retention, which increases the stability of the Chinese language program. Stable and successful programs taught by highly qualified teachers have a positive impact on student learning. Increasing the cultural understanding between teachers from China and their U.S. American co-workers

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and administrators will result in stronger Chinese language programs, improved

performance among students of Chinese language, and will help the U.S. meet the critical

need for more U.S. Americans to understand Chinese language and culture.

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Appendix

Interview questions.

1. First, can you tell me your name and where you are from in China?
2. Could you tell me how old you are and how many years has it been since you moved to the U.S.?
3. How long have you been teaching in the U.S.? How long have you been teaching at this school?
4. What grade level students do you teach? What levels of Chinese?
5. Were you a teacher in China before you arrived in the U.S.?
 - a. If so, what level
 - b. If no, did you have a different career in China? Tell me about it.
6. What do you like best about your job right now?
7. When you first started teaching in the U.S. what were the biggest differences you noticed between U.S. and Chinese school cultures?
 - a. Probe: Did this surprise you?
 - b. Probe: Do you think this difference is unique to your school or do you think it is a cultural difference?
 - c. Probe: What influence do you think that difference has on your work?
 - d. Probe: Do you have an idea why this difference exists?
 - e. Probe: Do you have a preference for the Chinese or U.S. way of doing this?

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8. Did you find that there were similarities between U.S. and Chinese school cultures? If yes, did they surprise you?
9. What are some of the challenges you have experienced as a teacher in the U.S.?
 - a. Have you talked about this challenge with other teachers or people at your school? Why/why not?
 - b. Who did you talk about this with? Why did you choose that person?
10. Are there teachers in your school who you look to for advice or help if you have a problem?
 - a. If so, can you give me an example of the type of question you had or problem they helped you resolve?
 - b. If so, how did you come to know those teachers? Was it through a formal process like a mentor teacher program?
 - c. If no, do you have a mentor who works in another school?
 - d. If no, is there a reason you don't seek advice from other teachers?
11. Have teachers or principals given you advice or suggestions about how to teach in U.S. schools?
 - a. If so, could you give me an example of their advice?
 - b. If so did you take their advice? Why or why not?
12. Do you feel your American colleagues engage you in the school's academic and social environment?
 - a. If yes, can you give some examples?
 - b. How about your Chinese teaching colleagues?

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13. Have you experienced uncomfortable situations with any teachers or principals at your school?
 - a. If so, could you explain the nature of the difficulty and how it was resolved?
 - b. If so, could you tell me if you think the situation might have been handled differently in a Chinese school? How?
14. Are there things you wish you had known about U.S. school culture before you started teaching in the U.S.?
 - a. Can you tell me about these things?
 - b. How did you learn about these things? Who did you learn them from?
15. If you were asked to give advice about teaching in the U.S. to a new teacher coming from China, what specific advice would you give?
16. Do you have any suggestions for what American administrators or colleagues could do to make Chinese teachers feel more welcomed in the U.S. K-12 schools?