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American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Culture

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Abstract

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American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Culture

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The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture, which includes the use of language, communication style, family values with regard to education, and development and identity. Different from previous studies on Chinese Americans, which were conducted in coastal urban areas, this study took place in a Midwestern rural town. 17 American teachers (K-12), eight Chinese immigrant parents, and five Chinese American students participated in semi-structured interviews. Data consisted of interviews with teachers, parents, and students, and pertinent state and operational social studies curricula. Data analysis followed the naturalistic inquiry approach, and themes emerged from the data.

Major findings of the study include: (1) While the majority of the student participants’ native language was Chinese and they began learning English upon entering school, none of the teacher participants was able to provide language assistance; (2) Teacher participants positively commented on Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education, but did not realize parents’ communicative challenges caused by linguistic barriers and a lack of understanding of American culture and American education; (3) Teacher participants were not aware of the cultural influence behind Chinese immigrant parents’ high expectations for their children’s education and
some teacher participants thought high socioeconomic status Chinese American families attached more importance to education than low status families; and (4) The majority of teacher participants believed their Chinese American students fit well in the school culture but half of the parent participants reported racial discrimination against their children, and fewer than half of the social studies teachers in this study included cultural diversity in their curriculum as required by the official state curriculum standards.

Based on the findings, this study has implications for practice and policy. Implications for practice focus on improving the communication between American teachers and Chinese immigrant parents and on helping in-service teachers better understand their ethnically diverse students. Implications for policy emphasize the development of preservice teachers’ skills in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL] and their appreciation for Asian cultures.
Dedication

To my parents: An Lu and Tian Yanshu,

who taught me that the happiest people are the ones

that are brave enough to chase their dreams!

-----

献给我的父母：安路和田艳书，

你们让我懂得勇敢追寻梦想乃人生最大的快乐！
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Unforgettable was the moment when my dear friend threw out an idea to me that I should get my Ph.D. in the United States. “What? Do you know how much that will cost? My parents are factory workers, and you want me to study in the U.S.?” “Show them how good you are, and they will help you,” he said. His advice led me onto an unbelievable and life-rewarding journey. Thank you – Bruce A. Williams!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. (Obama, 2009)

Patchwork: Are We There Yet?

At his inauguration in 2009, President Obama used the word *patchwork* to describe the diverse heritages in the U.S. The connotation of a patchwork is an affirmation of each unique culture. It implies to people from all ethnic groups that they “should take pride [in] [their] distinctiveness” (C-SPAN Video Library, 2009). Contrary to the notion of a *patchwork* is the idea of a *melting pot*, which came into common use after Israel Zangwill’s play “The Melting Pot” was performed in 1908. A melting pot “emphasizes one unifying culture and language as a necessity for national strength” (Skerrett, 2008, p. 262) and requires that immigrants “ought to assimilate and acquire the mainstream culture” (Entwistle, 1999/2000, p. 1) by “[forsaking] their original cultures in order to fully participate in the nation-state” (Banks, 2006, p. 22).

American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) described the United States as “a nation of nations” (as cited in Solomon, 1985, p. 88). For centuries, its immigrants came from almost all over the world and landed on different shores. Immigrants to those different shores were welcomed in quite different ways: those from Europe landed on the Atlantic shore and were soon granted American citizenship, while those who came from Asia to the Pacific shore were denied citizenship and treated as strangers for decades (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998). The different treatment experienced by European and Asian immigrants was rooted in racism – being American generally meant being
white (Takaki, 1998, 2008). “Not to be ‘white’ is to be designated as the ‘Other’ – different, inferior, and inassimilable” (Takaki, 2008, p. 4). As Takaki described in an interview:

The Founding Fathers saw America as a Whiteman’s country. The signers of the Declaration of Independence saw America as a Whiteman’s country. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration, said, after he purchased Louisiana, “I look forward to the day when this continent should be covered by the same people [speaking] the same language.” He meant a white American population spread across the continent. (C-SPAN Video Library, 2009)

In 1790, the U.S. Congress passed the Naturalization Act, which stipulated that “any Alien being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen” (The Library of Congress, n.d.). The Naturalization Act stated that only white men could become U.S. citizens. It was based on race and country of origin. Although this act was passed over two centuries ago, it remained effective until 1952.

Immigration has made the U.S. a multicultural society, in which people of various ethnicities constitute a cultural patchwork. Nonetheless, America is still dominated by a white, European-centered ideology (Goodwin, 2010; Takaki, 1998) which demands that immigrants assimilate into the melting pot, because “the Founding Fathers rejected the idea of a multicultural society and advocated for the creation of a unified American culture” (Spring, 2013, p. 11). The tension between the reality of a multicultural society and a white national identity has raised issues as to how schools should approach
different cultures. Considering immigration and globalization, is it sufficient for teachers and students to know only the white culture? Is it necessary for them to know about other cultures?

**Social Studies and Culture**

The *National Curriculum Standards*, developed and published by the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (2010), provide ten themes as a framework for teaching and learning about the human experience in K-12 public schools. Among these themes, *Culture* is listed first, which requires that “[s]ocial studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity” (NCSS, 2010, p. 14).

It is important that students learn about other cultures. Economic development is driving this world to become more and more globalized and is bringing together people from every corner of the world, allowing them to interact. Learning about other cultures prepares students for living in a culturally diverse world.

Being culturally aware and taking students’ cultural backgrounds into consideration is especially important for teachers, because culture, to a large extent, shapes the way people think and behave, and a student’s learning habits are influenced by his or her culture (Delpit, 2006; Nieto, 2000). However, in the United States, one barrier to teachers being culturally responsive is that in this culturally and racially diversified country more than 80% of the teacher population is white (Gay, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). There is an urgent need for teachers to expand their knowledge because
research has shown that their limited knowledge of other cultures has hindered students’
effective learning (Kwon, Suh, Bang, Jung, & Moon, 2010).

**Education and Culture**

By 2008, “the foreign-stock (the foreign born, plus the U.S.-born second
generation) population of the United States was over 70 million people...some 38 million
were foreign born” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, p. 63). In 2007, one in
every five school-age students spoke a language other than English at home (U.S. Census
Bureau, April 2010). However, the majority of American teachers are white,
monolingual, and middle class (Delpit, 2006; Goodwin, 2002, 2004), and few of them are
prepared to teach racially diverse students (Gay, 2010). As a result, students “are [still]
taught from the middle-class, Eurocentric frameworks that shape school practices” (Gay,
2010, p. 22). Consequently, it is not a surprise to hear a negative outcry from an African
American mother, “My kids know how to be black – you all teach them how to be
successful in the white men’s world” (Delpit, 2006, p. 29).

According to Gay (2010), “*culture* refers to a dynamic system of social values,
cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and
meaning to our lives as well as the lives of others” (p. 9). It is the lens “through which
life is perceived” (Moule, 2012, p. 11). It does not determine who we are, but it does
influence how we think and behave (Nieto, 2000). Therefore, when looking at the same
phenomenon, people from different cultural backgrounds are highly likely to interpret it
in different ways.
Culture is an important concept in education. It influences how teachers view their students, especially those who come from different cultural backgrounds (Tileston, 2010). Cultural diversity, which connotes an “array of differences that exist among groups of people with definable and unique cultural backgrounds” (Moule, 2012, p. 11), requires teachers to have cultural competence – “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than [their] own” (p. 5). For the purpose of this study, students’ culture includes their use of language, family values with regard to education, communication style, and development and identity.

Within the dominant culture, American teachers of European ancestry who possess the power of being white, “are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence” (Delpit, 2006, p. 24). Erickson (2010) further explains this point by arguing that:

In a sense, everything in education relates to culture – to its acquisition, its transmission, and its invention. Culture is in us and all around us, just as the air we breathe. In its scope and distribution it is personal, familial, communal, institutional, societal, and global. Yet culture as a notion is often difficult to grasp. As we learn and use culture in daily life, it becomes habitual. Our habits become for the most part transparent to us. Thus, culture shifts inside and outside our reflective awareness. We do not think much about the structure and characteristics of culture as we use it, just as we do not think reflectively about any familiar tool in the midst of its use. (p. 35)
Nieto (2000) contends that because a school curriculum is not neutral and mainly reflects the values of the dominant culture, students who are not from the dominant group can hardly find themselves in the curriculum. However, minority students can reach their full potentials when they can relate what they learn back to their own experiences (Delpit, 2006; Moule, 2012). Therefore, teachers should be culturally aware and teach in a culturally responsive way in order to better facilitate minority students’ academic success. Teachers should also be aware that culture is dynamic and has always been influenced and reshaped by various socioeconomic factors (Gay, 2010; NCSS, 2010; Nieto, 2000).

**Socioeconomic Influence on Culture**

Culture is not an independent entity (Nieto, 2000), and is constantly influenced by socioeconomic factors, such as the economy, politics and social movements (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998, 2008). In this section, I will briefly describe the history of the Chinese in America to explain how Chinese culture has been influenced by socioeconomic factors in the U.S.

**Chinese Americans: A manufactured stereotype.** As a minority in the U.S., the Chinese image has been constantly changed and reshaped by the dominant culture. The Chinese in America have experienced a series of title-changes. Sometimes they were, as depicted by California Governor John McDougal in 1852, “one of the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens – to whom the climate and the character of these lands are peculiarly suited” (as cited in McClain, 1984, p. 535); sometimes they were “utter heathens, treacherous, sensual, cowardly, and cruel” (George, 1896, Character of
the Chinese section, para.1); and sometimes they were chastised as “the Chinese troubles” (Beebe, 1963, p. 152), who threatened white racial purity and should be put on reservations like the American Indians (Takaki, 2008). Then all of the sudden they became a “success story of one minority group in U.S.” that moved forward by itself without asking for help from anyone else (U.S. News & World Report, 1966). Since the first day they arrived in this country, “Chinese Americans have been caught in a web of social stereotyping” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 137) and “have been named and defined by others” (Goodwin, 2003, p. 22). The rollercoaster-like stereotypes were cast by socioeconomic factors, which include the domestic economy, politics, racism, and social movement. No single factor can determine a culture; rather, it is the interaction among all these factors that has shaped American perceptions of Chinese Americans.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed rapid economic growth in the U.S. Whites kept moving westward, “[c]rossing the Rocky Mountains and reaching the Pacific ... [and] finally circumnavigating the earth to bring civilization to the ‘Yellow’ race” (Takaki, 2008, p. 177). The unequal treaties signed in the mid-19th century between the U.S. and the Qing government (1664-1912) enabled not only trade between the two countries but also migration of Chinese to America. The early Chinese immigrants laid the foundation for future development in the West and “[transformed] California into one of the richest farming regions in the United States and the world” (Mark & Chih, 1993, pp. 13-14). As depicted by L. L. Wang (1991):

In the American West, [the Chinese] were employed to extract metals and minerals, to construct a vast railroad network, reclaim swamplands, build
irrigation systems, work as migrant agricultural laborers, develop the fishing industry, and operate highly competitive, labor-intensive manufacturing industries. (p. 186) 

The early Chinese immigrants were “nation builders” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 13), and their contribution to this country can never be erased.

However, in American history, the Chinese were often “the unwelcome immigrants” (Miller, 1969). As a “politically proscribed labor force” (Takaki, 2008, p. 187), Chinese immigrants in California faced racism from the day they arrived (Goodwin, 2003; Mark & Chih, 1993; Miller, 1969; Takaki, 1998, 2008). Chinese miners were abused by white miners (Takaki, 1998, 2008; Zinn, 2003) and they were charged higher taxes than other miners (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998, 2008). Although they were unfairly treated, Chinese immigrants were not eligible to legally protect themselves because they, as one non-white group, “could not testify against whites” (Takaki, 2008, p. 189).

The 1870s witnessed an economic collapse in the U.S., and the West Coast experienced its first real economic depression (J. Chen, 1980). “In the ensuing anti-Chinese movement of the 1870s and 1880s Chinese were scapegoats for the frustrated anger of the white working class, while America’s corporate barons generally escaped unscathed” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 33). Anti-Chinese sentiment spread throughout the entire nation. On May 6, 1882, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first U.S. legislation to restrict immigration on the basis of race (Ko, 2013; Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998) and “to forbid a group by ethnicity to become citizens by
naturalization” (Ko, 2013, p. 14). According to Mark and Chih (1993), a couple of factors led to the passage of the act. First, completion of the transcontinental railroad and a good foundation being laid for future economic development on the West Coast meant labor was not in demand, and Chinese labor became dispensable. Second, political competition facilitated the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act – “[T]he Democratic and Republican forces, in a close battle for control of Congress, realized that to win the crucial western votes they had to support the anti-Chinese stand. With minimal opposition, the Exclusion Act passed easily through both houses” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 36). The Chinese Exclusion Act prevented Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. and prohibited the naturalization of the Chinese in America.

The turning tide for Chinese in America occurred during World War II. Inter-governmental cooperation between China and the U.S. cleared the way that Chinese were perceived in America. They “were no longer considered a social or economic threat” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 98); rather, they became “faithful allies [and] heroic fighters” (Lyman, 1970, p. 124). Support for repealing the Chinese Exclusion Act came from various sources, such as non-government, religious, business, humanitarian and liberal organizations (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998). In 1943, the law was finally repealed. In doing this, President Roosevelt acknowledged the historical error, saying:

Nations like individuals make mistakes. We must be big enough to acknowledge our mistakes of the past and to correct them. By the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws, we can correct a historic mistake and silence the distorted Japanese propaganda. (H.R. Doc. No. 78-333, 1943)
The legal status change, coupled with the lack of labor after World War II, greatly benefited the Chinese in America (Ogbu, 1983). They were able to “apply for American citizenship and qualify for government employment” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 100), which allowed them into mainstream society.

Entering the 1960s, as the growing Civil Rights movement unnerved the U.S. government, a new stereotype was applied to Chinese Americans – they became a model minority. This new look found its way into the mainstream (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998). However, this stereotype is a myth (Banks, 2012; G. Li & Wang, 2008; Mark & Chih, 1993; Spring, 2013; Takaki, 1998, 2008; Tatum, 2003). Politicians exaggerated Chinese American achievements with the purpose of alleviating the tension between blacks and whites, as Spring (2013) contends:

Faced with the anger of black Americans demanding equal rights and economic opportunity, some European Americans began pointing their fingers at the Asian community and argued that they were successful in achieving the American dream without contentious demonstrations and accusations of prejudice and discrimination against the white population. If, these European Americans seemed to say, the black population acted like the Asian population they could achieve economic success without criticizing the white population. (p. 120)

The model minority myth has brought Chinese Americans more disturbance than pride. It overlooked their real needs and pitted them against other minority groups (Mark & Chih, 1993; Takaki, 1998, 2008).
Spring (2013) contends that “U.S. history and education have been plagued with cultural and racial conflicts” (p. 2). In school, on the one hand, “educators have preached equality of opportunity and good citizenship,” while on the other, they have perpetuated “religious intolerance, racial segregation, cultural genocide, and discrimination against immigrants and nonwhites” (Spring, 2013, p. 2). A brief overview of the history of the Chinese in America suggests two themes with regard to education. First, considering the early Chinese immigrants’ contribution to this country, they truly were the “nation builders” (Mark & Chih, 1993, p. 13). However, American public schools teach “next to nothing about the significance of Asian Americans” (Takaki, 2008, p. 5; Wong, 2011), and in American history texts, “the Chinese Exclusion Act is excluded on record in this nation of immigration” (Ko, 2013, p. 18). Second, the Chinese American image and culture have always been changing within a socioeconomic context in the U.S. Therefore, teachers need to avoid judging their Chinese or Chinese American students on any stereotype. Every teacher needs to be aware of his or her students’ cultural background and its impact on students’ learning and behavior in school (Delpit, 2006; Nieto, 2000). Gay (2010) claims that, “culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration, or performance assessment” (p. 8).

**Problem Statement**

Chinese Americans are the largest identified Asian population group, accounting for 23% of all Asian Americans in the U.S. (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012). In 2011, the Chinese population in the U.S. was four million, having increased 40% in the
past ten years (U.S. Census Bureau, March 2013). According to Y. Zhou (2004), “contemporary Chinese immigrants to the United States are polarized between low-skilled, little-educated immigrants who work in the lowest wage jobs in inner city areas and highly educated professionals or entrepreneurs in the prestigious institutions and corporations of America” (p. 38).

Although Chinese Americans make up one of the fastest growing Asian subcategories in the U.S., they are still invisible to society (Goodwin, 2003; Takaki, 1998). At school, they are often stereotypically viewed as model students, yet they experience racism (Goodwin, 2003). They live between two cultures because of a cultural discontinuity, “the lack of congruence between home and school cultures” (Nieto, 2000, p. 146). They are considered super achievers due to the model minority stereotype, so teachers often unrealistically assume that Chinese American students are genetically smart. Therefore, teachers give more attention to the students who they think are in need and ignore Chinese American students’ needs (R. S. Chang, 1993; Kwon et al., 2010; A. Liu, 2009; Zhao & Qiu, 2008).

Most prior studies have been focused on Chinese American students and the challenges they face in school. However, there is a lack of research on the American teachers’ perceptions of their Chinese American students’ culture.

**Research Questions**

The central research question of this study is:

1. What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture?
In order to investigate this question, two sub-questions guided this dissertation as well:

2. How do Chinese immigrant parents view their children’s American teachers’ awareness of Chinese culture?

3. How do Chinese American students view their American teachers’ awareness of their Chinese culture?

**Overview of Methods**

Based on the nature of my research questions, this study constitutes a qualitative case. The case is American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture in the Elmwood City School District, located in Elmwood, Ohio (pseudonym). The intention of building this case was to explore American teachers’ cultural competence in teaching Chinese American students.

Since Elmwood, Ohio, is a mid-size university community located in a large rural region, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other regions in the United States. However, this study constitutes a specific exploration that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18), so the findings of this case study will add to the existing research literature and thus enrich its theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009).

Two data collection methods were employed in this research study: interviews and document analysis. To gain a deeper insight into different perspectives, three different groups of people were targeted to participate in a semi-structured interview: (1) American teachers who have or have had Chinese American students; (2) Chinese immigrant parents, and (3) Chinese American students. The interviews comprised four
major categories: language, cross-cultural communication, educational values, and individual development and identity. Document analysis focused on the prescribed official social studies curriculum standards and social studies teachers’ operational curriculum (Posner, 2004), which includes textbooks and supplemental teaching materials.

**Significance of the Study**

This research study is important for four reasons. First, most previous studies of the Chinese American educational experience have focused on Chinese American students and very little research has been dedicated to exploring European American teachers’ perceptions of their Chinese American students, so this study will contribute to bridging that gap.

Second, for historical reasons, most Chinese Americans have settled in urban areas, such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles. As a result, most previous studies on Chinese Americans have been focused on urban Chinese Americans’ experiences. This study took place in a rural area where a considerable number of Chinese and Chinese Americans reside.

Third, since Chinese Americans mostly reside in West Coast states such as California and Washington, or in the East Coast states such as New York and Massachusetts, a multitude of research studies have been conducted on Chinese Americans on the West Coast (F. Chang, 1973; Goto, 1997; S. K. Lee, 1999, 2002; Lo, 2005; Sheets & Chew, 2000; C. Wu & Chao, 2005; Yao, 1979; Ying, Han, & Wong, 2008) and the East Coast (C. F. Chen & Lee, 1996; Kwon et al., 2010; Moon, Jung,
Bang, Kwon, & Suh, 2009; S. F. Siu & Feldman, 1995; Z. Zhou, Peverly, Xin, Huang, & Wang, 2003). However, comparatively few studies have been conducted of Chinese Americans in the Midwest (Wang & Phillion, 2007; Y. Wang, 2009; Leung, 1997; Liao & Larke, 2008). Therefore, this dissertation will contribute to the research literature on the educational experiences of Chinese Americans in a Midwestern community.

Finally, while this research design applies to Chinese American students, it can also be applied to students from other ethnic backgrounds.

**Limitations**

This study has four limitations. First, due to an unforeseen delay of the permission from the school district, data collection could not be begun until the first week of May 2013, when that semester had three weeks remaining, and when teachers and students were busy preparing for final tests. I was not able to observe how social studies teachers presented information relating to cultural diversity and how the teachers interacted with their Chinese American students in class.

Second, this study encountered challenges from some Chinese immigrant parents, predominantly well-educated university professors. Some of them were concerned about the interview being recorded, but after I explained that I could take notes instead of recording the interview, they still refused to participate for unknown reasons. Others did not believe culture matters in education, so they chose not to participate. As a result, no parent participants had a child at middle school level (grades 7-8), and no student participants were of middle school age. Therefore, the opinions from middle school Chinese American students and their parents are not represented in this study.
Third, this study focuses on one specific race of students. Teachers may get uncomfortable when talking about race, thus the interviews with teachers may be affected by their emotional state at the time of interview. To avoid the risk of getting distorted responses, I did member check after I transcribed the interviews. Some teachers did revise some parts of the transcriptions and further clarified what they meant to say.

A final limitation of this study was teachers’ operational curricula. It would have been ideal if I had had a full access to teachers’ lesson plans, teaching notes, textbooks, and supplementary materials, which are pertinent to cultural diversity. In reality, I can only analyze what they chose to share with me.

**Definition of Terms**

*American teacher*: refers to a teacher who is an American citizen of European heritage.

*Chinese American student*: refers to a student who was born in the United States and has at least one parent who emigrated from China.

*Immigrant*: According to the Immigration and Nationality Act [INA], an *immigrant* refers to “any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigration categories” (Homeland Security, n.d.).

*Chinese immigrant parent*: In accordance with the definition of *immigrant* by INA, *Chinese immigrant parent* in this study refers to a parent who emigrated from China and resides and/or works in the United States, regardless of his or her immigration status.
Professor family: For the purpose of this study, *professor family* refers to a family in which at least one parent works as a university professor in Elmwood, Ohio.

Restaurant family: For the purpose of this study, *restaurant family* refers to a family that owns and operates a restaurant in Elmwood, Ohio.

Chinese (language): Although the Chinese language contains many different dialects, in this study, all are considered *Chinese*.

Elmwood Chinese Culture Center: is the only Chinese school in Elmwood. Some local Chinese families send their children to the Culture Center in order to maintain their children’s Chinese language skills. Some American families also send their children to this school to learn Chinese.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Background

According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *Asian* means “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam” (Hoeffel et al., 2012, p. 2). Six groups of people indicate their race(s) as Asian: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese. Each is termed a detailed Asian group. As a result, the Chinese, with a total population of 4,010,114, are considered the largest detailed Asian group in the U.S. (Hoeffel et al., 2012), accounting for 23% of the Asian population and 1.3% of the total population. (See Table 2-1)

Table 2-1.

*Regional Chinese Population (pop.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>308,700,000</td>
<td>4,010,114</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>17,320,856</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>11,536,504</td>
<td>43,818</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>192,233</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmwood, OH</td>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td>500-1,000</td>
<td>3.0-4.0</td>
<td>1,000-2,000</td>
<td>50-75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources:* Hoeffel et al. (2012); Strickland (2010); U.S. Census Bureau (2010a), (2010b).

The total Chinese population in Ohio is 43,818, accounting for about 23% of the Asian population (Strickland, 2010, p. 8) and 0.4% of the total population (U.S. Census
The Chinese are Ohio’s second largest Asian group, following Asian Indians (29%).

In Elmwood, Ohio, the site for data collection in this research study, the total Chinese population is between 500 and 1,000, accounting for 50%-75% of the city’s Asian population and 3%-4% of Elmwood’s total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). The Chinese make up the largest Asian population in Elmwood, Ohio.

**Who are Chinese Americans?** The term *Chinese American* was first coined as the name of a Chinese-English bilingual newspaper in New York City in 1892 by Wong Ching Fook, the founder of the Chinese Equal Rights League, which aimed “to campaign against US policy of Chinese Exclusion” (Ko, 2013, pp. 14-15). Fook has been considered the Martin Luther King of the Chinese (Ko, 2013). Nowadays, the term *Chinese Americans* generally refers to Americans of Chinese descent.

The Chinese immigrant experience in the U.S. is divided into four historical periods (Association of Chinese Teachers, 1977; S. F. Siu, 1992b): (1) 1848 to 1882 was the period of free immigration, but the hostile situation in the host country finally led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Law in 1882; (2) 1882-1943 was the period of restricted immigration; only certain groups of Chinese people – merchants, teachers, students, visitors, and officials – were granted permission to enter the U.S. (Solomon, 1985). The 1924 Immigration Act prohibited Chinese women from entering this country as wives; (3) 1943-1965 was the period of limited immigration. Because China and the U.S. were allies during WW II, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, but an annual quota of 105 was put on Chinese immigrants; (4) post-1965 was the period of
liberalized immigration marked by the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965.

**Period 1: 1848 – 1882.** The first period of immigration consisted of predominantly “young, healthy, unmarried men” (Yang, 2000; Zhan & Cao, 2012, p. 80). Ninety percent were farmers from the southern province of Guangdong, with little or no education (Association of Chinese Teachers, 1977; Zhou, 2004). They came to the U.S. for the gold mountain, hoping to make a fortune and return to their home country, and became labors known as *sojourners*. The term *sojourner* was first used by Paul Siu in his article “The Sojourner” in 1952. P.C. P. Siu (1952) defined a sojourner as “one who clings to the cultural heritage of his own ethnic group and tends to live in isolation, hindering his assimilation to the society in which he resides, often for many years” (p. 33). The early Chinese immigrants became sojourners both voluntarily and involuntarily. According to Yang (2000):

...the Chinese roots-attachment tradition, the gender division of labor in the Chinese split families, the absence of a family basis in the immigrant community, and the lack of personal and property security, equal economic opportunities, and social status all reinforced the Chinese sojourning mentality and led to their sojourning behavior pattern. (p. 243)

At the same time, the racist environment forced them to involuntarily become sojourners (Yang, 2000). In California, the laws and constitutions:

[excluded] them from the public schools, [refused] to recognize their testimony or participation in jury trials, [refused] them the right to vote, [barred] their
employment by any California corporation, and [called] for cities and towns across the state to remove them entirely or otherwise confine them to fixed areas.

(Chin, 2013, p. 11)

All these racist laws and exclusionary treatment isolated the early Chinese immigrants from mainstream society and forced them to not assimilate but rather return to their homeland (Chin, 2013; Yang, 2000). Between 1848 and 1882, a total of 317,023 Chinese immigrants arrived in the U.S., of whom 150,886 returned to China, yielding a 47.6% return rate (Yang, 2000, p. 239). In fact, the return rate was most likely even higher. Yang (2000) cautions:

Keep in mind that these statistics show only those returnees who not only intended to return but also were able to do so. There were probably many others who desired to return but failed to realize their wishes because of financial difficulties and/or fears of losing face through a lack of accomplishments. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that the majority of the pre-exclusion Chinese immigrants had a sojourning orientation. (p. 238)

**Period 2: 1882 – 1943.** The year 1882 witnessed the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. “The ugly legislation was … the first ever passed by Congress targeting a group based on race” (Zia, 2000, p. 28). It nearly prohibited Chinese citizens from entering the U.S. Only ten persons were allowed to come to this country in 1887 (S. F. Siu, 1992b). The Chinese Exclusion Act was rooted in racism (Chen, 1980; Takaki, 1998). “Unregulated investments in railroad stocks, real estate, and official corruption led to panic across markets that destroyed business profits and banks” (Chin, 2013, p. 8).
Economic depression caused 30% of American people losing their jobs (Chen, 1980, p. 135), and “led to xenophobia among many white Americans and heightened tensions between rich and poor” (Chin, 2013, p. 8). Chinese immigrants at this time became the target of attack. “Anti-Chinese activists claimed that the Chinese were lowering California’s standards of living by spreading disease, working for cheap wages and eating rats” (Mark & Chin, 1993, p. 33). The anti-Chinese sentiment began in the gold mines and quickly spread to the whole country, as “Chinese suffered from racial attacks” (Takaki, 1998, p. 115). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned Chinese immigration for ten years and denied Chinese immigrants’ naturalization, but in 1892, the Geary Act renewed it for another ten years and required all Chinese to carry a Certificate of Residence wherever they went. Later on, the U.S. congress passed other laws to extend the Chinese Exclusion Act for an unlimited number of years. During the exclusion years, the Chinese were discriminated against and were “driven out of the general labor market and forced to withdraw to those occupations ‘where no bitter voice’ would be raised against them,” such as restaurant and laundry work (Takaki, 1998, p. 240).

**Period 3: 1943 –1965.** The United States joining World War II marked a turning tide for the Chinese in America (Mark & Chin, 1993). As S. F. Siu (1992b) states, World War II:

gave them a chance to leave Chinatown and prove their loyalty to their adopted country; opened doors to employment opportunities, especially in the defense industry; and forced the U.S. government to reexamine its discriminatory policies
toward Chinese in America, which led to the repeal of the Exclusion Laws and to a more favorable public attitude toward the Chinese. (p. 20)


**Period 4: Post-1965.** The post-1965 Chinese immigrants were very unlike the early ones. Even though during the first period (1848 to 1882) and the last period (post-1965) Chinese immigrants entered the U.S. with no restrictions, these two groups of people differed from each other in terms of place of origin, occupation, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and immigration orientation (See Table 2-2).

Table 2-2.

*Comparison of Chinese Immigrants: pre-Exclusion and post-1965*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Immigration Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1848-1882</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>Predominantly Males</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Sojourners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangdong Province, Southern China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-1965</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Males &amp; Females</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>Settlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan; Hong Kong; mainland China; Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Yang (1999), (2000).*
When the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965, large scale Chinese immigration to the U.S. became a reality (Ko, 2013), “first with immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan” (Zhou, 2004, p. 37). In the late 1970s when the Chinese government implemented reform and opened up the country to the outside world for economic development, an increasing number of Chinese immigrants from mainland China entered the United States (Zhou, 2004). In addition to these three areas, there were also Chinese from neighboring Asian countries, such as Vietnam and the Philippines. Most post-1965 immigrants brought their families with them (Zhou, 2004). Some of them were menial laborers; others were well-educated professionals.

The most distinctive feature of the post-1965 Chinese immigrants is that most of them were settlers (Yang, 1999), “whose mental orientation is toward the host country and who [are] determined to take roots in [their] adopted country” (p. 62). The majority of them “tended to naturalize and own homes” (p. 67), which are the two major indicators that reflect their settlement mentality (Yang, 1999). What factors made them migrate to and settle in the U.S.? The answer to this question is multileveled: economic, political and social factors all contribute to Chinese immigrants’ settlement in the United States. Although there is no consensus about the reasons why Chinese migrated to the United States after 1965, Yang (2010) provides an integrated picture.

Immigration is neither simply a push-pull process, nor solely due to economic or social factors (Lee, 1966). The factors that contribute to immigration have always been multifaceted. Yang (2010) synthesized different theories on Asian immigration to the United States and generated his own multilevel causation theory, which “highlights three
clusters of determinants: intercountry disparities, multilevel connections, and migration policies” (p. 15), which are interrelated and co-function at multi-levels.

Intercountry disparities assume that people migrate because there are economic, political, social, and environmental differences between their home country and another country (Yang, 2010). Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. for better jobs, higher income, and a better quality of life. However, this does not mean post-1965 Chinese immigrants were poor or unemployed in their places of origin. Yang (2010) emphasizes that “relative deprivation plays a more important role in Asian migration decisions than absolute poverty” (p. 16). In fact, many post-1965 Chinese immigrants were well-educated middle-class, and this was partly because American immigration policy preferred people with higher education and skills. Political disparities are important stimuli for Chinese people to migrate to the U.S. The Civil War (1945-1949) between the Red Army and the Nationalist government, as well as later the Communist takeover, drove many Chinese people to come to the U.S. Some of the Chinese immigrants who arrived in the 1940s (Zhao & Cao, 2012), especially students, businessmen and government officials sent by the Nationalist government, deferred their return to China (Yang, 2000). Therefore, the political change “generated a wave of refugees who could not return and did not intend to” (Yang, 2000, p. 248). Social disparities, according to Yang (2010), motivated many Chinese people to migrate to the U.S. because there were more opportunities for them and their children to get a higher education. In China, students must pass the extremely competitive gaokao, the college entrance examination, to get a higher education (Zhao, 2009; Zhu, 1999). According to statistics provided by
People’s Daily (2010), when the gaokao was resumed in 1977 (after 10 years of Cultural Revolution that disrupted the education of a whole generation at all levels), only 4.8% of those taking the gaokao were admitted to college. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the percentage of college admission was about 20 percent; but since the late 1990s, the college admission rate has significantly increased to about 50-60 percent. Even though more people have a chance to get a higher education, “a new round of competition is centered on getting into top-ranking institutions” (D. Wang, 2008, p. 125).

Comparatively, in the U.S., colleges and universities are open to almost anyone who is able and desires to get a higher education. Environmental disparities also encourage Chinese people to migrate to the U.S. to avoid natural or man-made disasters, such pollution (Yang, 2010).

If intercountry disparities initiate migration, multilevel connections between the sending and receiving countries sustain it (Yang, 2010). Multilevel connections are both macro- and micro-level. At the macro level, the political connections between China and the U.S. played a critical role in Chinese migration. The Sino-U.S. diplomatic normalization in 1979 opened the door for people from mainland China to go to the United States; the Sino-U.S. economic connections consolidated the ties between these two countries and facilitated Chinese migration to the U.S.; and Sino-U.S. cultural connections, such as study abroad, academic exchange, and mass media, have undeniably encouraged more Chinese to come to the U.S. At the micro level, kinship-based networks, friendship-based networks and a network based on ethnic communities and institutions led to more migration (Yang, 2010).
Intercountry disparities and multilevel connections are both important to international migration, but they are not sufficient conditions, because migration policies also play a critical role in international migration (Yang, 2010). When discussing immigration policies, it is necessary to look at the policies of the sending country and the receiving country, and Yang (2010) contends that the latter is more crucial. From the U.S. side, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 almost shut the door for Chinese immigrants, but the act’s repeal in 1943 allowed 105 people to enter the U.S. per year and enabled Chinese to be naturalized. The 1945 War Brides Act and its 1946 amendment allowed Chinese women and children to enter this country to reunite with their husbands and fathers who were U.S. servicemen during World War II (Takaki, 1998). When the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965, a large number of Chinese immigrants began to arrive. From China’s side, the Chinese government “imposed many restrictions on leaving the country until 1979 so that it was very difficult for a Chinese to obtain a passport” (Yang, 2010, p. 24). The late 1970s witnessed a dramatic change in China, as the opening-up of economic reform encouraged more Chinese to go abroad (Zhou, 2004).

Yang’s (2010) *multilevel causation theory* provides us with an integrated framework to better comprehend post-1965 Chinese immigration to the United States. Generally speaking, good relationships regarding politics, economy, and social culture between China and the U.S., and favorable immigration policies which prefer well-educated and skillful Chinese to come to this country have enabled millions of Chinese to settle in the U.S.
The model minority stereotype. The 1960s witnessed not only a large number of Chinese immigrants to the U.S., but also a strong Civil Rights movement. These two seemingly unrelated events were skillfully interwoven by politicians. To “[silence] the protests of racial minorities and [maintain] the dominant structure of race and power relations” (A. Liu, 2009, p. 1), Chinese Americans and other Asian American groups at this time were characterized as model minority Asian groups, because they were thrifty and family-oriented, worked hard, and had high moral values (Spring, 2013; Tatum, 2003). For example, *U.S. News & World Report* (1966) praised Chinese Americans as follows: “At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese-Americans are moving ahead on their own – with no help from anyone else” (p. 6). Within the context of the Civil Rights movement, the splendid image of a model minority “quickly caught on and dominated the stage for years” (Chun, 1980/1995, p. 96). In 2012, a report entitled “The Rise of Asian Americans,” by the Pew Research Center caught people’s attention again. This 225-page report “portrayed Asian Americans as an immigrant group that has successfully broken many social, political, and economic barriers” (Leung, 2013, p. 54). It soon drew criticism from Asian American organizations, who condemned the report as “‘one-dimensional,’ ‘exclusionary,’ and full of ‘overgeneralizations’ that portrayed Asian Americans as the American exceptionalism” (Leung, 2013, p. 54).

Admittedly, being portrayed a model minority pitted Chinese Americans against African Americans (Spring, 2013; Tatum, 2003; Wong, 2011), but it was baseless, because, as historian Bob H. Suzuki argues, “portrayals of the model minority image
often neglect the historical evolution of the Asian American community” (as cited in Spring, 2013, p. 120). “Underneath the surface glory, however, the model minority stereotype imposed on Asian American students has resulted in silenced voices and neglected needs among this racially diverse group” (Li & Wang, 2008, p. 2).

Based on the central research question of this study – What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ cultural background? – the next section summarizes what previous research studies have found about American teachers’ perspectives on: (1) Chinese American students, and (2) Chinese American parental involvement.

**American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students**

American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students are both positive and negative. The positive mainly centers on Chinese American students’ academic achievement and social behaviors; the negative primarily focuses on their verbal communication abilities.

**Positive perspectives.** Studies have found that American teachers’ views on Chinese American and other Asian American students are usually positive, which is consistent with the media’s portrayal of Asian American students as a model minority (D. F. Chang & Demyan, 2007; D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003; Hui-Michael & García, 2009; Zhang, 2010). Chinese American students are typically lauded as high academic achievers with good social behaviors.

**High academic achievement.** When compared with students from other ethnic groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, and Caucasians, Asian American students
almost always meet teachers’ highest expectations. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to assess whether American teachers had different expectations for racial minorities than for European American students. They collected 39 samples, published from 1968 to 2003. Their analysis showed that American teachers expected more of European American children than of Latino/a and African American children, but at the same time, they “held significantly more positive expectations for Asian American children than they did for European American children” (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007, p. 262).

Asian American children are assessed by American teachers as intelligent, more self-controlled or even overcontrolled, industrious, hardworking, and academically successful (D. F. Chang & Demyan, 2007; D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003; Hui-Michael & García, 2009; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Schneider and Lee (1990) conducted a qualitative study to compare teachers’ perspectives on East Asian (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) and Anglo students. They interviewed 16 urban and suburban school teachers and administrators in the Chicago area, and 73 students (43 East Asians and 30 Anglos). When asked to classify East Asian students on a Likert scale in terms of their academic achievement, with 1 as the highest and 5 as the lowest, “15 out of 16 teachers stated that East Asian children most often belonged to the first or second group” (Schneider & Lee, 1990, p. 371). Teachers commented, “Most Oriental children are eager to learn – do well – appreciate going to school, are happy in school, and usually do all the work” (Schneider & Lee, 1990, p. 371). In 2007, Chang and Demyan carried out a similar study, investigating teachers’ understandings of Asian, African American, and white students.
They surveyed 188 teachers through a set of questionnaires in the Southern California area. The findings once again associated positive traits, such as industriousness and intelligence, with Asian American students (Change & Demyan, 2007).

**Good social behavior.** Research has also found that Asian American students have fewer overall behavior problems than African American students, that they are respectful to teachers, and that they are compliant and reliable (D. F. Chang & Demyan, 2007; L. Chang, Morrissey, & Koplewicz, 1995; D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003; Hui-Michael & García, 2009). D. F. Chang and Demyan (2007) found that, in American teachers’ perceptions, Asian American students were the least aggressive when compared with African American and white students. A study in Southern California by D. F. Chang and Sue (2003), which investigated American teachers’ assessment of students’ behavior based on race, showed that in teachers’ minds:

...for Asian Americans, overcontrolled behaviors were significantly more typical of the race than undercontrolled behaviors ... The undercontrolled Asian American student was judged to be significantly less typical of his race compared with the undercontrolled Caucasian or African American student... (p. 240)

D. F. Chang and Sue (2003) pointed out that “overcontrolled behavior was associated with significantly higher academic performance and innate ability than undercontrolled behavior” (p. 240). Another interesting finding by D. F. Chang and Sue is that American teachers tended not to rely on stereotypes when assessing African American or white students, but they did rely on stereotypes with Asian American students. The reason for this could be that American teachers had less experience with Asian American students,
which pushed them to “rely more often on stereotypes” (D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003, p. 240).

**Positive perspectives vs. negative consequences.** Teachers’ positive perspectives on Chinese and other Asian American students have some truth to it, because they do fit some Chinese or other Asian American students. However, it reinforced the model minority stereotype and left much more unsaid. With all the positive stereotypes in mind, American teachers may neglect some Chinese or other Asian American students’ academic challenges (D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003; Hui-Michael & García, 2009). Zhang (2010) pointed out that the model minority stereotype could have “psychological, emotional, and social costs for Asian American students, such as studying harder and longer, foregoing social life, enduring loneliness and alienation, and experiencing extreme depression and stress” (para. 5).

Hui-Michael and García (2009) conducted a qualitative study in central Texas. They interviewed five elementary school teachers who had Asian American students in their classrooms (including Chinese American). The study showed that a 3rd grade and a 4th grade student were labeled as average in spite of the fact that each had failed the state’s math tests. Classroom observation showed that one of these students actually had a hard time “following directions, staying on task, and finishing her independent work” (Hui-Michael & García, 2009, p. 29). However, their teachers were optimistic about the students’ future and had positive comments about them, like “good learning attitude,” “I usually grade on her effort” (p. 29), or “Mikey’s academics are poor for a gifted student” (p. 31). Hui-Michael and García (2009) contended that “[teachers’] explanations for any
unexpected underachievement of individual Asian American students were constrained by their limited understanding of the interface between culture, language and learning” (p. 32). Consequently, some Asian American students who have real academic challenges are only “wait[ing] to fail” (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003, p. 139).

**Negative perspectives.** In addition to the positive traits they identify among Chinese and other Asian American students, American teachers also have some negative perspectives on these students as “quiet, shy, humble, passive, non-confrontational, and speak poor English with an accent” (Zhang, 2010, para. 6).

**Lack of communication skills.** Chinese and other Asian American students are perceived by their American teachers as less assertive, less persuasive, less expressive, less effective interpersonally, less capable of leadership, less likely to participate in group discussion, less skilled at eye contact during communication, and less open to expressing their feelings (Bannai & Cohen, 1985; D. F. Chang & Demyan, 2007; D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003; Yamamoto & Li, 2012). When American teachers have these stereotypes in mind, they are more likely to “call on Asian American students less often than on Caucasian students” (Schneider & Lee, 1990) and to expect less classroom involvement from them” (D. F. Chang & Sue, 2003, p. 235).

Yamamoto and Li (2012) conducted research in the Massachusetts and Rhode Island suburban areas, exploring teachers’ differing perceptions of quietness among Chinese immigrant (CI) children and European American (EA) children. They examined 166 four-year-olds, 108 CI children (nine were US-born; the rest were from China) and 58 EA children. Among the 108 CI children, 52 attended an EA-dominant preschool and
56 attended an Asian-dominant preschool. They interviewed children and their parents and requested evaluations from the children’s homeroom teachers. The findings were very illuminating. According to the teachers’ evaluations, which rated children’s quietness, CI children appeared to be quieter than EA children in both EA-dominant and Asian-dominant preschools, and their quietness had nothing to do with their socioeconomic status background, nor with their parents’ length of stay in the U.S., but “the better CI children’s English is, [the] more expressive they become in EA-dominant preschools” (Yamamoto & Li, 2012, p. 8). The study also found no co-relationship between CI children’s English proficiency and their quietness. As a result, the researchers concluded that “quiet attitudes [were] deeply rooted in CI children’s cultural values and norms, and [could not] be easily changed through acquisition of language skills” (p. 10) and that their personality also had something to do with their quietness.

Misinterpreting Chinese or other Asian American students’ quietness may lead to negative views by American teachers and poor peer acceptance by EA children (Yamamoto & Li, 2012). Quietness is usually linked to a “lack of communication” by American teachers (J. Liu, 2002, p. 47). A quiet Chinese American student may easily become invisible in a teacher’s mind and “may not stand out as an engaged learner or may be viewed as a passive learner since EA cultures tend to associate verbal elaboration with competence and active thinking” (Yamamoto & Li, 2012, p. 11). Yamamoto and Li (2012) also found that “quiet CI children are less likely to get along with or less liked by peers in EA-dominant schools, but not in Asian-dominant preschools” (p. 11). The researchers emphasized that negative peer acceptance had nothing to do with ethnicity.
They cited Ramsey and Myers’ (1990) study, which showed that EA children were more likely to be friends with children who were similar to them, and speculated that “CI children may stand out as different from EA children when they are quiet in EA-dominant preschools” (as cited in Yamamoto & Li, 2012, p. 11).

No matter whether the speculation is correct, Chinese American students’ quietness does make them different from the mainstream social norm. Bannai and Cohen (1985) even hypothesized that if such students could strengthen their communication skills, they would be able to fully participate in American society. This suggestion sounds reasonable, but Bannai and Cohen forget that quietness is in the eyes of the beholder (Yamamoto & Li, 2012). When one uses one set of values to judge people who hold a completely different set of values, misunderstanding is unavoidable. Therefore, Yamamoto and Li (2012) recommend that American teachers have a clearer and better picture of Chinese American students’ quietness, so they will not mis-judge these students or ignore them consciously or unconsciously.

**Understanding Chinese silence in the American classroom.** It is necessary to point out that not all Chinese American students are quiet, just as not all European American students are expressive. Many Chinese American students are eloquent and good at expressing their feelings or opinions. It is only when comparing Chinese American students in general with European American students that the former appear to be quieter.

J. Liu’s (2002) three-Chinese-case study provides us with a comprehensive explanation of the Chinese silence. He interviewed three Chinese college students at a
large Midwestern university and explored the complexities of their silence. Blaming individual Chinese American students for their silence without considering their educational and cultural background “may over-simplify and distort the mechanism underlying their silence in the classroom” (Y. R. Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 287). Most of the time, silence is not due to a lack of preparation or interest, and Chinese American students are by no means showing disrespect for teachers (J. Liu, 2002).

It is important that American teachers know that silence is a face-saving strategy for many Chinese and Chinese American students (Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002; Liu, 2002). *Face* becomes a unique Chinese term when its connotation goes beyond its literal meaning. According to J. Liu (2002):

The Chinese concept of face has its dual [entities]: *Liǎn*, and *Miànzi*. While *Miànzi* refers to prestige and reputation, *Liǎn* stands for ‘the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation’, and it represents the confidence of society ‘in the integrity of ego’s moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community’ (Hu, 1944: 45). In the Chinese culture, *Liǎn* carries much more weight than *Miànzi*. For instance, ‘to lose *Liǎn*’ is considered more serious than ‘to lose *Miànzi*’ in that the former refers to a condemnation by the community for socially distasteful, or immoral behavior or judgment (Hu, 1944: 45), and the latter indicates the loss of one’s reputation or good image. (p. 40)

To some extent, Chinese culture is referred to as a shame-culture, “in which individuals are strongly socialized to be aware of what others think of them, and are encouraged to
act so as to maximize the positive esteem they are granted from others, while trying to avoid incurring their disapproval” (Fung, 1999, p. 193). Thus, in Chinese culture one always needs to think about his or her face before saying or doing anything. Further, as it is commonly known that Chinese society values collectivist cultural orientation more than Western societies do, a person influenced by Chinese culture really needs to consider more than just his or her own behavior (Hwang et al., 2002). Gao, Ting-Toomey, and Gudykunst (1996) argue that “The notion of face permeates every aspect of interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture because of the culture’s overarching relational orientation” (as cited in Hwang et al., 2002, p. 74). Silence keeps one from making mistakes or being judged by the surroundings, and thus it can help one maintain his or her face.

Second, silence is encouraged and acceptable in Chinese classrooms. J. Liu (2002) contends that:

In traditional schools in China, the teacher is often perceived as the authority who does most of the initiation of questions followed by students’ responses, which would again be evaluated by the teacher. The students’ major role is to listen attentively and understand the lecture. Unless expected to speak up, students are supposed to be quiet in class and take notes if they have any questions. Asking questions or speaking up in the middle of the lecture is usually considered inappropriate and disrespectful. (p. 49)
This educational and cultural background sheds light on why some Chinese and Chinese American students keep silent in class – they are doing what they think American teachers expect of them.

Third, silence indicates power management (J. Liu, 2002). Power management happens when the dominant group exercises power over subordinate groups (J. Liu, 2002), but in J. Liu’s case study, it “lies in the internal processing of information at [the student’s] own pace, thus allowing the student to disagree or agree with the teacher or other students without affecting others and without being affected” (p. 48).

Finally, silence could be reinforced by American teachers’ negative response (J. Liu, 2002). When American teachers misinterpret Chinese American students’ silence as a lack of communication skill and become hesitant to ask them questions, they “may perpetuate the cycle of silence as well as negatively impact those students who do perceive that participation in the classroom is important, and are in the process of developing the confidence to speak up in class” (p.50).

In China, quietness is considered a virtue that stands for “caution, modesty, and courtesy” and “a valued sensitivity to social environments” (Yamamoto & Li, 2012, p. 3). Chinese American students usually receive two sets of values: Chinese values at home and American values in school. When the two sets conflict, it is the Chinese American students who will suffer from the stress. Teachers need to understand Chinese silence, so they can help ease the mental conflict Chinese American students often experience.
American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Parents

Research studies in the United States have shown that among Caucasian families parental involvement has a positive influence on children’s education (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Baumrind, 1971; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Parental involvement refers to a “parent’s engagement in home and school activities to advance children’s education and development” (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009, p. 691). The benefits include enhancing children’s academic attainment (Cotton & Wikeland, 1989; Hong & Ho, 2005; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999) and lowering their dropout rates (Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000). Very few studies have been dedicated to exploring teachers’ perspectives on Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education (Constantino, Cui, & Faltis, 1995; Lahman & Park, 2004), even though many studies have been conducted on Chinese immigrant parents’ perspective on their involvement in their children’s education (Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013; Guo, 2011, 2013; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; J. Li, 2001; Pearce, 2006; Ran, 2001; S. F. Siu, 1993, 2001; D. Wang, 2008).

Constantino et al. (1995) conducted a study in southern California to explore American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese immigrant parental involvement. They interviewed 10 elementary school teachers and 15 Chinese immigrant parents, some of whom were able to carry on easy conversations in English though most did not speak English at all. The researchers found that American teachers considered some activities as most important for parental involvement, such as homework, discipline, cultural activities, and parent-teacher conferences, but it seemed that Chinese immigrant parents
held another view on these activities. For example, a couple of American teachers thought Chinese immigrant parents did not pay enough attention to the homework and tests their children brought home, and all teachers believed that parents should make sure their children completed their assignments. However, Chinese immigrant parents confirmed that they considered checking homework as their responsibility at home, that they believed they did supervise their children on assignments. Several teachers were not satisfied with some Chinese American students’ behavior at school and complained that their parents should discipline them more at home. On the contrary, Chinese immigrant parents did not consider “assisting in discipline a type of involvement in school” (p. 48). All teachers agreed that some cultural activities should be included in their curriculum and that parents should be actively involved in helping such Chinese New Year activities as cooking dishes and helping with dancing performances. However, none of the Chinese immigrant parents considered being involved in those kinds of cultural activities, but were willing to help if asked. Finally, all teachers believed that parents should attend teacher-parent conferences, but Chinese immigrant parents chose not to. When asked why, they said they either did not see the significance of it or they could not communicate well in English or did not have time (Constantino et al., 1995).

In Lahman and Park’s (2004) study, American teachers and Chinese immigrant parents placed values on parental participation in the classroom, but each group had its own concerns. Chinese immigrant parents worried that their limited English might hinder full participation in the classroom, while the American teachers, in addition to being concerned about language barriers, tried to be sensitive to what the parents said to
avoid misunderstanding. For example, one Chinese father gave the teacher permission to “beat” his son if the child failed to behave. Luckily, this teacher learned from her past experiences that what he actually meant was “spanking” rather than abusing his child. She initiated a dialogue with the child’s father, not only to let him know the connotation of the word beat, but also to advise him to use other, more effective, forms of discipline.

American teachers perceive Chinese immigrant parents as having a passive role in their children’s education – lack of communication with teachers and scarce participation in school activities. Some studies that explored this topic from the Chinese immigrant parents’ perspective came to the same conclusion (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Pearce, 2006; D. Wang, 2008). Active school-family partnerships seem to “lose their explanatory power when applied to Asian Americans” (S. F. Siu, 2001, p. 105). However, it is hard to deny the high educational achievements of a large number of Chinese American students despite the fact that their parents seldom participate in any school activities. So how do Chinese immigrant parents get involved in their children’s education?

**Chinese Immigrant Parents’ Perceived Role in Their Children’s Education**

Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education is complex (Guo, 2013), no matter where they are – Canada (J. Li, 2001), New Zealand (Guo, 2011), Europe (Ran, 2001), or the United States of America (S. F. Siu, 2001). Therefore, “one cannot speak of ‘the’ pattern of Chinese American parental involvement in education” (Siu, 2001, p.108) because it is always an interaction between their home cultural values about education and the social structure of mainstream society (Guo, 2013; Pearce, 2006;
Siu, 1993). In the process of interaction, Chinese immigrant parents gradually lean toward the mainstream style in the host country, yet are still rooted in Chinese cultural values.

**Cultural factors.** Chinese culture values education, but by no means claims this sentiment is found only in Chinese or Chinese American societies (S. F. Siu, 1992b). Traditional Chinese society was divided into four classes: “scholar, farmer, laborer, and merchant” (S. F. Siu, 1992b, p. 8), with the scholar being the highest social class. Evidence of emphasis on education in Chinese society can be traced back to the Sui Dynasty (581-617 A.D.), when “the central government began to use a national exam system to select government officials” (Zhao, 2009, p. 74). Traditional Chinese parents believed that “education was the road to fame and material success” and that “compared to scholarly pursuits, everything [else] is lowly” (S. F. Siu, 1992b, p. 8). From a cultural-historical perspective, Chinese values about education have been strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy (Guo, 2013; Pearce, 2006; S. F. Siu, 1992a, 1992b, 1993; Wu & Herberg-Davis, 2008; Zhu, 1999), in which “ability is considered an accumulation of skills and knowledge and perseverance is seen as the key to educational as well as other kinds of success” (S. F. Siu, 1992b, p. 8).

Influenced by Confucian thoughts, Chinese parents retain traditional parenting involvement in their children’s education. According to S. F. Siu (1992b):

Chinese parents, whether here or abroad, tend to exercise more control over family members, be more protective of children, emphasize more obedience to the parents, ...value grades more than general cognitive achievement in children,
evaluate more realistically a child’s academic and personality characteristics, be less satisfied with a child’s accomplishment, hold children to higher standards, and believe more in effort and less in innate ability than their American counterparts. (p. 11)

Huntsinger and Jose (2009) compared Chinese American and European American parental involvement. Their findings showed that Chinese immigrant parents are more likely to teach their children at home. They also found that Chinese immigrant parents rarely give encouraging comments to their children, often assign extra homework because they do not think homework from school is enough, and teach math at home and usually ahead of their child’s grade level. It is undeniable that Chinese immigrant parents’ practices related to their children’s education are rooted in the traditional Chinese values (Adler, 2001; Guo, 2011, 2013; J. Li, 2001; Wu & Herberg-Davis, 2008).

**Social factors.** Social factors refer to “those elements that inhibit or enhance academic achievement and attainment but are largely beyond an individual’s control” (Pearce, 2006, p. 78). A critical social factor that is directly related to education is socioeconomic status (Pearce, 2006). Children whose parents are highly educated and enjoy high socioeconomic status tend to achieve better than children whose parents have little education and a lower status.

Ji and Koblinsky (2009) conducted research to explore parental involvement among low-income Chinese immigrant families in an urban area. They interviewed 29 parents working in the hospitality sector, who had children attending public schools (K-12) in the District of Columbia. Their findings showed that the parents were neither
actively involved in their children’s education at home nor in school activities. Even though the participants expressed high expectations of their children’s education, only half knew about their children’s performance at school (p. 687); about 41% spent less than one hour per day with their children (p. 702); only 14% helped with their children’s homework (p. 703) – some only checked whether the homework was completed instead of assisting them to solve any assignment problems. One in ten of the participants volunteered at school, and none of them “participated in school decision making or community collaborations” (p. 687). The researchers found that limited English proficiency and demanding work schedules hindered these parents from giving their children more time for their learning.

Chinese American parents who enjoy a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be involved in their children’s education. Recently, a most prominent example was the tiger mother, Amy Chua, a law professor at Yale University. She immigrated to the U.S. with her parents when she was little. Her book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011) presented how she used harsh parental control to ensure her two daughters’ excellent performance in school and in music. She and her siblings were raised up by their parents in the Chinese way, which made them adore their parents, so she decided to do the same to her daughters. Her daughters are both successful in school and in music. However, the ironic part of the book is though she strongly emphasized that her tiger parenting style was due to her Chinese cultural background (Guo, 2011), she intentionally left out one critical factor that helped her daughters to accelerate – her professorship at one of the most famous universities in the world. Her book aroused a plethora of
controversy. Yong Zhao, another Chinese American professor, wrote Amy Chua an open letter, entitled “You Must Be Joking, Professor Chua: An Open Letter to the Chinese Tiger Mom” and posted it on his personal website (Y Zhao, 2011). Close to the end of the letter, Zhao pointed out that Chua’s daughters’ success was more related to Chua’s high socioeconomic status. He said:

I am sure you know that your children’s success—Carnegie Hall performance and other kudos and trophies—may have more to do with you as a Yale professor, the community you live in, the friends and colleagues you have, the schools they attend, the friends they have (oh, I forgot, they are not allowed to have friends, well in this case, the classmates they have), than your parenting style. There are at least 100 million Chinese parents who practiced your way of parenting but were unable to send their children to Carnegie Hall. (Y Zhao, 2011, para. 6)

Chua’s story illustrates how much children will benefit when their parents enjoy a higher socioeconomic status, even though the tiger mom did not explicitly state it, choosing rather to focus only on the Chinese cultural influence on her parenting style.

Guo (2011) pointed out that another thing that Chua’s book left out was that “it [ignored] the Western influences inherent within her life.” (p. 28). How can a woman who grew up in the U.S. and whose husband is a Jewish American not be influenced by American parenting styles? Chinese immigrant parental involvement in their children’s education constitutes an interaction between their cultural values and the mainstream American society (S. F. Siu, 1993).
Dynamic Chinese American parenting involvement in education. Chinese American parenting is also a process of acculturation, which means “the reconciliation of differences between their culture of origin and their adopted culture with regard to socialization beliefs, practices, behaviors, and values” (Cheah et al., 2013, p. 31). Their involvement in their children’s education is greatly affected by cultural factors, from both the home culture and the host country culture. At the same time it is also influenced by social factors, such as socioeconomic status, which could either hinder or enhance their children’s school performance. Once Chinese immigrant parents sense a difference between eastern and western parenting styles, they tend to modify their own style, “taking the best of western parenting and mixing it with the best of Chinese parenting” (S. F. Siu, 1993, p. 11). For example, Cheah et al. (2013) found that Chinese immigrant mothers identified several characteristics of the two kinds of parental involvement in their children’s education – Chinese parents tend to adopt harsh discipline and more criticism and emphasize children’s academic performance, while American parents are more likely to use regulatory reasoning and more praise and focus on their children’s overall development. When Chinese mothers in the study noticed the advantages of American parenting style, they began to decrease their coercive methods and emphasis on academic performance and increase regulatory reasoning and to stress children’s overall development.

Chinese immigrant parenting is a dynamic practice, but however they change their parenting involvement, one thing is certain: their expectations of their children’s education have always been high. They are the parents who are even “willing to borrow
money and do anything to pay the tuition” (S. F. Siu, 1993, p. 9). In other words, they do whatever they can to provide their children with a decent education, because their goal is “to prepare children for mainstream lives, as it is still the mainstream society that most children need to fit in” (Guo, 2013, p. 49). Siu’s (1993) single-case study well illustrated how Chinese American parents prepared their children for mainstream society.

In S. F. Siu’s (1993) single case, Ivan was a seven-year-old boy, born in the U.S., whose parents emigrated from China. Ivan had a Chinese name but was called by his English name both at home and in school, and he was bilingual, speaking Chinese at home and English elsewhere. His parents believed that to be successful in mainstream society, Ivan needed to master the right tools, which included English, social poise, and the ability to interact with people of different races. In order to equip him with these abilities, they kept him away from Chinatown and created opportunities for him to interact with people from other races; hired a non-Chinese woman to babysit him; looked for private, non-sectarian schools through social networking; and ensured that he had a strict teacher in school. Like other Chinese immigrant parents, Ivan’s parents assigned him extra homework to “compensate for a perceived laxity on the part of the school” (S. F. Siu, 1993, p. 14). They carefully picked extracurricular activities for him. For example, they did not enroll Ivan in any program in Chinatown, and they checked other children’s behavior before they signed Ivan up for any program. Although it seems like this family turned its back on their home culture, Siu (1993) contends they did not, because they maintained the Chinese culture at home.
In her study, S. F. Siu (2001) discerned three patterns of Chinese American parenting involvement with education, based on “the parents’ perception of their status in the United States (how secure)” (p. 109). Among the 20 Chinese American parents, some were recent immigrants, some were long-time immigrants, and the rest were American-born. Pattern I (highly secure) families included those in which at least one parent was U.S.-born, went through the American education, and viewed himself or herself successful in school and/or career. Pattern III (tenuously secure) families were those in which both parents were immigrants, obtained their education in non-U.S. schools, and did not consider themselves successful or secure in any socioeconomic sense. Somewhere between Pattern I (highly secure) and Pattern III (tenuously secure) lies Pattern II (moderately secure) families, in which both parents were immigrants and attended schools both overseas and in the U.S. Pattern II parents tend to maintain a balance between Chinese and American parental involvement. S. F. Siu’s study explored participants’ beliefs and practices on parental involvement in education in nine different areas, and a wide range of Chinese parental involvement in education is clear.

Pattern I parents consider education, personal and interpersonal qualities all important for children’s success. They actively volunteer in school activities, keep in touch with teachers, participate in curriculum discussions, and carefully monitor their children’s progress. They allow their children to develop their own interests and give them freedom to choose their own majors in college and future career paths. They believe that their children’s extracurricular activities should center around “enjoyment and socialization” (S. F. Siu, 2001, p. 113), so these parents view school as a valuable
place to make friends. They were educated in the U.S., so they understand how the American educational system works. They do not make up extra homework for their children, but they do read to them and promote reading through modeling by being good readers. They speak up whenever they think there is an issue with their children’s academics, and quite often, they talk directly with the principal. They consider themselves Chinese American and have a multiracial circle, so their children will be exposed to people from different cultural backgrounds, and feel comfortable in mainstream society. They are not good at Chinese language or culture, accordingly do not require their children to learn Chinese, but they want them to know about their heritage. They attach great importance to their children’s social and emotional development. They regard their neighborhood as their communities and have almost no ties to Chinatown.

Pattern II parents consider getting into the mainstream as success. They see the laxity of schoolwork, so they assign their children extra homework and buy extra workbooks but do not necessarily require their children to work in them. Their expectations for their children are similar to those of Pattern I parents and they do not tend to assign their children any extracurricular activities. They have adequate knowledge of the U.S. school system, but still check with their friends or relatives to make sure they know enough about their children’s specific school. They frequently read to their children, but do not always model being good readers themselves. They seldom request a particular teacher and do not complain to the teachers. They usually speak Chinese with their spouses but not with their children, so there is a linguistic gap between
parents and children. They struggle somewhat between two different kinds of parenting styles – they want to pay more attention to their children’s social-emotional development but fear giving them too much autonomy. They usually consider their suburban neighborhoods and their extended families as their community, and have no ties to Chinatown.

Pattern III parents view getting a college degree and a stable job as success. They believe it is their responsibility to teach their children the skills needed in order to thrive in the future. They are the parents who always complain there is not enough homework, so they make up extra homework and invest a lot in their children’s education by purchasing workbooks and other supplemental materials, and making sure their children indeed work on them. They expect their children to get good grades, enter college and get a degree in some acceptable major, such as doctor, engineer, or computer scientist. Unlike Pattern I and Pattern II parents, Pattern III parents do not know much about the American educational system, so they have to obtain all information through different channels to make the right decision. They rarely participate in school activities due to limited English proficiency and demanding work schedules. They do not see the possibility that school would make changes just for them, so they usually do not complain. They consider themselves Chinese, speak Chinese at home, and have a Chinese circle of friends. Aware of their disadvantage in American society, they push their children harder to learn English and very carefully plan what kinds of activities their children should attend. They emphasize obedience at home and tend to tell their children
what is best for them, rarely considering the children’s feelings. Unlike the other two pattern parents, Pattern III parents have a feeling of belonging in Chinatown.

Based on S. F. Siu’s (2001) findings that “one cannot speak of ‘the’ pattern of Chinese American parental involvement with education” (p. 108), American teachers should avoid stereotyping Chinese American parents.

Finally, the academic success of Chinese American children is by no means an individual achievement, rather the outcome of the entire family’s effort (S. F. Siu, 1992a). Their outstanding academic achievement gives people, especially teachers, the impression that they are super-achievers, but whoever thinks along this line should be careful not to over-generalize. Teachers and educators need to be aware that there are many Chinese American at risk students (Siu, 1996), who may suffer from psychological problems which hinder their social adjustment (Qin, 2008). Teachers need to understand the contemporary social context that facilitates current Chinese American students’ success.

A Historical Overview of Chinese Americans’ Educational Experience

As a solution to the racial conflict between the blacks and the whites in the 1960s, Chinese Americans, along with other Asian American groups, were politically exploited as a device to ease domestic racial tension (Spring, 2013). The glowing title, model minority, granted to Chinese Americans since the second half of the 1960s still sticks in people’s minds today. “It has seeped deep into the thinking of policy makers and the general public, and has become a firmly entrenched belief among commentators and
social scientists” (Chun, 1980/1995, p. 96). This section provides a historical narrative of Chinese Americans’ educational experience in America.

In the early years of Chinese American immigration history, educational opportunities for Chinese American children ranged from extremely limited to non-existent (S. F. Siu, 1992b). By the 1850s, Chinese immigrants in California were regarded as “yellow barbarians” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 4), and their children were strongly discriminated against in California public schools.

In September, 1859, the first Chinese public school was opened by the California Board of Education, per request from several wealthy Chinese families. However, the city school superintendent James Denman held a strong bias against Chinese immigrants. When he visited the school in April, 1860, and found “only three children and seven adults in attendance,” he was dismayed and claimed that teaching those Chinese was “almost hopeless” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 4). In October, 1860, the school was turned into an evening English language school for Chinese working adults. However, with little tax money funneled into the school building, the learning environment was only a “gloomy basement,” which, according to George Tait, Denman’s successor, was “not repugnant to Mongolian tastes and habits” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 5). Barely getting by for another ten years, this school was closed in February, 1871.

“In the face of an increasingly hostile environment, the Chinese turned to one another, forming an ethnic network for survival and support” (S. F. Siu, 1992b, p. 15). Even though most of the early Chinese immigrants were farmers with little or no education, some were scholarly merchants who could help with the education of young
children. The first Chinese language school was founded in the 1850s, and by the 1870s several small Chinese language schools had opened in the San Francisco area, and each school was operated by a recognized scholar (Wollenberg, 1978/1995). According to J. Chen (1980):

> Inside the community, they helped maintain the scholarly tradition in knowledge and the arts. They helped give the young the traditional education they would have received in China. One fishing camp, on San Pablo Bay, had a resident teacher for its children. (p. 120)

In addition to the Chinese language schools, some Christian missionary organizations helped set up schools for Chinese immigrants. Differing from the schools for school-aged children to learn Chinese and Chinese values, church schools were mostly for adults to learn English, and once they picked up a smattering of the language, they went away for employment (Wollenberg, 1978/1995).

In 1884, however, “[the] denial of equal educational opportunity” was challenged (Spring, 2013, p. 78) in *Mamie v. Hurley*. Different from previous Chinese families who sent their children to Chinese schools, Joseph and Mary Tape asked to send their daughter Mamie Tape to Spring Valley School, an American public school, because she was an American citizen and spoke better English than Chinese (Wollenberg, 1978/1995). Their request was denied by Jennie Hurley, the principal of Spring Valley School, because she was “prohibited from admitting any Mongolian child of schoolable [sic] age, or otherwise, either male or female, into such school or class” (Low, 1982, as cited in Spring, 2013, p. 78). The Tapes turned to the Imperial Chinese Consulate for
help, and on October 4, 1884, Consul General Frederick A. Bee requested that Andrew J. Moulder, the San Francisco City School District Superintendent, enroll Mamie in Spring Valley School, because the refusal to do so was, according to the San Francisco Evening Bulletin (1885):

> inconsistent with the treaties, constitutions and laws of the United States,
> especially so in this case as the child is native-born, that I consider it my duty to renew the request to admit the child and all other Chinese children resident here who desire to enter the public schools under your charge. (as cited in Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 3)

Moulder did not follow Bee’s direction but chose to seek advice from State Superintendent William T. Welcher, who endorsed Moulder’s decision. In November, this became a law suit in municipal court. On January 9, 1885, Judge Maquire required Hurley to enroll Mamie at her school and ruled that the Board of Education’s decision was against the state laws. Moulder urged the Board of Education to appeal the case, but on March 3, 1885, the State Supreme Court reaffirmed the earlier decision, because “the justices found no legal basis for the exclusion of Chinese children” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 8).

Moulder then used the doctrine of “separate but equal” and legally put Chinese children in a separate school building, which was rented at $35 per month (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 9). When Mamie attended Spring Valley School on April 7, she was stopped by Hurley, who demanded that she must show a certificate of vaccination and medical examination. When she had everything prepared on April 13, “the new Chinese
school was open for business, and she was forced to attend that institution” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 9). Even though Ms. Tape wrote to the Board of Education on April 15, her complaint was never answered, because “‘separate but equal’ was ... the rule for San Francisco’s Chinese schoolchildren” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 11).

Moulder was wrong when he predicted this Chinese school would not last long. It thrived despite the 1907 earthquake, and by 1920 had an enrollment of 854 (Wollenberg, 1978/1995). By this time, Chinese parents began to have a voice. They required that the Board of Education let their children attend regular high school; otherwise, they would “boycott the elementary school and cause a substantial loss of state financial aid” (Wollenberg, 1978/1995, p. 9). As the demand for ending segregation in San Francisco grew stronger, the segregated Chinese school was finally closed in 1936. However, the end of segregated schools did not mean Chinese Americans received an equal education.

S. F. Siu (1992b) contends that “until the 1940’s, [the] Chinese in America did not really have full access to American public education, even though by 1918 all the states had enacted legislation mandating free public school and compulsory school attendance” (p. 15). The racial discrimination and all kinds of educational policies that prevented Chinese Americans from getting an equal educational opportunity explain why Chinese Americans were not considered well-educated before the 1940s. According to S. F. Siu (1992b):

Given the consistent denial of access to public and private education, it is small wonder that during this period the Chinese in America were not noted for being highly educated. Eighty years after Chinese immigration to the U.S. began, in
1940 one out of every four Chinese had no schooling at all and only half of those over age 25 had received some elementary education. (p. 19)

During the 1940s, especially after the U.S. joined the Second World War and allied with China, the relationship between the two countries improved. This change deeply impacted the lives of Chinese in America. Takaki (1998) claimed that “The war [gave] them the opportunity to get out of Chinatown, don army uniforms, and be sent overseas, where they felt ‘they were part of the great patriotic United States war machine out to do battle with the enemy’” (p. 373). Many schools and universities began admitting Chinese American students, and more technical and professional jobs became available to Chinese Americans. After 1964 when the Civil Rights Act “outlawed many blatant forms of discrimination, Chinese-Americans faced fewer barriers to their effort to do well in school” (S. F. Siu, 1992b, p. 23).

After the Immigration and Naturalization Act was passed in 1965, more favorable policies were enacted to attract well-educated foreign immigrants to the U.S. A new wave of Chinese immigration drastically changed the demographics of Chinese in America. Before 1965, 61% of Chinese Americans were American-born; but by 1984, 63% were foreign-born (Takaki, 1998, p. 421). Many new immigrants were wealthy and highly educated, which gave them a higher foundation from which to start (S. F. Siu, 1992b; Takaki, 1998).

However, racial discrimination continued as exemplified in *Lau v. Nichols*. In 1974, the San Francisco Unified School District included 2,856 students of Chinese descent who were not able to speak fluent English. About 1,000 students received some
supplemental course instruction, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), 40 minutes per day, which, according to Ling-Chi Wang, was the “once-a-day ESL bitter pill” (as cited in Spring, 2013, p. 123). However, about 1,800 did not even receive any instruction at all. These students’ parents sought relief from the school district for violating the Fourteenth Amendment. However, both the District Court and the Court of Appeals denied their relief, the latter reasoning that “every student brings to the starting line of his educational career different advantages and disadvantages caused in part by social, economic and cultural background, created and continued completely apart from any contribution by the school system” (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). This case eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court and was unanimously reversed. In his decision, Justice Douglas stated:

Under these state-imposed standards there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. ... We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful. (Lau v. Nichols, 1974)

Justice Blackmun’s opinion conveyed another critical reason for the reversal, i.e. the significant number of students who needed special assistance from the school district. He stated:

I merely wish to make plain that, when, in another case, we are concerned with a very few youngsters, or with just a single child who speaks only German or Polish
or Spanish or any language other than English, I would not regard today’s
decision, or the separate concurrence, as conclusive upon the issue whether the
statute and the guidelines require the funded school district to provide special
instruction. For me, numbers are at the heart of this case, and my concurrence is
to be understood accordingly. *(Lau v. Nichols*, 1974)*

Although the Supreme Court did not prescribe a particular remedy (Nieto, 2000), *Lau v. Nichols* provoked other school districts to ponder whether and how they should help their students who did not speak English. The *Lau v. Nichols* case has become a landmark for bilingual education and “emerged as a key strategy to counteract the language discrimination faced by many students in our schools” (Nieto, 2000, p. 200).

Wang’s (2009) research study shows another challenge that Chinese American students experienced in 2007. Chinese American students in a Midwestern high school requested to learn Chinese as a foreign language, but their request was denied by the school board. As “English is the reigning language of the system” (Spring, 2013, p. 122), the plaintiffs argued that they were deprived of the right to maintain their own ethnic language. Facing the English-domain educational system, Chinese American parents expressed their helplessness and disappointment with American public schools. One parent said:

> There is no Chinese friendly environment for Chinese American students to practice speaking and using Chinese and to make them feel that they are proud of themselves as Chinese Americans in the school. I notice my daughter is losing her interest [in] speaking Chinese at home. *(Wang, 2009, p.16)*
The Chinese American students’ parents talked to the school authorities and fought for the right of their children to learn their home language. The school denied the parents’ request due to “inadequate funding and a lack of Chinese teacher availability” (Wang, 2009, p. 13).

Apart from language discrimination, Chinese American students are being stereotyped as model minority students (Li & Wang, 2008; Spring, 2013), a new racism against Chinese American students. The model minority stereotype gives Americans the false idea that all Chinese American children are super achievers. This causes negative consequences for these students. They are easily turned invisible in school (Goodwin, 2003). Teachers unrealistically believe the Chinese American students in their classrooms are genetically smart, so they pay more attention to students they think are in need and ignore Chinese American students’ needs (Zhao & Qiu, 2008). From the students’ perspectives, because of the model minority stereotype and American teachers’ limited attention, many Chinese American students seldom seek help when they have emotional or mental health problems (Gee, 2004; To, 2008; Zhou et al., 2003). “[D]oing well in school, being quiet, not acting out and seeking little clinical help do not necessarily mean that Asian American students adjust well” (Qin, 2008, p. 135). Although Chinese Americans appear to be stress-free (Goodwin, 2003; Zhao & Qiu, 2008), “their mental health problems and the need for mental health services are more urgent than they appear” (To, 2008, p. 303).
Summary

This literature review discussed the background of Chinese Americans, introduced their demographics and reviewed the four waves of Chinese American immigration in United States history. It presented American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students and their parents. Finally, this chapter presented research findings on Chinese American parents’ involvement in education and the history of Chinese American educational experience.

The research literature suggested a gap between how American teachers view Chinese American students and their parents in contrast to who they really are. This study sought to bridge this gap and to explore American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture.
Chapter 3: Methods

This research study used a qualitative case study design, which is suitable when the goal is to explore a real-world situation, group, culture, or program to investigate what goes on there, and how participants perceive things (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The central research question was:

1. What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture?

To minimize bias due to teachers’ self-reporting, the study also explored the question from the perspective of Chinese immigrant parents and Chinese American students:

2. How do Chinese immigrant parents view their children’s American teachers’ awareness of Chinese culture?

3. How do Chinese American students view their American teachers’ awareness of their Chinese culture?

This qualitative case study design was used to explore the perceptions of American teachers of their Chinese American students’ culture and to assess whether these students and their parents believed that American teachers were aware of Chinese culture. In this study, student home culture includes the use of language, communication style, family values with regard to education, and development and identity.

This study used a naturalistic inquiry approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Samples were purposefully selected and data were analyzed in an inductive way without a prior theoretical framework, because “When working within the naturalistic paradigm ...the investigator typically does not work with either a priori theory or variables” (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985, p. 203), but rather allows patterns and theories to emerge by induction
(Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Site Selection

The site of this research study was the Elmwood City School District, located in
Elmwood, Ohio. Elmwood is a mid-size university community in a large rural area, with
a resident total between 20,000 and 30,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). This school
district was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2005; Marshall & Rossman,
2011; Patton, 2002) for two reasons.

First, Elmwood is ethnically and culturally diverse due to the university located
there, which includes students and faculty from various cultural backgrounds and from
different countries around the world. There is a significant Chinese and Chinese
American population in Elmwood. It includes not only students, but also faculty and
staff members working at the university, as well as Chinese American businessmen.

Second, most previous studies focusing on Chinese culture have been conducted
in urban areas, but this study was situated in a rural area “to show different perspectives
on the problem” (Creswell, 1998, p. 62). The findings of this study will add to the
research literature and enrich the theoretical pool of studies both on Chinese Americans’
educational experience and on American teachers’ awareness of the cultural background
of Chinese American students.

Participants

The participants in this study included American teachers of European ancestry
(K-12), Chinese immigrant parents, and Chinese American students (K-12). Since
qualitative research study does not aim to generalize to a population “but to obtain insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 111), the participants in this study were purposefully selected.

**Sampling strategies.** The sampling strategies in this research study included criterion sampling and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling, which is used for quality assurance (Miles & Huberman, 1994), means “individuals, groups, or settings are selected that meet criteria” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 114). Based on the central research question – What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture? – the main participants were American teachers of European ancestry in the Elmwood City Schools who had or had had Chinese American students in their classrooms (K-12). Teachers of the core subjects (math, science, social studies and language arts) were all considered potential participants in this study.

Regardless of the subject, it is beneficial for students when their teacher acknowledges and integrates their cultural background in the curriculum (Delpit, 2006). Instructed by the director of the Special Services Office in the school district, I obtained permission from the principal in each school and then contacted all teachers of the core subjects in each building via email to seek their participation. I was able to recruit 17 core subject teachers. All teacher participants received and signed a consent letter (see Appendix A). The consent letter ensured that all information provided would be held in the strictest confidentiality and that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.
In order to avoid one-sided self-reporting from teachers, this study also addressed American teachers’ cultural awareness as perceived by Chinese American students and their parents. The students were either born in China or in the U.S. and had at least one parent who was a native of China. An assent letter (see Appendix B) and a parental consent letter (see Appendix C) were sent home with the students, to seek participation and parental consent for their participation. Both letters ensured that students’ participation or nonparticipation would not affect their academic standing. I was able to recruit five Chinese American students. The parent participants had to be from China and have children attending Elmwood City Schools (K-12). The consent letter for parents (see Appendix D) ensured that whether or not they participated would not affect their relationship with their child’s school. All three consent letters to Chinese American students and their parents assured their anonymity.

The second sampling strategy was snowball sampling (Patton, 2002), which meant I “[asked] participants who [had] already been selected for the study to recruit other participants” who met the same criteria (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 113). This sampling strategy was only used to recruit more parents of Chinese American students. I asked parents who already agreed to be interviewed to help me contact other Chinese families who had children attending Elmwood City Schools. I also used social networking through the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center to get Chinese American families involved. As a result, I was able to recruit eight Chinese immigrant parents.

Teachers. Seventeen core subject teachers participated in this research study (see Table 3-1; all names are pseudonyms).
Table 3-1.

**Participants – Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Great Oaks ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe*</td>
<td>Clinton ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara**</td>
<td>Maple Ridge ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail*</td>
<td>Clinton ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia^</td>
<td>Maple Ridge ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison*</td>
<td>Clinton ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayden*</td>
<td>Maple Ridge ES</td>
<td>M/S/SS/LA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie*</td>
<td>Maple Ridge ES</td>
<td>SS/LA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava^</td>
<td>Great Oaks ES</td>
<td>S/LA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia*</td>
<td>Clinton ES</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa*</td>
<td>Rainsville MS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen*</td>
<td>Rainsville MS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James*</td>
<td>Rainsville MS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia*</td>
<td>Rainsville MS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary^&amp;*</td>
<td>Ross HS</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan^</td>
<td>Ross HS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony*</td>
<td>Ross HS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* M= Math; S= Science; SS= Social Studies; LA= Language Arts; ES=Elementary School; MS=Middle school; HS=High School

* grew up in rural areas.

^ grew up in suburban areas.

^* grew up in both suburban and rural areas.

&* grew up in both urban and rural areas.

N means the years of teaching experience

# means the approximate number of Chinese American students they taught.
Core subjects include math, science, social studies, and English language arts. Among the 17 core subject teachers, 10 taught in elementary schools, four in middle school, and three in high school. There were four math teachers, two science teachers, four social studies teachers, and seven K-3 teachers who taught all subjects.

Teacher participants represented a full range of teaching experience. Four had less than ten years’ teaching experience; seven had taught for more than ten but less than 20 years; six had taught more than 20 but less than 31 years. Among all the teacher participants, experience ranged from two to 31 years.

Twelve out of 17 teacher participants grew up in rural areas, and among these 12 participants, 10 grew up in Ohio, one grew up in different small towns in Colorado and Ohio, and one grew up in Arkansas. There was little diversity in the communities where they grew up – mostly white (approximately 90% or higher), with a countable number of African Americans and even fewer Asian Americans. Their school communities reflected the demographics of their neighborhood communities. Even though several of them had more diverse populations in their high schools due to international exchange students, the schools were still predominantly Caucasians.

Two participants (Mary and Barbara) grew up in different areas. Mary lived outside of Detroit until she was 11 years old and then moved to an unspecified rural area. Detroit had a large African American population, but the rural area where she lived later was predominantly white. Barbara grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles until she was 12 and then moved to rural Ohio with her mother after her father passed away. When she lived in California during the 1960s, her community was originally mostly Caucasian and
then many African American people moved in. She also remembered many Asian people living in California, and a lot of them were Japanese gardeners.

The last three participants (Ethan, Patricia, and Ava) grew up in suburban Ohio. Their neighborhood demographics and school communities were predominantly white, with a small percentage of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics. Ava had a couple of exchange students in her high school, but she did not know them well.

Before taking a teaching position, six participants (Sophia, Abigail, Madison, Jayden, Linda, and Jessie) had no personal interactions with Chinese natives or Chinese Americans. The other 11 participants had had some personal contact with Chinese or Chinese American people prior to their teaching career. Nine of them (Tony, James, Jen, Mary, Ethan, Chloe, Lisa, Patricia, and Barbara) had contacts at school with a few Chinese or Chinese Americans who were their classmates, teammates, housemates, or professors. Excluding Ethan and Mary, the remaining seven participants used the following words when describing their impressions of the Chinese Americans that they knew at the time: hardworking, smart, intelligent, bright, organized, friendly, nice, and focused. Olivia had contact with a Chinese graduate student from a nearby university when she was a junior in high school during the late 1970s. When one of her World History assignments required her to interview somebody from China, she interviewed this Chinese graduate student and met with him several times to work on her project. Her impression of that Chinese American contact was “very helpful and very kind.” Before she began teaching, Ava had some minimal contact with a Chinese doctoral student whom she got to know through a university program which matched a local family with
an international student for the purpose of cultural exchange. However, she said this student was very busy with his studies and hardly had any time to communicate with her and her husband. In Ava’s mind, this particular Chinese doctoral student was very nice, but she and her husband did not get a chance to know him well due to his busy schedule.

In terms of the number of Chinese American students that these teachers had taught, 11 teacher participants had approximately ten or less; two participants (Tony and Jayden) had about 20; Patricia had at least 30; Olivia and Ethan had around 60; and Barbara said she could not remember how many Chinese American students she had taught in her 30 years of teaching.

Parents. Eight Chinese immigrant parents participated in this research study (see Table 3-2; all names are pseudonyms). Except for Ms. Ting Zhao, who preferred not to reveal her family’s socioeconomic status, the families described themselves as middle class.
Table 3-2.

Participants – Chinese American Students’ Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Degree received in</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wei Zhang</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianguo Xu</td>
<td>Restaurant owner</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia Tian</td>
<td>Restaurant owner</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feng Lu</td>
<td>Restaurant owner</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Li</td>
<td>Health Inspector</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan Pan</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ting Zhao</td>
<td>Stay-home mother</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jie Ji</td>
<td>Stay-home mother</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N means the number of years living in the U.S.

Dr. Wei Zhang, a university professor, received his doctoral degree in the U.S. His wife had just received her master’s degree from the university where Dr. Zhang was employed at the time of the interview. They had two daughters, one of whom was Kayla (a student participant in this study), nine years old, and the other one was six years old. The Zhang family has been living in the U.S. for 14 years.

Mr. Jianguo Xu was a restaurant owner. He and his wife both had a middle school education in China. They worked in the same restaurant. When Mr. Xu first arrived in the U.S., he lived in New York city, working part-time in the restaurant business. Several years ago, he moved to Ohio and started his own restaurant. He had three children, eight, seven, and three years old. The Xu family has been living in the U.S. for 20 years.
Ms. Jia Tian was a restaurant owner. She and her husband had a high school education. She received her high school diploma in the U.S.; her husband received his in China. This family owned restaurants in two different cities in Ohio. They had three children, one of whom was Anna (a student participant in this study), 16 years old. The other two were 14 and 12 years old. Ms. Tian’s family has been living in the U.S. for 26 years.

Mr. Feng Lu was a restaurant owner. He received his bachelor’s degree in the U.S. His wife, who worked in the same restaurant, had a high school diploma, which she earned in China. Like Mr. Xu, Mr. Lu moved to Ohio from New York. He had two daughters, one of whom was Sara (a student participant in this study), seven years old, and the other was six years old. The Lu family has been living in the U.S. for 16 years.

Ms. Juan Li who worked for the State of Ohio, received her Master’s degree in China. She was divorced from her American husband (Caucasian). She lived with her daughter Betty (a student participant in this study) and has been living in the U.S. for 20 years.

Ms. Yuan Pan worked as a company accountant. She received her Master’s degree in the U.S. Her husband, a university professor, received his Ph.D. in the U.S. This family had two daughters, seven and five years old. Ms. Pan’s family had been living in the U.S. for ten years.

Ms. Ting Zhao was a stay-at-home mother. She received her Master’s degree in Europe. Her husband, a professor, received his Ph.D. in China. They had two daughters,
one of whom was Grace (a student participant in this study), and the other one was a
college student. Ms. Zhao’s family had been living in the U.S. for eight years.

Ms. Jie Ji was also a stay-at-home mother. She received her Ph.D. in the U.S.
Her husband was an American professor. They had two daughters, 11 and three years old
respectively. Ms. Ji had been living in the U.S. for 15 years.

**Student.** Five Chinese American students, three elementary school pupils and
two high school students, participated in this research study (see Table 3-3; all names are
pseudonyms). These students’ real names were Americanized, so I used American names
as their pseudonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Great Oaks ES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maple Ridge ES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Great Oaks ES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ross HS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ross HS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grace, seven years old, had just finished the first grade at Great Oaks Elementary
School at the time of interview. She was born and lived in Michigan until she was five
years old. Sara, seven years old, just finished the first grade at Maple Ridge Elementary
School. She was born in New York Chinatown, and lived there until she was five years
old. Kayla, nine years old, just finished the fourth grade at Great Oaks Elementary
School. She was born in Purdue, Indiana, and moved to Elmwood, Ohio, when she was
four years old. Betty and Anna were 16 years old and just finished the 10th grade at Ross High School. Betty was born and grew up in Ohio, and Anna was born and lived in Manhattan, New York, until she was five years old.

**Data Collection**

Fieldwork usually involves more than one method (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this study, I interviewed 17 American teachers (K-12), five Chinese American students, and eight parents of Chinese American students. I also analyzed pertinent grade-level Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS) and teachers’ operational curriculum. (See Figure 3-1)

![Data Collection Methods](image)

**In-depth interview.** In-depth interviews provide an opportunity to “enter the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341) and “permits the respondent to move back and forth in time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). In-depth interviews also discover issues that
cannot be directly observed (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 1988). Stake (1995) argues that “The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64).

Therefore, in order to find out American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ cultural background when they have or have had Chinese American students in their classrooms, I did not interview only American teachers. I also interviewed Chinese American students and their parents to determine whether they believed American teachers are culturally aware and responsive. All of the interviews followed the same pattern. The questions for each group of participants were divided into five categories: personal information, language, cross-cultural communication, cultural values with regard to education, and individual development and identity. By arranging the questions in the same pattern, I was able to compare and contrast their responses.

The interviews were conducted in three different formats. The first format, face-to-face interview, was used with the majority of my participants. However, with three of them, I had to use another two formats. Due to time constraints I had conducted only three-fourths of the interview with one teacher when it was time for her first period in the afternoon. I asked to return for another interview, but she preferred that I email the remaining questions to her in a Word attachment. She emailed her answers back to me later. Due to the distance limit, I conducted telephone interviews with two parents. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to two hours, depending on how much information
each participant was willing to share. All interviews were audio-recorded. The interview process lasted for two months.

*Interview with teachers* (see interview protocol Appendix E). Seidman (2013) suggests that the beginning phase of an in-depth interview should focus on the participant’s life history to “put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time” (p. 21). Therefore, at the beginning of the interview, I asked each American teacher some questions relating to his or her past experiences with cultural diversity, especially interactions with Chinese Americans. Then I asked about their perceptions of Chinese American students’ speaking Chinese at home while learning and speaking English in school, how they communicated with their Chinese American students and their parents, how they perceived Chinese cultural values with regard to education, and how they perceived their Chinese American students’ identity development. By asking these questions, I was able to probe how much they knew and understood their Chinese American students and their culture.

*Interview with parents* (see interview protocol Appendix F). The parents of the Chinese American students were first asked how long they had been in this country and to describe their educational level and their socioeconomic status. I then asked them to explain how important they believed maintaining the home language was, how they thought of the way American teachers communicated with them, how they viewed education, and how they perceived the influence of the school environment and teachers’ cultural knowledge on their child’s identity development.
Interview with students (see interview protocol Appendix G). I asked the students to describe their early experiences living in this country. The questions on language were divided into two parts: (1) Chinese American students who were not proficient in English when they first attended school were asked how they were helped in school to improve their English language and how they felt when they realized they could not speak Chinese at school; (2) Chinese American students who had always been fluent in English were asked whether they believed it was necessary for them to be able to speak Chinese anymore. Then all Chinese American students were asked how their teachers communicate with them, how Chinese culture influenced their perceptions of education, and how they perceived the development of their own identity.

Documents. The documents that I collected and analyzed consisted of the Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS), which are available at the website of the Ohio Department of Education, and teachers’ operational curriculum (Posner, 2004). The operational curriculum refers to “what is actually taught by the teacher and how its importance is communicated to the students – i.e., how students know that it ‘counts’” (Posner, 2004, p. 13). It includes teachers’ lesson plans (or scratch notes of lesson ideas), textbooks, and the supplemental teaching materials.

The purpose of analyzing the state and the teachers’ operational curricula was to examine whether cultural diversity was included in the State of Ohio at pertinent grade levels, and whether and how teachers implemented the state requirement into their own curricula. The rationale behind the document analysis was culturally responsive pedagogy, which “is to empower ethnically diverse students through academic success,
cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy” (Gay, 2010, p. 127). Gay (2010) emphasizes that “[k]nowledge in the form of curriculum content is central to this empowerment” (p. 127).

**Data Analysis**

The data collected in this research study consisted of transcribed interviews with 17 American teachers, five Chinese American students, and eight parents of Chinese American students, reflections I wrote after each interview, the pertinent grade-level official OACS curriculum, and operational curriculum from participating teachers. My reflections were used for additional information. Operational curricula, as part of the document for analysis, were limited to the ones teachers were willing to share.

Merriam (1988) summarizes four components of data analysis: analysis during data collection, intensive analysis, developing categories, and developing theory. Guided by Merriam’s data analysis model, I analyzed my data as outlined in the floating chart below (See Figure 3-2), which contains three main steps: preliminary analysis, intensive analysis, and data report.
Data collection and data analysis were simultaneous procedures (Merriam, 1988). After each interview, I immediately wrote down my reflection upon that particular interview, which included the rapport between the participant and me during the interview, my observation of the participant’s body language and facial expressions when answering my questions, the adjustment I needed to make when asking certain questions in the next interview, and, finally, the most important part: what all this meant to me. I transcribed the interviews as the interview process progressed. This enabled me to conduct some preliminary analysis, including writing analytic memos (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2005), because “[d]ata that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 1988, p. 124). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend early analysis. They contend that:
[Early analysis] helps the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data. It can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots. It makes analysis an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 50)

Analytic memos are important because they “not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). Marshall and Rossman (2011) believe that “[w]riting notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (p. 213).

I used Express Scribe software and Infinity Foot Control to help me transcribe the interviews. After all interviews were transcribed and reflection notes sorted out, I began coding data (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). At this stage I identified the units of information, each of which was “a complete idea or concept or interaction” (Morehouse, 2012, p. 86). The unit of information could be as small as a phrase, or as big as a paragraph. It “[served] as the basis for defining categories” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 344). I conducted two rounds of coding. In the first, I coded as I read through each transcription; in the second, I checked the accuracy of first-round coding.

When units of information were identified and coded, all codes were put into a coding table (see Appendix H), which led to the development of categories. Using the constant comparative method, I converged and diverged codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;
Patton, 2002; Merriam, 1988). Convergence is the process of determining what units of information could “converge on a single category or theme” (Merriam, 1988, pp. 134-135). In order to do so, I looked for regularities or patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002), because the “regularities reveal patterns that can be sorted into categories” (Patton, 2002, p. 465). When the task of convergence was completed, the next task was divergence, which meant “fleshing out the categories once they have been developed” (Merriam, 1988, p. 135). When categories were identified, I aggregated similar categories into overarching themes so that it was easier to make sense of the data.

The final step of data analysis was reporting the data. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) contend, writing qualitative data was part of the analytic process, just like writing analytic memos. Data were presented through descriptions, explanations, charts, tables, or concept maps, from which I derived major conclusions to complete the data analysis process (Yin, 2009).

Validity and Credibility

Qualitative researchers need to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), “not only for being accurate in measuring things but logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements” (Stake, 1995, p. 108). To assure the validity of this case study, I triangulated my data (Creswell, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2010; Yin, 2009, 2011), adopted peer debriefing (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Kligner, Pugach, & Pichardson, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), conducted member checks after transcribing each interview (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell,
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2005; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2010), and recorded thick descriptions for case analysis (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Data triangulation is “to collect information from multiple sources but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon” (Yin, 2009, p. 116). Multiple sources not only strengthen the internal validity of a case study (Yin, 2009), but also “lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 115-116). Based on previous research studies, I anticipated that discrepancies might exist among my data. Patton (2002) cautions researchers that the purpose of data triangulation is not to look for an agreement among different sources, although this could be one result of data triangulation, because sometimes data from multiple sources may yield different results. This does not mean one or more sources are invalid (Patton, 2002); rather, data triangulation requires the researcher “to study and understand when and why these differences appear” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). In this study, I triangulated data collected from document analysis and interviews with American teachers and Chinese American students regarding how social studies teachers’ curriculum affected Chinese American students’ cultural identity.

Peer debriefing is “having a colleague or someone familiar with phenomena being studied review and provide critical feedback on descriptions, analyses, and interpretations or a study’s results” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). In this study, I invited a colleague who had just finished his dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction to help me check my interpretations of the data “for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise [have] remain[ed] only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba,
1985, p. 208). We had taken several courses together and we were familiar with each other’s research.

Member check “is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). According to Maxwell (2005):

[Respondent validation (i.e. member check)] is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (p. 111)

Brantlinger et al. (2005) classify member check at two levels – at the first, the researcher brings transcription to his or her participant before he or she starts analyzing it, and at the second level, the researcher takes his or her interpretations of data to the participant and asks the participant to validate the researcher’s analysis and conclusion. In this study, I did first level member check with the teacher participants and both levels of member check with the Chinese American students and their parents. The reason I did not pursue second-level member check with teacher participants was that I considered it was not desirable for this study. As the purpose of this study was to explore American teachers’ perspectives on a specific group of students’ culture, second-level member check may not only confront some of the teacher participants but also cause discomfort among them. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) contend that it is not always practical to conduct second-level member check, because “the researchers and subjects do not simply have different interpretations of particular views or practices; they have different worldviews” (p. 160).
Thick description means “reporting sufficient quotes and field note descriptions to provide evidence for researchers’ interpretations and conclusions” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201). Patton (2002) contends that “[d]escription forms the bedrock of all qualitative reporting” (p. 438).

**Researcher’s Lens**

Holding both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English Language and Literature, I have long been interested in language and culture. What makes my doctoral study experience invaluable is that my social studies background allows me to look at culture from a deeper and broader perspective. Throughout my course of study in Social Studies Education, I have found myself to be a firm believer in multicultural education.

Multicultural education helps minority students make their education meaningful. Nieto (2000) argues that school curriculum is not neutral and mainly reflects the values of the dominant culture. Therefore, students who are not from the dominant group often fail to recognize themselves in the curriculum. Students learn well when they can relate what they learn to their own experiences (Delpit, 2006). A multicultural curriculum should be culturally relevant (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995) to better facilitate minority students’ academic success.

Multicultural education also helps reduce social inequalities and embodies democracy (Banks, 1991; Delpit, 2006; Nieto, 2000). As Banks (1991) puts it:

A unified and cohesive democratic society can be created only when the rights of its diverse people are reflected in its institutions... A national culture or school
curriculum that does not reflect the voices, struggles, hopes, and dreams of its many people is neither democratic nor cohesive. (p. 2)

Gay (2004) expresses similar ideas and argues that “when we educate our children for and about cultural diversity we enrich and empower ourselves as well as come closer to achieving a truly democratic civic society” (p. 41).

Based on my belief in multicultural education, I decided to explore how American teachers in Elmwood, Ohio, take their minority students’ culture background into consideration. As a native of China, I focused on Chinese culture and explored whether American teachers were culturally responsive in teaching their Chinese American students. The research literature suggests that Chinese American students still face many challenges in schools in the U.S., most notably due to the model minority stereotype (Goodwin, 2003; Spring, 2005; Tang, 2008; Zhao & Qiu, 2008), and racism (Goodwin, 2003; Takaki, 2008).

Yin (2011) contends that “No lens is free of bias [and that] every lens has subjective and objective qualities” (p. 270). Being aware of my own bias, what I did to alleviate it and to keep my reflective self under control was “to provide sufficient information to enable the audience to reinterpret, if needed, [my] interpretations” (Yin, 2011, p. 272).
Chapter 4: Findings

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings that emerged from a qualitative case study related to American public school teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture. To avoid biases resulted from teachers’ self-reporting, this study did not interview only teachers. Chinese immigrant parents and Chinese American students were also interviewed to assess whether they think American teachers understand their Chinese culture. The research questions include:

1. What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture?
2. How do Chinese immigrant parents view their children’s American teachers’ awareness of Chinese culture?
3. How do Chinese American students view their American teachers’ awareness of their Chinese culture?

For the purpose of this study, students’ culture includes four aspects: use of language, communication style, family values with regard to education, and development and identity. The findings fall into three sections: teacher perspectives, parent perspectives, and student perspectives. The four aspects of student home culture are addressed in each section.

Teacher Perspectives

A total of 17 core subject teachers participated in this study, among whom 10 taught in elementary school, four taught middle school, and three taught high school. Seven were K-3 grade-level teachers who taught all subjects: Math, Science, Social
Studies, and Language Arts, and the remaining 10 teachers (grades 4-12) were content-area teachers. This section addresses American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture in four areas: use of language, cross-cultural communication, family values with regard to education, and student development and identity.

**Use of language.** In Elmwood, Ohio, English is the only language used as the medium of instruction in school. Chinese American students, no matter whether they speak Chinese or English must speak English once they begin school. This section reports how teachers perceived the English-only policy, whether they believed bilingual education was feasible in their school district, and how they placed value on Chinese American students’ home language.

**School language.** The teachers’ perspectives on an English-only policy and bilingual education could not be fully explained by the environment in which they grew up, the grade levels that they taught, the number of years’ teaching experience, or their contact with Chinese natives or Chinese Americans before they began teaching. However, the teachers’ travel experiences and their foreign language skills affected how they perceived their school’s language policy.

*Traveled in North America.* Slightly more than two-fifths of the teachers had traveled only in the Americas and did not speak any foreign language. Except for two teachers who had traveled to Canada and Mexico, they had never been outside of the United States. These teachers did not give much thought to the English-only policy. In a typical response, James said, “I have never thought about that. I guess that’s because I’m an English-speaker” (James, May 13, 2013, interview).
Half of these teachers’ responses to the English-only policy focused on the English as a Second Language (ESL) service in the school district, which was only offered at the Maple Ridge Elementary School. One ESL teacher served all students in the district who struggled with the English language. While these teachers had incoming foreign students who did not speak any English, they commented that after spending some time in the ESL program, “they start to pick up what you’re meaning” (Jen, May 16, 2013, interview). These foreign students were immersed in an English-speaking environment, and their teachers were optimistic about how fast they learned the language. “I think being forced to take that language, at [an early] age, they are able to do it well. They just absorb it” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview). Abigail had never had any foreign students who did not speak perfect English, so she “was never concerned” about the English-only policy (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview). However, she did mention that one of her co-teachers once had a male foreign student who did not speak English well and was mistakenly thought to have a learning disability.

These teachers considered bilingual education in the Elmwood City School District nearly impossible for three reasons. First, even though there appeared to be many foreign students in their school district, their numbers were still low in comparison to the American student population. Therefore, if bilingual education were to be offered, it “would only benefit that very small number of students” (James, May 13, 2013, interview). Second, because the foreign students come from so many different countries, teachers did not know how they would address all the different languages and bilingual education became a “tricky thing” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview; Olivia, May 10,
According to Jayden, a third grade teacher who had many ESL students in his classroom:

Which two languages do you pick? We have Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Spanish, and Ethiopian. Each year there’s a different mix. Even though the [ESL] teacher (and his assistants) might know different languages, they try to stick with English, because they don’t want [the students to] revert and say, “Oh, I don’t need to learn these [English] words, because I can just stick with my Spanish or whatever language.” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview)

Third, facing the linguistic diversity among their students, some teachers showed resistance in developing foreign language skills. In a typical response, Sophia, a fourth grade math teacher who rarely had ESL students, strongly opposed the idea of bilingual education. She argued:

I have to put myself in the teacher’s shoes, so my question to you is: Would I like to become bilingual myself? If so, how could someone teach in all the languages of the students that come into my classroom? I would have Chinese people [coming] in; I might have people from Mexico speaking Spanish. Would I be expected to be able to speak all those languages? (Sophia, May 15, 2013, interview)

Even though these teachers did not think bilingual education was feasible in their schools, Sophia and Olivia believed that using interpreters could be a good way to help foreign students who did not speak English.
Traveled abroad. Nearly three-fifths of the teachers had traveled not only in the Americas, but also to Europe, Africa, Australia, or Asia. Except for one teacher who did not speak any foreign language, all these teachers had some limited foreign language skills. Most spoke some Spanish, with two exceptions who spoke minimal French and German. All of them encountered language barriers when they traveled abroad and typically were unable to carry on a conversation in the foreign language.

With their own experiences in non-English speaking countries and their limited foreign language skills, these teachers empathized with their foreign students when discussing the English-only policy at school. They understood that foreign students needed help to learn English and they did not agree that schools should be teaching in English only. As seventh grade math teacher Lisa argued, “Without someone to help them, it would be very difficult for students to get by, because there’s the academic language that [they] need to learn as well” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview). Linda, a kindergarten teacher who spent many years teaching in Texas and working with Hispanic students, argued that some of her Hispanic students failed the standardized tests even though they were actually A+ students.

These teachers noted that the English-only policy might devalue ethnically diverse students’ home language and might create conflicts between the students and their parents at home. As a kindergarten teacher, Chloe, commented, “It’s not fair to them that they just have to learn a language and probably they don’t feel their language is valued” (Chloe, May 20, 2013, interview). Barbara, a kindergarten teacher, thought that the English-only policy was “terrible” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview). She posited,
“If I went to Germany, I would speak to my children in English at home because that’s what I know, and I wouldn’t want my children to forget their native language” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview).

Seeing the drawbacks of the English-only policy, these teachers recognized the value of bilingual education. They believed bilingual education was “phenomenal” and “helpful” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview; Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview). If teachers knew their foreign students’ languages, “[they] could have more connections with” the students (Jessie, May 23, 2014, interview). In addition, as third grade teacher Patricia argued, “It’s more important to realize that our ESL students are much more likely to readily grasp information presented to them if it [is] in their first language” (Patricia, May 21, 2013, interview). Furthermore, as Ethan, a teacher at Ross High School, noted, bilingual education can save ESL students from traveling to another school to learn English.

Affirming the importance of bilingual education, these teachers also perceived potential challenges in implementing bilingual education. In addition to the lack of funding and resources, they thought it would be challenging to find instructors “who are qualified, not only in the language but who know something about children” (Ava, May 14, 2013, interview). In spite of the perceived challenges, these teachers still believed in “the more languages, the better” (Chloe, May 20, 2013, interview; Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview).

**Chinese language.** How important do teachers perceive the maintenance of their Chinese American students’ Chinese language to be when all students are taught in
English? The findings show that, to a large extent, all interviewed teachers’ opinions on Chinese American students’ speaking Chinese at home were based on their exposure to ESL students and their Chinese American students’ English language proficiency. Except for one-fifth of the teachers who said they would neither encourage nor discourage their Chinese American students from speaking Chinese at home, because they believed that they could “do what they feel comfortable [with] at home” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview), the teachers expressed divergent opinions.

*Obstacle.* Teacher participants who were rarely exposed to ESL students and had Chinese American students who were not able to speak English fluently discouraged them from speaking Chinese at home and viewed doing so as a barrier that would prevent them from reaching their full academic potential. For example, Sophia and Madison worked at the Clinton Elementary School, which did not have ESL service and had less racial diversity. They were not supportive of their Chinese American students speaking Chinese at home because of the difficult transition from the home to school language. Consequently, they put the blame on the students’ parents. “At home his family spoke Chinese to him all the time, and then he struggled when he got to school. I mean he could understand, but you can tell he was not performing his best” (Sophia, May 15, 2013, interview). Madison faced the same situation. In Madison’s mind, students should embrace as much culture as possible, but for a better transition in school, Chinese immigrant parents should speak English with their children at home.

*Asset.* Teacher participants who frequently worked with ESL students or had Chinese American students who spoke English fluently were inclined to encourage them
to speak Chinese at home and considered the Chinese language an asset for their future. Two-thirds of the teacher participants believed that being able to speak two languages was a strength and that it helped their Chinese American students maintain their culture and heritage. Additionally, Mary, a high school teacher, not only supported her Chinese American students to speak Chinese at home but also suggested Chinese to be taught in high school.

Being bilingual was good for brain development and enabled students to think about different things in different ways (Ava, May 14, 2013, interview; Mary, May 9, 2013, interview). In addition, being bilingual opened more opportunities for students to broaden their worlds. In a typical response, Barbara, whose daughter speaks Chinese and teaches English in China, said, “I think it opens up to being willing to go to other countries, and you get comfortable in a foreign language” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview).

Speaking Chinese at home was important for students to maintain their culture and family bonds (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview; Tony, May 22, 2013, interview). For example, Olivia, a seventh grade social studies teacher, posited that if she were in a foreign country, she would need to learn another language in order to communicate publicly, but at home she would want to be with her family and be who she was.

According to Mary, a high school science teacher, both American and Chinese American students would benefit from Chinese being taught in high school. Sending her two adopted daughters to the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center to learn Chinese, Mary realized that many American families wanted their children there to learn Chinese and
that many Chinese American families send their children to learn Chinese because even though they know how to speak the language, they do not know how to write Chinese characters. Therefore, “if Chinese language was offered in high school as a foreign language, it would become popular among students” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview).

**Cross-cultural communication.** This section discusses communication between the teachers and their Chinese American students and parents, how they perceived their Chinese American students’ classroom behavior, how much time they spent tutoring their Chinese American students, and how they perceived their communication with Chinese American students’ parents during parent-teacher conferences.

**Communication: Students.** Teachers in this study reported that Chinese American students’ classroom participation was no different from their peers. “Some would never say a word unless I directly address them, [while] others are very outgoing and extroverted and would participate [in classroom discussion] every chance they get” (Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview). When having quiet Chinese American students in her classroom, Lisa considered it was because of “their personalit[j]ies rather than cultural difference[s]” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview), and Madison believed that “they were just very shy” and that there is a “[difference] between [being] shy and not wanting to participate” (Madison, May 14, 2013, interview).

Nearly one in every five teachers noted that his or her Chinese American students’ classroom participation and comfort in the classroom improved as they became more proficient in their English skills. Chinese American students who were still learning English were often “reserved at first” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview) and “did a
lot of absorbing” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview). They were hesitant to share in the whole group because “they [were] more concerned if their English [was] correct and accurate” (Patricia, May 21, 2013, interview). Once they were able to speak enough English and felt more confident, “they move[d] pretty quickly into full participation” (Patricia, May 21, 2013, interview), and “they pretty much participate[d] like everybody else” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview).

Regarding teachers’ tutoring time, three-fourths of the teachers reported that they usually spent more time tutoring the other students, not so much the Chinese American students. Since “most of the Chinese American students [had] done very well” (Tony, May 22, 2013, interview), “[they] did not think [they] needed to tutor Chinese American students” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview). Appearing to affirm the stereotype that Chinese American students are good at math, all math teachers in this study said those students who need the most of their tutoring time were American. Barbara, a kindergarten teacher, was amazed by how advanced her Chinese American students were, even with some of their language barriers. “How come they read better than my English-speaking children” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview)?

Mary and Olivia said they give “more help to kids who need more help” regardless of their ethnicity (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview; Olivia, May 10, 2013, interview). For example, Olivia believed that, in her eighth grade social studies classroom, one of the two Chinese American students that she had this year constantly demanded her attention whereas the other seldom did.
Abigail and Ethan believed that they gave more tutoring time to Chinese American students. Abigail pointed out that in her second grade classroom her two Chinese American students were both high achievers, so she “spent time on enrichment with them or things to challenge them” (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview). Ethan noted that his 10th grade Chinese American students “asked a few more questions on review day, or they’d be at [his] desk in the morning at a higher percentage than other students” (Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview). He sensed his Chinese American students’ test pressure, as they usually told him, half joking and half seriously, “My mom, she’s gonna kill me if I do bad, so help me out here.” (Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview).

**Communication: Parents.** Nearly all teachers believed that their communication with Chinese immigrant parents during parent-teacher conferences was positive and pleasant. A typical comment was, “They are very supportive and willing to do anything to help their kids” (Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview).

Teacher participants pointed out that if there were any communication barriers between themselves and Chinese immigrant parents, it would the parents’ English language proficiency, but it did not affect their communication. Almost all teacher participants noted that a large number of their Chinese American students’ parents belonged to the university community, spoke good English, and they were always able to understand each other during parent-teacher conferences. If some parents’ English was not fluent, the teachers would talk slower, repeat more often, and use simple words in order to accommodate those parents’ linguistic needs. When the parents spoke very limited English, the teachers indicated they had minimal difficulty communicating as
these parents were usually accompanied by their own interpreter (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview). Other than linguistic ones, all teachers believed that there were no barriers in their conversations with Chinese immigrant parents.

The teachers reported that during parent-teacher conferences, Chinese immigrant parents typically expressed two concerns. As Patricia put it, “First, how are they doing in class? Are they participating? Are they meeting your expectations? Second, do they have friends? So academics tend to come first, then social concerns” (Patricia, May 21, 2013, interview). According to the teachers in this study, Chinese American students usually study hard and behave well in school, two traits that contribute to the ease and success of the parent-teacher conference. However, Chloe, a kindergarten teacher, was the only one to point out a third concern. She said, “I think parents from other countries tend to have more questions about school in general, just because they are not familiar with the way the American school system works” (Chloe, May 20, 2013, interview).

All teachers remarked that Chinese immigrant parents tend to have very high academic expectations of their children. The teachers appreciated this parental support because it made their work a lot easier. A high school science teacher, Mary, said this with laughter, “Even if I have a lot of good things to say, they always want to know ‘Where is the improvement?’ ‘Where can this get better?’” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview)

However, high expectations by Chinese immigrant parents did not always turn out to be supportive. Sometimes it caused confusion or frustration for teachers. Jessie, a fourth grade Social Studies and Language Arts teacher, was once confused by a Chinese
parent’s question, “Where is [my child] in the class?” She did not know what the parent meant. After the parents’ explanation, she finally understood that the parent wanted to know the child’s academic rank rather than his seat assignment. “We don’t do that here! They are doing very well. They would be in the top 50% or maybe the top 10% but we don’t rank them” (Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview). Jessie said she had no problem with high expectations, but that ranking students might get them pigeon holed and lead to developing poor self-esteem.

**Family values.** This section reports how American teachers perceived Chinese immigrant families’ values with regard to education from three aspects: Chinese American students’ academic achievement, motivation behind their achievement, and Chinese American students’ extracurricular participation.

**Achievement.** Based on their contact with Chinese American students and their parents, all teachers in this study opined that education was the first priority among Chinese American families. Four out of every five teachers in this study believed that Chinese American students “do better than non-Chinese American groups on average” (Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview). The common terms they used included: “brilliant,” “good students,” “high achieving,” “bright,” and “conscientious.” Many teachers reported that their Chinese American students “always completed their homework” (James, May 13, 2013, interview) and that they were either in honors classes or took accelerated subjects, so “they [were] taking classes before their classmates would” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview). Barbara and Jessie, two elementary school teachers, assumed that their Chinese American students were born to be smart. As Barbara said, “Perhaps
they have educated parents? They came from smart parents and so they have good genes” (Barbara, May 24, 2013, interview).

Only one out of five teachers reported that they had a full range of achievement levels among their Chinese American students and that “socioeconomic status far outweighs cultural background” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview). Mary recalled that she used to have a Chinese American student who “was an average achiever – her parents do own a restaurant” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview). In Mary’s mind, students who were children of professors had “a better expectation and higher achievement” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview).

**Motivation.** All teachers argued that parental involvement was a significant factor that guided their Chinese American students to perform academically. Three-fourths of the teachers believed that, in addition to the external motivation provided by their parents, Chinese American students were also intrinsically motivated.

**Parental expectations.** All teachers in this study believed that education was a priority in Chinese immigrant families and that the Chinese immigrant parents made sure their children knew how much they cared about education. In a typical response, Jayden, a third grade teacher, said that many Chinese American students’ parents “[were] here as [graduate] students; their education [was] important, not just for [them], but also for [their] child” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview). All teachers concluded that Chinese immigrant parents, from kindergarten through high school, had “high expectations” (Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview; Mary, May 9, 2013, interview). For example, Linda, a
kindergarten teacher, was surprised when she learned how Amber’s mother pushed Amber to learn at home. Linda said:

We have a computerized-reading program that we do here in the computer lab, called “Reading Eggs,” like reading letters and words. Parents also have the option of doing it at home. At the conference, we gave the parents the password, so that they could do it at home. A month later, when Amber’s mom dropped her off, she expressed how wonderful it was and that she had Amber sit down for an hour every night to do this. I was like, “What? An hour! You get a kindergartener sitting for an hour?” She was really pushing her. As a result, Amber and another girl are the only ones who finished the kindergarten level.

(Linda, May 13, 2013, interview)

High school teachers learned about Chinese immigrant parents’ high expectation from their children as well. For example, some of Tony’s Chinese American students told him something like, “Oh, I got to get an A; I got to get this. My parents set high expectations” (Tony, May 22, 2013, interview). But, according to Ethan, when the students make such comments, “they don’t really look like they are stressed; they almost joke about it” (Ethan, June 6, 2013).

The teachers admitted that when Chinese immigrant parents were involved in their children’s studies, it made teaching a lot easier. They valued the support but thought that some Chinese immigrant parents pushed too much, especially when a student was doing well. For example, Patricia had a Chinese American student who was in accelerated math, completing fourth grade-level work although still in third grade.
However, the student’s parents were not happy when she got a B. As Patricia said, “She may truly be challenged at her highest level and thinking. Then a B is to be celebrated, because that is more knowledge than earning an A [at a lower grade level where] you’ve learned nothing new” (Patricia, May 21, 2013, interview). Several teachers noted that some of their Chinese American students were very stressed and felt they could not afford to make mistakes. The teachers hoped that the parents who pushed too much would consider their children’s feelings rather than only be “concern[ed] about them going ahead” (Madison, May 14, 2013, interview).

Regardless of the subjects and grade levels they taught, close to one-third of the teachers noted that the level of parental involvement varied depending on the family’s backgrounds. Due to the unique Chinese demographics in Elmwood, these teachers suggested that their Chinese American students tended to come from two types of families: professor families and restaurant families. “If your parents are both involved and both are college educated, chances are [that] you’re going to do better in school” (Ava, May 14, 2013, interview). On the other hand, Jayden recalled one of his Chinese American students whose parents owned a restaurant. “[His] biggest challenge would be [that] parents are not as involved because some of them were restaurant owners and [their children] don’t have [as] much home support as other students” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview).

Self-motivated. Three-fourths of the teachers in this study, regardless of subjects and grade levels taught, held that, aside from being externally motivated by their parents, their Chinese American students were also intrinsically motivated. Linda said that with
her mother’s push, Amber began to internalize it after she worked on the computer program for an hour per day. Most teachers believed that their Chinese American students were “innately driven” (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview; James, May 13, interview; Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview; Olivia, May 10, 2013, interview; Tony, May 22, 2013, interview). Sophia believed that working hard was part of Chinese American students’ “work ethic” (Sophia, May 15, 2013, interview). “They care about what they learn and they don’t complain” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview).

**Extracurricular.** Do Chinese American students actively join in extracurricular activities? How did teachers in this study perceive their Chinese American students’ participation in extracurricular activities in comparison to their American counterparts?

The teachers from lower-grade levels (K-3) reported that there were few extracurricular activities for students and they were not sure whether their Chinese American students were involved in such activities, either inside or outside of school. The only exception occurred at Chloe’s school where, although one of the teachers was a Girl Scouts leader, “[her] Chinese American student was not in [scouts]” (Chloe, May 20, 2013, interview).

Teachers from the higher elementary levels (grades 4-6) pointed out that students’ participation in extracurricular activities “varied by the parental involvement” (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview). Chinese American students whose parents were university professors had a lot of support and their parents were involved and took them to places and did things with them together. Ava had a Chinese American student who played piano very well and was a cross-country runner. On the other hand, Chinese American
students whose parents were restaurant owners might not participate in extracurricular activities as much, as Jessie argued, because their parents “didn’t have time to take them to those events, such as soccer” (Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview).

With one exception, all middle and high school teachers commented extensively on their Chinese American students’ extracurricular activities. Two-thirds indicated that these students were equally involved in extracurricular activities as their American peers, in sports as well as academics. Olivia, a middle school social studies teacher, and Ethan, a high school social studies teacher, both coached track and cross-country and each had coached many Chinese American students over the years. In Ethan’s mind, Chinese American students had always been active athletes. However, he recalled a surprising conversation with one of his Chinese American students about Jeremy Lin, a famous Asian American professional basketball player. When he asked them why they loved Lin, one student said, “Jeremy Lin breaks every stereotype there is! That’s why we love him!” Later in the conversation, Ethan figured out that the stereotype meant “Chinese American students weren’t athletic” (Ethan, May 31, 2013, interview). These teachers also remarked that a large number of their Chinese American students were involved in academic extracurricular activities, including the Spanish club, yearbook, school newspaper, Student Council, Power of the Pen, United Nations, and Math Counts.

The remaining one-third of the middle and high school teachers in this study believed that their Chinese American students were more involved in academic clubs and less involved in athletics. Mary, a high school science teacher, did notice that a couple of her Chinese American students were involved in tennis, but most of her Chinese
American students “[were] more academically oriented” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview). These teachers presumed that in Chinese immigrant families, “sports [were] not as valued” and “academic club[s were] the way to advance” (Mary, May 9, 2013, interview), because “those extracurricular activities give them extra practice” (Lisa, May 8, 2013, interview).

**Student development and identity.** This section presents a document analysis of the official state curriculum [Social Studies] and teachers’ operational curriculum as well as teachers’ perceptions of their Chinese American students’ assimilation into American culture.

**Culture-related curriculum.** To what extent do the Ohio Academic Content Standards (OACS) address cultural diversity and to what extent do teachers integrate this issue into their curriculum?

**Pertinent OACS.** In the Elmwood City Schools, teachers from kindergarten through the third grade teach all subjects. From the fourth grade on, teachers are assigned to teach different content areas. In this study, seven teachers (K-3) taught all subjects, including Social Studies. Barbara, Linda, and Chloe taught kindergarten; Abigail taught the second grade; and Madison, Jayden, and Patricia taught the third grade. Aside from these seven K-3 teachers, there were four social studies teachers: Jessie taught fourth grade Ohio History, Olivia taught eighth grade American History, Ethan taught 10th grade American History, and Tony taught 11th and 12th grade European History and Economics.
To determine the extent to which cultural diversity was included in the state curriculum, I examined the OACS of Social Studies K-8 and high school grade-levels. Cultural diversity was addressed at all K-8 grade levels, mostly under the Strands of History and Geography (see Appendix I; Ohio Department of Education, 2012a).

At the high school level, the social studies OACS are not listed by grade level. Rather, they are organized by course: American History, Modern World History, American Government, Economics and Financial Literacy, Contemporary World Issues and World Geography. Between the two high school social studies teachers, Ethan taught American History and Tony taught Economics and European History. The OACS for Economics and Financial Literacy and U.S. Government do not have any requirement for cultural diversity. Contemporary World Issues, World Geography and European History are elective courses. Consequently, for the purposes of this dissertation, document analysis at the high school level focuses on the American History and Modern World History.

Regarding cultural diversity and the history related to Chinese Americans and China, American History requires to teach immigration (late 19th century and early 20th century, and after World War II), racial issues in history, Cold War and China became a communist country (see Appendix J; Ohio Department of Education, 2012b). Modern World History includes some topics that relate to Asia, such as Imperialism (1800-1914), Achievements and crisis (1900-1945), the Cold War (1945-1991), and Globalization (1991-present). (See Appendix K; Ohio Department of Education, 2012b).
Operational curriculum. Strictly speaking, among the seven K-3 teachers, only Chloe, a kindergarten teacher, integrated Chinese culture into her social studies curriculum. She said she had some books about diverse cultures, and one book was about the Chinese New Year, which corresponded to the OACS (2012a) at the kindergarten level, “Heritage is reflected through the arts, customs, traditions, family celebrations and language” (p. 5). Except for lessons about the Chinese New Year, Chloe said she did not teach anything about China. At the time of the interview, Patricia taught third grade, her second year teaching at that level. However, she had previously taught sixth grade Social Studies for 19 years. As part of her sixth grade social studies curriculum, which focused on ancient civilizations, Patricia developed a project on ancient China. When she learned that her students were particularly interested in Qin Shihuang (the first emperor of China) and the Terracotta Warriors, she engaged them in some hands-on projects about the Qin Dynasty. When they finished their projects, she displayed their work around the school building. She saved all materials she used in her sixth grade classroom. She had three big plastic containers filled with Chinese paraphernalia such as costumes, fans, Qin Shihuang’s hat and some warriors’ leather clothes (made by an artist friend), character stamps, photos her friends took in China, colored inks, and some projects completed by her students (May 21, 2013, observation).

At the fourth grade level, in order to address the OACS requirement on immigrants, Jessie used a set of books on immigration by National Geographic, *Immigration to the United States*, which introduced four cultural immigration groups: Irish, Chinese, Mexican, and German-Jewish. “These books work with some of our social
studies curriculum” (Jessie, May 23, 2013, interview). Because this was a book series for children, the text was simple and complicated historical background was simplified. For example, when explaining why Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. in the mid-19th century, Pile (2006) wrote:

Chinese people had many reasons to leave China and immigrate in the nineteenth century. The main reason was that life in China was so hard. ... Flooding, drought, and war had badly damaged the countryside. There was a shortage of land for growing food. One area of southeast China, the Pearl River Delta area, still had good land for growing food. Many people went there. Soon the Pearl River Delta area became overcrowded. People then decided to leave China. (pp. 8-9)

Jessie said she divided her students into four groups. Each group studied one book about one of the immigrant groups, and then taught their peers.

At the eighth grade level, Olivia stated that she did not include anything about cultural diversity or about China in her social studies curriculum, because “the eighth grade Social Studies is mostly about American history” (Olivia, May 10, 2013, interview).

At the high school level, Ethan taught American History. He used two books as his 10th grade social studies texts: *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* (Danzer, Klor de Alva, Krieger, Wilson, & Woloch, 2005), and *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, (Kennedy, Cohen, & Bailey, 2006). These two textbooks have similar content regarding historical events related to China and Chinese immigration
history, including: Chinese immigrants as gold miners, transcontinental railroad builders, and laundry workers; discrimination against the Chinese immigrants; the Boxer Rebellion; China during the Cold War era (1945-1991); Nixon’s visit to China; and Tiananmen Square. While each textbook included approximately 1,000 pages, these topics were allocated about 20 pages in each. The description of Chinese immigrants’ contributions was usually expressed in brief sentences. For example, in the section of “The Age of the Railroads” in Danzer et al. (2005), Chinese workers were mentioned in only one sentence – “The Central Pacific Railroad employed thousands of Chinese immigrants” (p. 237). More pages were dedicated to anti-Chinese sentiment in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, China weakened by war and foreign intervention in the late 19th century, and China during the Cold War, than were given to Chinese immigrants’ contributions to this country. In addition, Ethan planned to use a DVD documentary about Maya Lin, a Chinese American who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Assimilation. All teachers agreed that their Chinese American students assimilated well into American culture, saying typically, “they fit right in” (James, May 13, 2013, interview). However, differences existed among the teachers at different grade levels.

Elementary (K-6). Except for Linda, a kindergarten teacher who noticed her Chinese American students were slow to assimilate as they transitioned from “parallel playing” to “easing [ing] into more interaction” (Linda, May 13, 2013, interview), the elementary teachers believed that Chinese American students had no problem fitting in. In a typical response, Abigail said, “I think race is no longer being seen in this
generation. I truly believe that most kids see their peers for what they are, not what they look like” (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview).

Middle (7-8). Among the four middle-school teachers, two believed that their Chinese American students “fit in just like any other students” (James, May 13, 2013, interview; Jen, May 16, 2013, interview), while the other two noted otherwise. Olivia worried about one of her Chinese American students who she believed needed an individual educational plan [IEP]. She said this student liked playing basketball but because he was a little bit overweight, he was always excluded by other players. Lisa noticed that, in general, her Chinese American students interact with all students in the class, yet also tend to stay close to their own peers who shared the same ethnic background.

High (9-12). All three high-school teachers agreed that the bond between Chinese Americans students and American students was very strong. As Ethan said that in high school “their peers have [attended classes] with the Chinese American students from the time they were in preschool,” so he did not think “they notice the difference any more” (Ethan, June 6, 2013, interview).

Summary. In this study, the teachers’ views on school language policies were largely influenced by their travel experiences and foreign language skills. Those who only had traveled in North America and had no foreign language skills were not concerned about the English-only policy and considered bilingual education almost impossible, while those who traveled abroad and had limited foreign language skills noted the drawbacks of the English-only policy and were supportive of bilingual
education. None of the teachers in this study was sufficiently fluent to converse in a foreign language. These teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students’ use of Chinese at home was mainly based on their exposure to ESL students and their Chinese American students’ English language proficiency. Those who seldom worked with ESL students tended to consider Chinese as an obstacle that prevented their Chinese American students from mastering the English language, while those who frequently worked with ESL students or only had students without any language barriers tended to consider Chinese an asset for their Chinese American students.

Teachers generally believed that communication with their Chinese American students and parents was positive. Three out of four teachers reported they spent less time tutoring Chinese American students because they believed they usually did well on their own. They thought their Chinese American students participated in classroom activities equally to their peers. When communicating with the Chinese immigrant parents, the teachers believed that, except for linguistic barriers with some parents, there were no significant communicative barriers.

All teachers believed that education was a first priority among Chinese American families and that Chinese immigrant parents had high expectations for their children’s education. Four out of five teachers in this study thought of all their Chinese American students as high achievers while only one out of five reported having had or currently having average to low-achieving Chinese American students. The majority of teachers in this study believed that Chinese American students are both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated. Additionally, close to one-third of the teachers noted that Chinese American
students’ socioeconomic status as well as their parents’ significant involvement in their school life affected their academic achievement academically as well as in extracurricular activities.

The interviews offered some insights regarding social studies teachers’ operational curricula. Even though required by state curriculum standards, only two out of five social studies teachers actually integrated cultural diversity, including China and Chinese culture, into their curricula. Nearly all teachers believed that their Chinese American students assimilated very well into the American culture.

**Parent Perspectives**

Eight Chinese immigrant parents from eight different families participated in this study. Four parents were from professor families; they were either a professor (Dr. Zhang) or a professor’s spouse (Ms. Zhao, Ms. Ji, and Ms. Pan). Three parents (Mr. Xu, Mr. Lu, and Ms. Tian) ran a restaurant business. One parent (Ms. Li) worked for the state. Except for Ms. Li and Ms. Ji who married American citizens (Caucasian), all were Chinese immigrant families. This section reports these eight Chinese immigrant parents’ perspectives on use of language, communication with teachers, family values with regard to education, and their children’s development and identity.

**Use of language.** This section discusses how important Chinese immigrant parents considered their children’s English and Chinese skills.

**School language.** Family backgrounds influenced children’s native language. Ms. Li and Ms. Ji, who married American citizens, said their children’s native language was English, so their children did not have any linguistic barriers when they entered the
school system. In the six Chinese immigrant families in which both parents spoke Chinese at home, their children’s home language was Chinese and they began learning English after entering school. All interviewed parents, even those who did not speak English well, believed that their children should be able to speak English in this country, “just like when you are in China, you must be able to speak Chinese so that everybody can understand you” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview).

Among the six Chinese immigrant families, none of the parents favored bilingual education as a means of helping their children learn English. They believed that it was important for their children to speak English and that they “should follow the mainstream culture” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). In addition, some parents pointed out the difficulties in implementing bilingual education. “It might be difficult to find a bilingual teacher who can speak both Chinese and English” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview). Even if such bilingual teachers were available, Mr. Lu still did not think bilingual education was a good idea, as he said, “teachers’ workload will be doubled, because they need to prepare a lesson in two languages” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). These six Chinese immigrant parents believed that children had the ability to master the English language through immersion and that bilingual education was not necessary.

*Chinese language.* The language Chinese immigrant parents spoke with their children at home depended on their family backgrounds, how much the parents wanted to push their children to speak Chinese, and their children’s willingness to speak Chinese. Children’s ages and grade levels did not seem to affect what language Chinese immigrant parents spoke to their children at home.
Ms. Li’s husband and Ms. Ji’s husband were both American Caucasians who did not speak Chinese. In these two families, English was the primary language used at home. “I tried to speak Chinese with [my daughter], but because her father and relatives here are all American, so I finally gave up” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). Although Ms. Li gave up speaking to her daughter in Chinese at home, she has sent her daughter, now a high school student, to the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center on a regular basis since age 10. Ms. Ji did not want to push her two daughters to speak Chinese. She gave them the freedom to choose what language they would like to speak. Her older daughter could understand some Chinese but resisted speaking it because “she wants to be the same as others; she wants to speak the mainstream language” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview).

With one exception, in the six Chinese immigrant families all parents required their children to speak Chinese at home, regardless of whether they were professor families or restaurant families. Dr. Zhang was a university professor as was Ms. Zhao’s husband, but these two families made their children speak Chinese at home for different reasons. Dr. Zhang and his wife spoke fluent English. They observed that once they started school, their children began speaking more English at home. In order to maintain their children’s Chinese language skills, the parents kept speaking Chinese at home and sent their children to the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center on a regular basis. Ms. Zhao did not speak English very well and, as she said, “My husband and I both speak Chinese at home, so we want [my daughter] to speak Chinese at home” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). Mr. Xu, Mr. Lu, and Ms. Tian were restaurant owners and did not speak
English well. These three restaurant families required their children to speak Chinese at home in order to facilitate better communication.

Ms. Pan’s family was the only one that did not make speaking Chinese a requirement at home. “They were born in the U.S., so there’s no difference between them and American kids” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview). Ms. Pan believed that English should be her children’s primary language, though she hoped they could also learn some Chinese.

*Importance of speaking Chinese.* Except for Ms. Ji, who did not attach much importance to her daughters speaking Chinese, all parents in this study believed being able to speak some Chinese and learning some Chinese culture was beneficial for their children. They provided various reasons why Chinese is important. The most frequently mentioned reason was to maintain the children’s Chinese heritage. As Dr. Zhang stated, “they should know about Chinese culture and tradition, because their roots are in China” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview).

Several parents stressed the significance of learning Chinese language for other reasons. Ms. Li, Ms. Pan, and Ms. Tian asserted that China’s economy had been growing over the past several decades and the economic ties between China and the U.S. have become closer. Consequently, they argued that if their children learned Chinese, it would be easier for them to find a job in the future. In addition, Ms. Li viewed language an avenue to another culture. “If she did not know the Chinese language, it would be very difficult for me to explain some of the Chinese culture to her” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview).
Communication with teachers. This section discusses Chinese parents’ views on communication with their children’s teachers: how they perceived access to the teachers and what barriers they encountered during the conversations with the teachers.

Access. Nearly all parent participants said the teachers were accessible when they needed to talk with them. Parents had a chance to communicate with the teachers at parent-teacher conferences every two to three months. Additionally, parents could communicate with their children’s teachers via email. Some parents reported they were able to see the teachers every day. As Mr. Lu said, “The teacher usually stands at the classroom door greeting students in the morning. If you go there earlier, you can talk with her. It takes about three to five minutes and is very helpful” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). However, not all teachers met parents’ expectations. Ms. Ji expressed her frustration in communicating with her daughter’s fourth grade science teacher. She did not understand why this teacher did not assign homework for his students. She reasoned that “homework [was] a tool for parents and teachers to communicate” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). Ms. Ji said she called and emailed the teacher to express her concern about homework, but “he didn’t give any response at all. This is not professional” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview).

Communication barriers. Among the eight interviewed parents, four identified barriers when communicating with their children’s teachers, including linguistic and cultural barriers as well as barriers with the American education system itself. Family backgrounds seemed to matter in Chinese immigrant parents’ communication with
American teachers: three of the four parents who reported communicative barriers were restaurant owners, while only one parent had a professor family background.

**Linguistic barriers.** Four parents explained that they encountered linguistic barriers when communicating with the teacher. Mr. Lu, Mr. Xu, and Ms. Tian ran restaurant businesses in Elmwood and Ms. Zhao was a stay-at-home mother, whose husband was a university professor. For Mr. Lu and Ms. Zhao, the challenge was that they could not express their thoughts well in English. As Mr. Lu said:

> When I talk with the teacher, I can only tell her some of my simple thoughts in English. I have a lot of deeper thoughts for my daughter’s education that I wanted to let the teacher know, but I don’t know how to express those in English” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview).

Mr. Xu and Ms. Tian needed interpreters at the parent-teacher conferences, typically either their own child or a reliable friend. “I don’t understand it when the teacher talked about things, like chemistry, so I ask my oldest daughter [16 years old] to be my interpreter” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview). Mr. Xu, who barely spoke any English, said he did not use his son, a first grade student, as his interpreter, “What if he only interprets the good part and ignores the bad part” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview)? Instead, Mr. Xu asked one of his friends to interpret for him at the conferences.

**Cultural barriers.** Culture was another barrier when some parents communicated with American teachers. Mr. Lu and Ms. Zhao found that American teachers mostly focused on praising their children. “In China, teachers often point out where your kid’s weakness is and then you’ll know how to improve. But here, after the parent-teacher
conference, I can’t figure out what the teacher exactly means when she said my kid was good” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). Mr. Lu’s interpretation of good was the “the American educational standard [was] lower than the Chinese educational standard.” He said, “Take learning new words for example. In China, learning 500 new characters is considered good, while in the U.S., maybe learning 100 is good enough” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). For Ms. Zhao, when the teacher said her daughter was good, she got confused. As she explained:

In Chinese, there are different levels of “good.” Does the teacher mean “excellent”, or “okay,” or just “average?” I know that the Americans use the word “good” frequently when they talk, but I think the meaning changes when they use different tones to say it; and different people use “good” to convey different means. It is really hard for me to get the teacher’s meaning when she said “good.” What level of “good” does she mean? (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview)

Ms. Zhao thought it was very difficult to communicate with the teacher when a cultural difference was involved. “She doesn’t understand my way of thinking and I can’t comprehend her way of thinking, so it’s hard” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview).

American education. The same four parents said they did not understand American education. “I’m very curious [about] what methods they use to teach” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). “They use their way to teach, but we don’t know what goal they want to achieve by using that method, so it’s hard for me, as a parent, to cooperate with the teachers at home” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). Along with
their language barriers, it was hard for them to question or challenge school. Consequently, they could only accept what was explained to them. “Since we choose to send our kids to an American school, we have to trust the teachers” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview).

**Family values.** This section reports Chinese parents’ perceptions of the differences between Chinese education and American education, their expectations concerning their children’s education, and their opinions on their children’s school curriculum and extracurricular activities.

**Major differences.** Having had educational experience in China, all interviewed parents noted some differences between Chinese education and American education. Regardless of their children’s grade levels, almost all parents in this study pointed out that American teachers do not push students. These parents had three different attitudes towards this American “no push” philosophy.

Three parents appreciated it. Ms. Tian’s daughter, Anna, was a high school student and took many honors classes. “She pushes herself to work hard, so she doesn’t need any extra push. Too much pressure is not good for her” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview). Ms. Pan’s and Ms. Zhao’s daughters were both in early elementary. They believed that “American teachers [paid] attention to each child’s interests” and that “they cultivate the interests so students can learn happily” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview; Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). On the contrary, four parents wished that teachers would push more. To Ms. Li, Mr. Lu, and Dr. Zhang, school should be more strict and more tight. Ms. Ji suggested that “if you want your kid to be a well-educated child, do
the work yourself at home, [because] only relying on school doesn’t get you anywhere” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). Compared with the above seven parents, Mr. Xu took a neutral stand. He explained, “Because the U.S. is a free country, it’s hard for teachers to push students” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview).

Several parents who had children in the elementary schools appreciated that American education encourages communication skills and encourages positive motivation. Dr. Zhang and Ms. Pan perceived that American education emphasized children’s communication skills. “I believe it is very important to teach children how to get along with their peers when they were young” and “communication ability is as important as academics” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview), because “you will use it all your life, no matter what major you have” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview). Dr. Zhang, Ms. Zhao, and Mr. Lu noticed that teachers use a lot of positive motivation and that they never discourage students. Mr. Lu used drawing a leaf as an example. He explained, “Your leaf can be a square, and mine can be a triangle. Students are also encouraged to make their leaves all kinds of colors” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). They were glad to see that their children were learning in a happy and relaxing environment.

**Expectations.** Seeing the differences between these two educational systems, parent participants knew that education should be more than just getting good grades, despite thinking getting good grades was important. Most parents emphasized that education should serve multiple goals: teaching children to achieve excellence, helping children find what they were good at, and teaching them how to get along with others.
All parents in this study liked to see their children do well in school, but none of them required straight As. Although they had heard of the *tiger mother* [see Chua, (2011)], they did not approve of her parenting style. They definitely did not want to over-pressure their children. “As long as she keeps As and Bs and not too many Cs, that would be fine” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview), or “85%-90% is good grade” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). They knew that people sometimes made mistakes, read the questions wrong, or did not understand the question, so in their minds, what really matters was that “you do not make the same mistake twice” (Mr. Lu, May 30, interview) and that “you understand what you are learning” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview).

Half of the parent participants hoped that their children would pursue their own interests and learn to communicate effectively with others, which they thought was equally important as getting good grades. “I hope they can find what they gonna like to do in the future” and “keep pursuing that interest” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview; Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). As for getting along with others, Ms. Pan hoped that her children could learn how to be friends with their peers and respect other people, and Mr. Lu hoped his daughter could learn to understand other people’s feelings and respect the elders.

With the exception of Mr. Xu who did not mind what education level his children would achieve, all parents in this study hoped that their children would earn a bachelor’s degree but that advanced degrees were not necessary. In a typical response, Ms. Tian said, “I hope they can get a college degree. In terms of master’s or doctoral degrees,
that’s too much pressure, but if they want to keep pursuing, I will support them” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview).

Curriculum. In this study, parents’ attitudes towards their children’s school curriculum were related to their family backgrounds. The parents from professor families and the parent who worked for the state said that they liked their children’s school curriculum, but preferred to have teachers assign more homework for their children. Parents from restaurant families had little comment on the school curriculum because they did not understand American education and had no time to monitor their children’s studies.

Five parents praised their children’s school curriculum, especially how social studies was being taught. At the elementary level, Ms. Ji, whose daughter was a fourth grade student, said, the “[s]ocial studies course has a lot of hands-on activities, which work very well on students like my daughter” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). At the high school level, Ms. Li, whose daughter was a sophomore, said students had many projects in social studies, which required them to collect information from different sources. For example, when they learned about World War II, “students were asked to interview World War II veterans and to explore their views of the war” Ms. Li explained, “so in this way, students learned about one history event from different sources, rather than only from the textbook” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). Ms. Pan, Ms. Zhao, and Dr. Zhang were appreciative when their children’s teachers invited them to the classrooms as guest speakers to give presentations on different subjects.
The only concern of these five parents was that they considered the amount of homework their children had to be insufficient. Dr. Zhang, whose two daughters were in elementary school, said, “They don’t have homework, almost no homework every day” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview). Ms. Li and Ms. Ji considered homework a tool of communication between school and family and were very upset when their children had no homework. “Without homework, [I] don’t know how my kid’s doing in school until the big test” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). To make sure their children understood what they learned, these parents said they printed out homework for their children.

The other three parents were restaurant owners and did not comment on the school curriculum because they “did not understand American education” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). They did not complain about the amount of homework, because they “barely had time to communicate with [their] children regarding [their] studies” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). Ms. Tian and Mr. Lu were content that their children were self-disciplined and motivated themselves to work hard. As Ms. Tian said, “If Anna noticed she’s lagging behind, she will push herself to study harder” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview). Due to their busy work schedules in the restaurant and their lack of English skills, parents whose children were in elementary school hired tutors for them. As Mr. Xu said, “I hire a tutor, who comes to help my kids with their studies at five o’clock on week days. I also have a friend who comes to our house on Saturdays and helps check my kids’ homework” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview).

**Extracurricular.** All parents in this study encouraged their children to participate in extracurricular activities. What kind of activities their children participated in was
affected by their grade level, and the extent to which their children could participate in those extracurricular activities depended on the family background.

Ms. Zhao and Ms. Pan noted an absence of extracurricular activities in the early elementary K-3 grades, so they signed their children up for classes outside of school with the purpose of cultivating their interests. Their children were involved in classes such as dancing, violin, or skiing.

At the upper elementary 4-6 grade levels, Dr. Zhang and Ms. Ji said their children were involved in school-related extracurricular activities. Dr. Zhang’s daughter was on the school cross-country team and played the piano. Ms. Ji’s older daughter was on the school swimming team. Ms. Ji liked to take her two daughters to different activities, as she said, “When they are little, we want them to be exposed to as many things as possible and see how they react” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview).

At the high school level, Ms. Li was satisfied with the extracurricular activities the school offered, such as photography, health, architecture, and house maintenance. She said her daughter used to play basketball and swim in elementary school and now she was in the marching band. “I just like her to be exposed to different things. It’s good for her health and keeps her busy” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). Ms. Li was the vice-president of the marching band booster organization and got involved in its activities.

The parents from professor families and the parent who worked for the state could spare time to take their children to different extracurricular activities. However, Mr. Lu, Ms. Tian, and Mr. Xu, who operated restaurants, faced a different reality. Although they also liked to see their children taking part in school activities, they did not have time to
transport their children to after school activities. Due to the busy schedule in the restaurant, these parents admitted that they “did not exactly know what extracurricular activities were out there in school” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview; Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). They really wanted to join some activities with their children, but they knew it was impossible for school to change its schedule just to meet their demands. As Mr. Lu said:

School has its own rules and regulations. Those activities are designed for parents who have a regular job, not for us restaurant owners. Those parents are available after five in the afternoon or during the weekends, but that’s our busiest time. Restaurant industry doesn’t have regular hours. Usually, we need to be in the restaurant almost the whole day, from nine in the morning to nine in the evening. I remember that during the Thanksgiving, the school invited all parents to go to school for some kind of activities, but we can’t go. (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview)

As much as they wished they could attend extracurricular activities at school, Mr. Lu, Mr. Xu, and Ms. Tian placed more value on operating their business than they did on their children’s extracurricular school activities.

**Balance.** All parents in this study believed that both schoolwork and extracurricular activities were necessary for their children. Five parents were inclined to put more emphasis on schoolwork. In a typical response, Ms. Pan said, “If she can take care of her study, she can join as many extracurricular activities as she wants to” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview). Three parents considered schoolwork and extracurricular
activities equally important. As Ms. Li explained, “The academic and non-academic are not one-or-another; they both benefit together” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview).

**Children development and identity.** This section addresses Chinese immigrant parents’ perceptions of their children’s school environment, whether they considered it necessary for American teachers to have some awareness of Chinese culture, and their expectations about their children’s cultural identity.

**Discrimination.** Half of the parent participants claimed that some teachers and students engaged in discriminatory practices. They argued that although the discrimination was very subtle, they sensed its presence.

Ms. Ji was offended when her daughter’s math teacher used the term “Asian kids” during a conversation. Like all other Chinese immigrant parents in this study, Ms. Ji did not understand how math was taught in American schools and did not know how to help her fourth-grade daughter with word problems in math, so she asked the teacher for help. However, she found it unacceptable when the teacher said, “Asian kids tend to do basic operation very well, but [are] not good at word problems” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). Ms. Ji immediately felt she was stereotyped when she heard the teacher use “Asian kids” at the beginning of the conversation.

Mr. Lu believed racial discrimination exists in American society and he put it into two categories: uncivilized and civilized. Uncivilized racial discrimination meant bullying among different ethnic groups and usually involved physical conflicts whereas civilized racial discrimination referred to discriminatory attitudes typically seen among some white Americans. “They look down upon you, but they’ll not say it” (Mr. Lu, May
Mr. Lu claimed that he experienced civilized discrimination from his daughter’s first grade teacher, and he believed it was because “[their] languages and skin colors [were] different” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview). He further explained, “I mean, she’s not mean to us, but she simply doesn’t give much time and attention to my daughter as she did to other students” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview).

Discrimination among students could be cruel as well. Children often make fun of a child they identify as different. Ms. Li said that her daughter, Betty, liked to bring lunch to school and in elementary school, she always brought dumplings or noodles. Some students would say, “Oh, what’s that smell, Betty? What are you eating? Oh, that looks like vomit!” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). When Betty was in middle school, she liked to bring leftovers to school for lunch, and some students would say, “Yuk, what’s that? That’s gross!” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview)! Ms. Li said her daughter usually ignored it when this happened during lunchtime. Ms. Pan’s daughters faced a different challenge in school. Ms. Pan understood that many people here were Christian, and that in children’s minds, someone who did not believe in God would go to Hell. Although she was aware that some Chinese families are religious, she emphasized that her family was not. “Because we are from a different culture and we are not religious, my children face challenges when their classmates talk about religious topics, especially after they find out my children do not believe in God” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview).

Teachers’ cultural awareness. Should American teachers be culturally aware so they can better serve children from Chinese immigrant families? The parents in this
study took two different stances, neither of which was related to their family backgrounds nor affected by their children’s grade level.

Three parents, Mr. Xu, Ms. Zhao, and Dr. Zhang, thought it was almost impossible for American teachers to know other cultures. “There are students from Japan, India, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. How can a teacher know so many cultures? We can’t ask teachers to change” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). Ms. Zhao further explained, “We decided to live in the U.S. because we approve of American education and we want them to fit in as much as possible” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). In Dr. Zhang’s mind, “it is hard for teachers to know about Chinese culture unless they can travel to China and stay there for several months. They can’t find out what a culture really is just from hearing people talk about it” (Dr. Zhang, May 6, 2013, interview).

The other five parents held a different opinion. They preferred teachers with some cultural awareness so they were able to help close the gap between school and family. They considered it important for teachers to know that Chinese families emphasize respect for parents at home. In a typical response, Mr. Lu explained:

If the teacher teaches something that is contradictory to the Chinese value and they did not consult the Chinese parents before teaching it, children will accept what teacher said and may come back to argue with parents. However, in Chinese families, children are supposed to listen to their parents, rather than challenging them. So I think teachers need to ask parents how to teach their children. If they teach something that is not acceptable among Chinese families, it will be hard for parents to cooperate with teachers. (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview)
Aside from family values, Ms. Ji expected American teachers to have some cultural awareness, but she did not want them to have stereotypes. She pointed out that most Asian students were very self-disciplined so they may appear to be quieter than other students. She hoped that American teachers would understand and respect Asian quietness.

*Cultural identity*: Whether their children should be Chinese, American, or Chinese American, all parents admitted that they had no control over their child’s cultural identity, yet all expressed their expectations.

Half of the parent participants hoped their children would have both identities. They hoped to see their children understand each culture’s advantages and drawbacks. As Ms. Li said, “It’s the matter of taking the best of both cultures and just being herself” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview).

Two parent participants believed their children should be American. “They were born here and are receiving [an] American education, so they are Americans. If they could learn some Chinese language and culture, that will be beneficial for them when they look for a job in the future” (Ms. Pan, May 20, 2013, interview). Mr. Xu, whose two children were born in China and lived there for five years with their grandparents, also believed his children should be American. Mr. Xu emphasized that “when the environment one lives in has changed, he or she must change accordingly” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). He said his daughter used to speak Chinese and talked with her grandparents every day, but “now she gradually forgets how to speak Chinese and rarely speaks to her grandparents any more” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). This did not
happen to his son, who was still able to speak Chinese and was “still thinking of his grandparents” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview). However, Mr. Xu said he did not regret bringing his daughter to the U.S. and thought it was acceptable if she never spoke to her grandparents again. “Once she came here, she should follow the mainstream American culture, not Chinese culture” (Mr. Xu, May 31, 2013, interview).

Ms. Zhao had a hard time answering the question regarding her child’s cultural identity. She did not know how to balance Chinese and American cultural identity in her daughter. “When I saw she was a pure Chinese when she was little, I worried about her assimilation, but now I’m disappointed when I see she doesn’t know anything about Chinese history and culture” (Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). Ms. Zhao smiled in a helpless manner and felt it was almost impossible for her daughter to be in a correct position in terms of her cultural identity.

Ms. Ji provided a suggestion to solve Ms. Zhao’s dilemma – let the children choose their own cultural identity. Ms. Ji’s husband was American Caucasian, and she never worried about her daughters’ cultural identity. She did not agree with some Chinese parents’ parenting style, making their children feel they were never Chinese enough to be real Chinese or American enough to fit into mainstream American society. Ms. Ji did not want her daughters to feel they were “short of certain standards” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). Therefore, she would not emphasize her daughters’ cultural identities and allowed them to decide who they were.

**Summary.** Ms. Li and Ms. Ji married American Caucasians. Their children’s native language was English and they did not have any linguistic barriers when entering
school. Ms. Li emphasized the importance of Chinese and sent her daughter to the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center to learn the language, while Ms. Ji did not push her two daughters to learn Chinese. The other six parents were from Chinese immigrant families. Their children’s native language was Chinese and they began learning English after attending school. These six parents did not favor bilingual education because they believed children would learn English fast in an all-English environment, and at the same time, they all emphasized that knowing some Chinese language and Chinese culture would be beneficial for their children.

Except for one parent who found it was difficult to communicate with her daughter’s science teacher, seven of the eight parents reported that their children’s teachers were accessible, yet four claimed that they had communication barriers, including linguistic and cultural barriers and barriers with American education itself.

All parents in this study held that American teachers did not push their students enough. In addition, at the elementary school level, four parents were pleased to see that American teachers help their students develop communication skills and use a lot of positive motivation. All parents, regardless of their family backgrounds, cared about their children’s education and expected them to strive for excellence. The parents from professor families and the parent who worked for the state liked their children’s school curriculum but were concerned about the lack of homework, while parents from restaurant families did not comment on school curriculum because their lack of English skills and busy schedule in the restaurant prevented them from committing the time necessary to get involved in their children’s education. In order to help their children,
parents from restaurant families hired tutors to supervise their children’s studies. Even though those parents who were restaurant owners reported they could not spare time to join their children in extracurricular activities, all parents encouraged their children to participate in academic and/or non-academic activities.

Half of the parents in this study reported that their children experienced discrimination both from teachers and students. The majority of the parents believed that it was necessary for American teachers to learn something about Chinese culture, especially Chinese family values. In terms of their children’s cultural identity, while half of the parents hoped that their children could take the best of both Chinese and American cultures, the other half either believed that their children were primarily American or left this choice up to them.

Student Perspectives

Five Chinese American students participated in this study. All were born in the U.S. Three attended elementary school, and two attended high school. At the time of the interview, Grace and Sara were both seven years old and had just finished first grade; Kayla was nine years old and had recently finished fourth grade. Anna and Betty, both 16 years old, were juniors in high school, and had completed 10th grade. This section reports these students’ perspectives on their use of language, communication with their teachers, their families’ values with regard to education, and their cultural identity.

Use of language. This section discusses how Chinese American students viewed English and Chinese languages.
**School language.** Betty was the only one whose native language was English. Her mother was a Chinese immigrant who spoke English well and her father was an American Caucasian. As a result, Betty grew up in an English-speaking family and did not encounter any language barriers when she entered school. The parents of the other four students were Chinese immigrants who spoke Chinese at home. The students first began learning English when they entered school.

Kayla and Grace attended Great Oaks Elementary School (PreK-6). Placed in the school’s pre-school classroom, they learned English by playing with their peers. Their transition period was fun and happy. After a year’s interaction with their peers and teachers who spoke only English, language was no longer a barrier when they entered kindergarten.

In contrast, Sara, who attended Maple Ridge Elementary School (K-6) and Anna, who attended Ross High School after graduating from Maple Ridge Elementary School, were required to learn English in the ESL program while taking regular classes as well. Sara, who had just finished first grade, was somewhat scared and had had difficulty making friends when she entered kindergarten because “nobody in school understood what [she] said at the time” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). In her mind, people with black hair were Chinese. When she wanted to become friends with a black-haired girl, she was disappointed when she talked to that girl – “She didn’t know what I was saying” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). Anna did not enjoy school at the time because she “was shy and couldn’t speak English that well” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). She said her
parents had told her that “[she] didn’t speak at all in class for the whole school year and [that her] teachers worried about [her]” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview).

**Chinese language.** All five students could speak Chinese, but their proficiency levels varied and were relative to their parents’ English proficiency. Anna, Grace, and Sara’s native language was Chinese and they maintained their Chinese skills because their parents did not speak English well. As Anna said, “My parents’ English is not that good, and I can speak [Chinese] better than they can speak English” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). Kayla and Betty were not proficient in Chinese because their parents were able to communicate in English. Betty’s father and all relatives on his side were American. Her mother, Ms. Li, had sent Betty to the Elmwood Chinese Culture Center for six years, from the time she was ten years old. At the time of this study, Betty could speak some Chinese and understood most Chinese conversations. Kayla, whose native language was Chinese and who once was fluent in Chinese, began to adopt English as her primary language after she entered school. Because her parents spoke good English, Kayla spoke English most of the time when she was at home.

Except for Kayla, all the student participants, regardless of their age or grade level, believed it was necessary to be able to speak Chinese to communicate with their parents and/or relatives who did not speak English well or at all. As Betty said, “I visit China. We usually go every other year. I have family over there” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). Kayla, whose native language was Chinese, was the only student participant who considered Chinese unimportant. “I don’t know many [Chinese words]. I can’t just stop when I can’t think of the word to say, but I know it in English” (Kayla, May 6, 2013,
interview). When Kayla’s father, Dr. Zhang, noticed Kayla’s antagonistic attitude towards Chinese after she entered school, he and his wife decided to send her to the Elmwood Chinese Cultural Center.

**Communication with teachers.** All students in this study reported that they liked their teachers and believed that their teachers, or at least a certain teacher, understood them. The elementary and high school students offered different explanations as to why they thought their teachers understood them. Grace thought her teacher understood her because they both spoke English whereas Sara thought “understanding” meant the teacher would notice when she was happy or not. Kayla liked her fourth grade teacher and believed that the teacher understood her, but she could not think of any specific examples. Of the high school students, Anna believed that her teachers understood her as a good student in school, and Betty said her teachers tried to learn her culture. “Sometimes they asked me about my culture. During the Chinese New Year, they asked me what I was doing to celebrate and they asked me what people did in China” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview).

All five students’ classrooms participation appeared to be related to their age and grade level. Sara, Grace, and Kayla were active in the elementary classroom. They said they liked to answer teachers’ questions and always raised their hands in class. In contrast, Anna and Betty were more reserved. They both “like[d] to hear what everyone else says” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview) before “add[ing] their opinions, saying [whether they] agree or disagree” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview).
When asked from whom they would seek help when they had questions or were confused, all except Anna said they first would try to figure the problem out on their own. If they could not, they would seek help from their classmates or the teacher. Betty, Sara, and Anna explained that their parents would be their last resort because they “spent most of the[ir] time in school” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview) or their family’s background hindered opportunities for assistance. Sara and Anna, whose parents operated a restaurant and did not speak much English, never asked them for help with homework because “they are always busy and especially when the assignments are in English” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview).

Family values. This section reports how Chinese American students perceived their parents’ expectations of their education and how they considered the importance of getting good grades.

Expectations. With the exception of Grace, who did not mention being pushed by her parents, all students, regardless of their grade level or family background, stated they were expected by their parents to study hard. “Both my parents push me” (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview). “When I made mistakes [in tests], my dad was kind of unhappy” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). Betty said that when she made simple mistakes on tests, her mother “would [her] ask a few times, what happened?” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). Anna said that her parents, who owned two restaurants and did not know much English, did not help her much with her studies, but told her nonetheless “to get good grade[s]” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). She said:
My parents always look at me, like, as the oldest one, I have to get good grades. I have a brother and a sister; they are both younger. I’m the oldest; they always look at me to get the good grades. If my siblings get really bad grades, it’s not a big deal. But if I get a bad grade, it’s like the end of the world. (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview)

_School and good grades_. Despite pressure from their parents to get good grades, all five students enjoyed school and earning good grades. Sara, Grace, and Kayla, all three elementary school level students, thought school was fun and that getting good grades is important. Sara and Grace enjoyed field trips while Kayla thought school was pleasant because “the teachers make work feel like fun” (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview). In their minds, good grades “made [them] happy” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview) and indicated they are “very smart genius[es]” (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview). “It’s good to be smart” (Grace, May 13, 2013, interview). Another reason Kayla liked good grades was that “when [she got] good grades, [she got] money” from her father (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview).

Anna and Betty liked their high school because they were “able to see and talk to [their] friends” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview; Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). Both were enrolled in several honors classes and liked “learning new subjects” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview), even though “there’s a lot of hard work” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview).

Anna and Betty thought good grades paved their way to college. Although both intended to go to college, their motives differed due to family backgrounds. Ms. Li,
Betty’s mother, was Chinese while Betty’s father was American. Betty wanted to go to college to get a good job in the future. “If you get better grades, you’ll go to college, or save your money. And if you can get a better job, you get more money” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). Anna’s parents were both Chinese and operated two restaurants. Her mother, Ms. Tian, said that to motivate her daughter to study hard, she always told her, “Look, I keep working in the restaurant 12 hours a day. If you don’t study hard, you’ll be just like me in the future” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013). Ms. Tian stated, “Anna doesn’t like coming to my restaurant. Every time when she comes here, she’s not happy” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview). Echoing Ms. Tian’s sentiment, Anna said she motivated herself to study hard “only because [she] wanna get to the college [and] get out of [Elmwood]” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). She said she would not like to go to any college or university near Elmwood. “I really want to go somewhere in California” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview).

**Development and identity.** This section explores what Chinese American students learned about China or Chinese culture in school and how they perceived their cultural identity.

**School and Chinese culture.** With the exception of Sara, the students explained they had not seen any signs reflective of Chinese culture in their classrooms or in their schools. Sara, a first grade student at Maple Ridge Elementary School, was the only one who said she saw something that reminded her of her cultural heritage. “Sometimes sixth grade students make some stuff reflecting China and display them in the hallway” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). Both she and Grace said they did not learn anything about
China or Chinese culture in their school. Kayla said a research project on pandas was the only thing that she learned in school about China. Proud of her project, she said, “Pandas are in China! And my parents come from China” (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview).

Betty said that even though her high school displayed flags of many countries, she “didn’t see the flag of China” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). Both she and Anna said they learned about China in social studies even though they could not remember much of what they learned. Due to their family backgrounds, their experiences differed. After completing her first three years of elementary education in Hong Kong, Anna’s mother, Ms. Tian emigrated to the U.S., where she stayed in school until she dropped out as a freshman in college. Ms. Tian said, “I’ve been here for a long time and I don’t know much about the Chinese holidays or traditions. My family only celebrates the Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival. I also taught my children to respect the elders” (Ms. Tian, June 6, 2013, interview). Sometimes Anna’s American classmates or teachers would assume that she knew something about China or Chinese culture simply because of her family background. However, she felt embarrassed: “I really don’t know much about Chinese culture” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). Yet, she remembered she studied the Cold War:

I am pretty sure it’s the Cold War and how we lost China, like communism. That’s the only thing that I remember. It was like Mao Zedong, someone, and ... I just know we lost China. We were allies with them; then we lost them. (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview)
When her social studies teacher talked about China, Anna would sometimes be surprised, saying, “I didn’t know it; I didn’t really know about my culture. If it’s something good, I’m like, ‘okay, that’s good. I’m proud of my heritage.’ But if it’s something that is not good, I’m like, ‘oh no’” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview).

Betty looked at what she learned about China in social studies from a different perspective, because her mother, Ms. Li, had completed her education through graduate school in mainland China. She learned more about China’s history and knew more about Chinese traditions and culture than Ms. Tian did and therefore was able to provide Betty with a Chinese perspective on some topics that she learned about in school. As Ms. Li said, “It’s not one better than the other; it’s just different measures and different cultures. Sometimes, there’s no right answer to it. It’s just different ways that people are thinking or doing things” (Ms. Li, July 3, 2013, interview). Betty remembered that during her freshman year in high school, she learned about the Boxer Rebellion:

Usually when [my social studies teachers] first get on [a] subject, I just listen to what they are talking about. Then I go home and see how my mom was taught that kind of stuff, like asking my mom how she was taught differently, or like how the different points of views from different countries. And at one point, my teacher taught the Boxer Rebellion and was talking about how the Chinese would kill the foreigners; then I asked my mom when I got home, and she told me the same historical event from a totally different perspective, like the clue, the [fight], who started the rebellion, and why [the] rebellion started. They had different reasons and different causes. (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview)
Betty said she would then go back to school and tell her classmates what her mother had told her about the Boxer Rebellion and that her classmates showed an interest in “other perspectives” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview). In her mind, the American perspective simply became “just another side of the story” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview), and that “[w]hen one person tells us one side of the story first, most people tend to think that’s true, but I usually seek different perspectives” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview).

**Cultural identity.** All five students perceived their cultural identities depending on their age. Grace, who was seven years old, was not sure of her cultural identity. “I was born in the U.S. My mom is Chinese. My teacher said I can be both” (Grace, June 13, 2013, interview). Sara, also seven years old, believed that she is Chinese. “I’m Chinese, but other people say I’m American” (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). Kayla who was two years older than Grace and Sara, paused a few seconds before responding: “ABC¹? [I am] more American because sometimes I like putting soy sauce on my rice; my dad doesn’t like it. I like salad and sushi; my dad doesn’t like sushi” (Kayla, May 6, 2013, interview). Anna and Betty both held they have both cultural identities. Anna stated, “My parents are not American, so I definitely have that influence. My whole family is Chinese. So, maybe, Chinese American. Probably more American” (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview). Betty said her cultural identity depends on the environment she is in at the moment. “When I’m with my American friends, I can see myself [as] Chinese because I’m obviously different from them, like the way I was raised. But when I’m in China, I’m obviously American. My hair, everything” (Betty, June 25, 2013, interview).  

¹ “American-born Chinese.”
All five students noted they differed from their American peers. Grace, Sara and Kayla, due to their young age, only identified some surface differences. Grace and Kayla noticed their hair color was different from their friends. Like most Chinese, believing that keeping warm is important for one’s health, Sara did not “like to wear short-sleeves too early” as her American classmates did (Sara, May 30, 2013, interview). Anna and Betty, on the other hand, offered more sophisticated responses. While Betty said she knew more about Chinese culture than her American friends, Anna said:

Mostly, like family, [American] parents are more lenient. They grow up in this culture, they are more okay like going to sleep overs sometimes. My parents didn’t grow up in this culture; they are more strict. They never get the stuff. I don’t get [as] much freedom as my American friends do. (Anna, June 6, 2013, interview)

**Summary.** Except for Betty, the students’ native language was Chinese. They began learning English when they first attended school. Anna and Sara, who learned English through the ESL program, had a more difficult time transitioning than did Grace and Kayla who learned English through playing with their American peers in pre-school. With the exception of Kayla, these students thought it was important to be able to speak Chinese because their parents and relatives all spoke Chinese.

The students’ level of classroom participation appeared to be related to their age and grade levels. Grace, Sara and Kayla, the three elementary school students, appeared to be more engaged in class than Anna and Betty. When they had questions or were confused, all, except Anna, chose to try to solve their problems on their own before
asking their classmates or the teacher. Betty, Anna, and Sara said they seldom asked their parents for homework help.

All five students said they liked school and enjoyed earning good grades. For Grace, Sara and Kayla, school was a fun place where getting good grades made them feel good. For Anna and Betty, school was a place where they could meet their friends and learn new things. Getting good grades was a way for them to get into college.

Except for Sara, the students said they had never seen any displays about their cultural heritage in their school buildings. Anna and Betty said they learned about China mostly in social studies classes. However, their family backgrounds influenced how they perceived what they learned about China. Anna’s mother had little knowledge about China’s history and traditions. As a result, Anna accepted what she learned about China in school. In contrast, Betty’s mother had a basic knowledge. Whenever Betty learned about China’s history in school, her mother would offer her a Chinese perspective exposing Betty to different perspectives. Finally, age influenced how they perceived their cultural identity. While Grace and Sara, first graders, were not sure about their cultural identity, Kayla, a fourth grader, Anna and Betty, high school sophomores/juniors, thought of themselves being part of both cultural identities.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture in Elmwood, a rural town in Ohio. The research questions included:

1. What are American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture?
2. How do Chinese immigrant parents view their children’s American teachers’ awareness of their Chinese culture?
3. How do Chinese American students view their American teachers’ awareness of their Chinese culture?

This study explored culture in four aspects: use of language, communication style, family values with regard to education, and student development and identity. In this final chapter, I summarize the findings from American teachers, Chinese immigrant parents, and Chinese American students. The implications of this study go for practice and policy. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Summary

Use of language. While the majority of the Chinese American students in this study began learning English upon entering school, none of the teacher participants was able to provide linguistic assistance to those Chinese American students who were not proficient in English. Two-fifths of the teacher participants who only traveled in North America and had no foreign language skills did not give much consideration to the English-only policy as they spoke English all the time and they viewed bilingual
education a “tricky thing” (Jayden, June 6, 2013, interview). Three-fifths of the teacher participants, who had traveled overseas and had minimal foreign language skills, were critical of the English-only policy and recognized the benefits of bilingual education. They hoped to see that more languages could be honored, but they also acknowledged the lack of funding and resources in the school district, two main issues that prevented the school district from providing more assistance to ESL students. As a result, the desires of this group of teacher participants seemed not enough to bridge the gap between what they hoped to see and what the school district could do to help ESL students.

Based on the findings in this study, the way that the Elmwood City School District helped its ESL students learn English was through the ESL service, which was provided only at Maple Ridge Elementary School where one ESL teacher helped all the English language learners. While some teachers in this study were happy to see that their ESL students quickly picked up English with the help of the ESL program, none of them seemed to notice the emotional challenges the students experienced while they were learning the language. Among the five Chinese American student participants, Anna and Sara learned English in the ESL program and both were scared to various degrees while learning English.

Teacher participants’ attitudes towards their Chinese American students’ home language differed. One-third either did not care what language their Chinese American students spoke at home or considered speaking Chinese at home an obstacle that prevented the students from mastering English. Two-thirds were supportive of their Chinese American students speaking Chinese at home, which echoed nearly all Chinese
immigrant parents’ views on Chinese language in this study. However, interviews with Chinese American students showed that the maintenance of their Chinese language skills was related to their parents’ English skills. Sara’s parents, Anna’s parents, and Grace’s mother were not adept at speaking English, so they had to speak Chinese in order to facilitate conversation at home. As a result, they maintained their Chinese language skills. However, Kayla, a fourth grade student whose parents were fluent in English, considered Chinese no longer important after she entered school. Kayla’s native language gradually became her lost language.

**Communication with Chinese American parents.** Previous studies in urban areas have suggested that American teachers have a negative perception of Chinese immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s education (Constantino et al., 1995; Lahman & Park, 2004). However, this current study, conducted in a rural area, found nearly all teachers offered positive comments about their communication with Chinese immigrant parents and believed that the parents were supportive of their children’s education.

However, teachers in this study had misunderstandings when communicating with Chinese immigrant parents, believing they could communicate with Chinese immigrant parents and create understanding through frequent repetition or by talking slowly, not realizing that some immigrant parents did not speak much English and were not able to fully express themselves (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview; Ms. Zhao, June 13, 2013, interview). Such parents did not consider their communication with American teachers to be effective, even after teachers repeated what they had said or spoke more slowly.
Additionally, teachers failed to recognize the challenge to parents of understanding American culture and education. As a result, communication with American teachers can be extremely challenging for Chinese immigrant parents who have linguistic barriers and do not know much about American culture and education.

**Family values.** Based on their experiences with Chinese American students and Chinese immigrant parents, the teachers in this study noted that education is a first priority among Chinese American families. These teachers appreciated parents’ support but often had difficulty understanding why Chinese immigrant parents pushed their children so hard. Ironically, Chinese immigrant parents in this study complained that American teachers did not push their students hard enough. The views from teachers and parents indicate that these American teachers did not understand the cultural influence behind the Chinese immigrant parents’ push. To illustrate, one parent in this study said, “We are influenced by Confucius, so we emphasize education and getting ahead in the society with outstanding academic achievement” (Ms. Ji, June 20, 2013, interview). Ms. Ji’s comment is consistent with previous literature (Guo, 2013; Pearce, 2006; S. F. Siu, 1992, 1993; Wu & Herberg-Davis, 2008; Zhu, 1999).

Most immigrant parents in this study had no experience in American public schools. After comparing their educational experiences in China with their children’s education in the U.S., some parents pointed out that the two systems represent extremes—the former has too much pressure, and the latter has no pressure at all. Consistent with previous studies (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Wu & Herberg-Davis, 2008), the majority of the parents in this study easily got upset when they did not see their children working on
homework assigned by their teachers. As a result, some parents contacted the teachers and asked for homework; others printed out extra homework for their children. In the parents’ minds, homework is more than work. It is a means by which they know what their children are learning in school so they can supervise and make sure their children understand what they have learned. Homework is also considered a form of communication between teachers and parents.

One-third of the teachers in this study thought Chinese American students from high socioeconomic status families tend to achieve better than those from lower-status families. Those teachers believed that parents who were university professors had more time and were better able to help their children study at home while parents who were restaurant owners were too busy with their business to assist their children with homework. However, all parent participants in this study, regardless of their family’s socioeconomic status, attached high importance to their children’s education. To illustrate, restaurant owner parents, knowing they were not able to supervise their children’s homework, hired tutors for their children. Socioeconomic status may influence how well a student can achieve, but it is by no means a determining factor.

Teachers from the upper elementary grade levels (grades 4-6) commented that involvement of Chinese immigrant parents in their children’s extracurricular activities was related to their socioeconomic status. Interviews with Chinese immigrant parents affirmed this. Parent participants who were restaurant owners expressed their sincere desire to attend some school activities, but could not due to the time conflicts. Such families were automatically excluded from some aspects of the school system. They
were marginalized; they did not know how to make their voice heard, and sadly, they did not even think they had the power to voice their opinions. As Mr. Lu said, “Schools won’t change anything just to accommodate our needs” (Mr. Lu, May 30, 2013, interview).

**Student development and identity.** Consistent with previous studies (D. F. Chang & Demyan, 2007; Hui-Michael & García, 2009; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007), four-fifths of the teachers in this study believed that Chinese American students were high achievers and rarely needed teachers’ special attention. Some teachers even considered their Chinese American students genetically smart. Consciously or subconsciously, these teachers helped perpetuate the model minority stereotype, which contrasted with Chinese American students in this study who explained that their academic achievement was the result of independent hard work. Like all students, the Chinese American students in this study were not free from challenges. Except for one, the student participants preferred to try to work out a problem on their own before asking for help. Seeking help from their teachers was their second or even third choice. Because they liked to solve problems independently, this may have made them look smarter than other students in the classroom.

The majority of the teacher participants believed that their Chinese American students fit in the school culture very well and that “race is no longer seen” (Abigail, May 15, 2013, interview). Most teachers in this study perceived that their “Chinese American students were treated like everybody else” (Jayden, June 5, 2013, interview). However, half of the parent participants reported that racial biases did exist among some teachers
and students. The contrasting opinions between teachers and parents suggest that most teachers in this study were unaware of discrimination against their Chinese American students.

Curricular content affects how minority students view their own cultural heritage. The Ohio curriculum standards require cultural diversity to be included in K-8 social studies and in two high school social studies courses – American History and Modern World History, but fewer than half of the social studies teachers in this study complied. Based on the interviews with teachers and Chinese immigrant parents, some elementary school teachers recognized or studied holidays of other cultures in their teaching and invited immigrant parents to present their holidays. These teachers introduced cultural diversity through holidays, but did not follow through with additional lessons. Cultural diversity does not equate to culture tourism “in which [a culture] is showcased to students without any interpretative and reflective engagement” (Gay, 2010, p. 147); rather it should aim to create an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2006).

High school social studies textbooks are still “controlled by the dominant group (European Americans) and confirm its status, culture, and contributions” (Gay, 2010, p. 129). As nation builders (Mark & Chin, 1993), Chinese immigrants’ contributions to the United States have typically been condensed into one or two sentences. The two high school student participants identified themselves as having both Chinese and American cultural identities, but neither was proud of her Chinese heritage. They could not remember much of what they had learned about China or Chinese immigrants in their high school social studies classes, but what they did recall – the Boxer Rebellion and the
Cold War – was solely interpreted from an American perspective. Being of Chinese
descent but lacking pride of their heritage, Chinese American students are pushed to
accept another set of values that is Euro-centered.

**Implications for Practice**

**Communication with Chinese immigrant parents.** Based on Chinese
immigrant parents’ communicative challenges, teachers and schools may use the
following three strategies to improve the quality of communication between teachers and
Chinese immigrant parents. First, teachers may consider allowing more time for
conferences with Chinese immigrant parents, and voluntarily reach out to them,
providing information such as how the American education system works and what
happens in the classroom on a daily basis. Teachers should remember that it is very
difficult for Chinese immigrant parents who have no experience in American public
schools to understand how American teachers teach. Second, considering that some
immigrant parents have limited English language skills, at parent-teacher conferences,
schools may provide an interpreter for such parents. The interpreter could be a bilingual
college student or another parent volunteer who can speak both languages. Third, to help
immigrant parents understand American education, schools may consider sending home
newsletters on a regular basis. Each issue of the newsletter could focus on an aspect that
immigrant parents need to know about the American education system. The newsletters
would not only teach immigrant parents about American education, but might also help
them assimilate into American culture.
Chinese immigrant parents’ concern about their children’s education may seem too strict to American teachers, but teachers should understand that Chinese immigrant parents are influenced by Chinese culture and are trying to find an appropriate balance between Chinese and American modes of education, an ideal balance that they think is good for their children’s future. In order to address the homework-as-communication issue between teachers and parents, teachers may wish to consider sending home a weekly teaching schedule at the beginning of each week or putting the schedule the school website. The schedule should clearly show what the teacher is going to teach during the week and what homework he or she will assign each day. Teachers can also include an optional study plan in the teaching schedule for families who want their children to practice at home after the regular homework has been finished. This teaching schedule will enable Chinese immigrant parents, and all the classroom’s students’ parents, to know what their children are learning every day, and provide an optional study plan that could be followed at home.

**Extracurricular activities.** Concerning extracurricular activities, schools should try to find a way to include marginalized families who may not have time to be present to support their child or children. Schools might consider, aside from other possible options, video-recording such activities for parents who are not able to attend, and provide a copy to these parents. This would benefit all the school’s parents and would also provide a keepsake record of the events for the students and their families.

**In-service multicultural training.** An on-going professional development with a multicultural orientation will help teachers keep abreast of changes in the school
landscape. In order to help in-service teachers who have never been trained to work with children from immigrant families, school districts may offer professional development opportunities such as culturally relevant workshops or seminars on a regular basis. Since each school district is unique in terms of its student demographics, the workshops or seminars would have more effect if they could be tailored to fit the needs of that particular school district. Additionally, collaboration between different school districts by sharing each other’s experiences would be ideal.

University-school collaboration is another way to help in-service teachers learn how to work with culturally diverse students. Universities usually have a considerable number of international students pursuing advanced degrees. These international students are bi- or multilingual and bi- or multicultural. Schools should utilize nearby universities as a resource and actively seek opportunities for collaboration. Teacher education departments should encourage their international graduate students to: (1) hold workshops for local schoolteachers, presenting how cultures may influence education and how education differs in other cultures; and (2) visit American classrooms on a regular basis to help ESL students from their own country or culture. These international students can help classroom teachers communicate with their ESL students while receiving academic credit. Such a collaboration would help local schools and teachers address cultural issues, enhance teachers’ cultural awareness, smooth ESL students’ transition, facilitate international students’ understanding of American education, and strengthen the partnership between universities and local schools.
Implications for Policy

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL]. ESL students need to learn the English language so they can effectively communicate and function in this country, but learning English should not be at the price of sacrificing one’s native language, which is “the palette from which people color their lives and culture” (Allman, 1990, para. 24). For ESL students, learning English should be an additive process (Lambert, 1975). “English plus other languages can make us stronger individually and as a society” (Nieto, 2010, p. 125). In order to foster preservice teachers’ TESOL skills, policy makers may consider making TESOL test a requirement in obtaining the teaching licensure. As a result, teachers will be able to assist their ESL students in their own classrooms, rather than merely rely on the ESL teachers. This may also make ESL students less stressed when they learn English.

Student teaching abroad programs. Based on another finding in this study, teachers who traveled overseas tend to be more aware of linguistic diversity and were more critical of an English-only policy than teachers who have never traveled outside of North America. To prepare future educators with open minds, institutions of teacher education may wish to consider establishing overseas student teaching programs to provide their teacher candidates with an opportunity to enhance their cultural and global awareness (Doppen & An, 2014; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Quezada, 2004; Sahin, 2008).

Foundations course on Asian American studies. The state may mandate Asian American studies an essential part of cultural studies in institutions of teacher education.
Teacher education programs should establish a foundations course in Asian American studies. Asian American history IS American history. One can hardly understand Asian Americans’ current context without knowing their past. When teachers only see the current status of Asian Americans, they are likely to perpetuate the model minority stereotype. Therefore, it is essential for teacher education programs to incorporate Asian American history into the program to help future educators gain an appreciation of how Asian Americans and their cultures have evolved in this country, and to better prepare future teachers to understand the needs of Asian American students.

Suggestions for Future Studies

More research on how American teachers view and understand their Chinese American students’ culture is needed. Due to the “master narrative” of Euro-centered American history (Takaki, 2008) and long-standing discrimination, Chinese Americans’ voices have long been muted. The model minority stereotype that emerged during the 1960s further keeps their voices silent (G. Li & Wang, 2008). While this study provides a glimpse into American teachers’ perspectives on their Chinese American students’ culture, more studies are needed in order to understand how to better prepare future educators to work with Chinese American students, not only with regard to their culture but also to empower them and make them appreciative of their heritage. Furthermore, the perspective of Chinese American students themselves and their parents should also be further explored.

Future research could address the following questions:

- How well do social studies teachers understand Chinese American history?
• How do social studies teachers present information that relates to Chinese culture and Chinese American history?

• What kind of multicultural-oriented preservice training and on-going professional development do teachers receive? How does this training prepare them to work with Chinese American students, as well as with other Asian American students?

• What are school administrators’ perceptions of their Asian American students? What kind of multicultural training have the administrators received?

• Longitudinal studies are needed to track Chinese American students during their transition from home to school. Studies beginning in kindergarten should research what challenges students face in the process of assimilation. If so, what types of discrimination do they encounter? What assistance do they need for a better transition from home to school?

• Research is needed to examine the perceptions of different age groups of second-generation Chinese Americans’ loss of their language: teenagers, college students, those who are in their 40s, 50s, 60s, or even 70s. Such findings will shed light on teacher education in terms of how teachers can help second-generation Americans preserve their cultural heritage. (According to the U.S. Census Bureau, second generation Americans were born in the U.S. with at least one parent who is an immigrant.)

• What assistance do Chinese immigrant parents need to better understand American public education, and to facilitate better communication between home and school?
In summary, this study found that in Elmwood, Ohio, a Midwestern rural town, the American teacher participants had a limited knowledge of their Chinese American students’ home culture and were unaware of discrimination against their Chinese American students.

Ironically, even though Chinese Americans have been living on American soil for almost two hundred years, their culture, history, and contributions are often still silenced and ignored. In the past several decades, a significant number of Chinese immigrants have come to the United States, but teachers are still not prepared to meet the challenges that result from this immigration. It is time for institutions of teacher education to integrate the study of Chinese American culture, as well as that of other Asian Americans, into their programs to prepare educators who appreciate and respect Asian American culture.
References


Appendix A: Informed Consent for Teachers

Title of Research: American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Cultural Background

Researcher: Jing An

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study
The objective of this research is to explore American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students’ cultural background when they have or have had Chinese American students in their classroom. The results of this study will benefit society and/or the scientific community by providing data-driven information that will help teachers and teacher educators. Teachers may consider the findings of this research study in their future teaching; and teacher educators may use the information of this research study to enhance pre-service teachers’ cultural awareness when teaching Chinese American students as well as how to better meet the academic needs of Chinese American students.

You have been informed that you are being asked to participate in an interview, which will be audio-recorded. You have been informed that all information you provide will be held in the strictest confidentiality, that no names will be included (only pseudonyms), and that no one aside from the researcher will handle the data. The data will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer in the investigator’s office. The recordings will be destroyed upon expiration of IRB approval, by April 2014.

This study has been described to you, and you have had the opportunity to ask questions about it. You understand that participation is voluntary, and that if you choose not to participate, you can withdraw at any time, and that there are no anticipated risks to my participation. You have been informed that the interview should take about half an hour to complete. You have been informed that your decision to participate or not participate in this research study will have no impact on your employment.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated
Confidentiality and Records

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please Jing An at (740) 707-4340, or by email at ja252409@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

* you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
* you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
* you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
* you are 18 years of age or older
* your participation in this research is completely voluntary
* you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature __________________________ Date________________________

Printed Name________________________
Appendix B: Assent Form for Students

Title of Research: American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Cultural Background

Researcher: Jing An

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

My name is Jing An. I am Chinese and now am student at Ohio University. I would like to learn what you think about your school and teacher.

If you decide to participate in my study, I will ask you to answer some questions in an interview, which will be audio-recorded and should take about half an hour to complete. The recorded data will be erased in a year (April 2014). Whether you decide to participate or not participate will not affect your grades in any way. You will be helping me to better understand what you think about your school and teacher.

If you want you can choose a pseudonym, which is a false name that only you and I will know, so that everything you tell me is confidential.

Even after we start you can decide to stop the interview at any time and ask me to destroy all information you have given me.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated

Confidentiality and Records

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please Jing An at (740) 707-4340, or by email at ja252409@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Printed Name ________________________
Appendix C: Ohio University Parental Consent Form

Title of Research: American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Cultural Background

Researcher: Jing An

You are being asked permission for your child to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your child’s participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

The objective of this research is to explore American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students’ cultural background when they have or have had Chinese American students in their classroom. The results of this study will benefit society and/or the scientific community by providing data-driven information that will help teachers and teacher educators. Teachers may consider the findings of this research study in their future teaching; and teacher educators may use the information of this research study to enhance pre-service teachers’ cultural awareness when teaching Chinese American students as well as how to better meet the academic needs of Chinese American students.

You have been informed that your child is being asked to participate in an interview, which will be audio-recorded. You have been informed that all information your child provide will be held in the strictest confidentiality, that no names will be included (only pseudonyms), and that no one aside from the researcher will handle the data. The data will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer in the investigator’s office. The recordings will be destroyed upon expiration of IRB approval, by April 2014.

This study has been described to your child, and your child has had the opportunity to ask questions about it. You understand that participation is voluntary, and that you can choose for your child not to participate, that he/she can withdraw at any time, and that there are no anticipated risks to his/her participation. You have been informed that the interview should take about half an hour to complete. You have been informed that your decision to allow your child to participate or not participate in this research study will have no impact on his/her grade or your relationship with your child’s school.
**Risks and Discomforts**  
No risks or discomforts are anticipated

**Confidentiality and Records**

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please Jing An at (740) 707-4340, or by email at ja252409@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary
- your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Signature_________________________________________ Date________________

Printed Name______________________________________________

Child’s Name______________________________________________
Appendix D: Informed Consent for Parents

Title of Research: American Teachers’ Perspectives on Chinese American Students’ Cultural Background

Researcher: Jing An

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

The objective of this research is to explore American teachers’ perspectives on Chinese American students’ cultural background when they have or have had Chinese American students in their classroom. The results of this study will benefit society and/or the scientific community by providing data-driven information that will help teachers and teacher educators. Teachers may consider the findings of this research study in their future teaching; and teacher educators may use the information of this research study to enhance pre-service teachers’ cultural awareness when teaching Chinese American students as well as how to better meet the academic needs of Chinese American students.

You have been informed that you are being asked to participate in an interview, which will be audio-recorded. You have been informed that all information you provide will be held in the strictest confidentiality, that no names will be included (only pseudonyms), and that no one aside from the researcher will handle the data. The data will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer in the investigator’s office. The recordings will be destroyed upon expiration of IRB approval, by April 2014.

This study has been described to you, and you have had the opportunity to ask questions about it. You understand that participation is voluntary, and that if you choose not to participate, you can withdraw at any time, and that there are no anticipated risks to your participation. You have been informed that the interview should take about half an hour to complete. You have been informed that your decision to participate or not participate in this research study will have no impact on your relationship with your child’s school.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated
Confidentiality and Records

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please Jing An at (740) 707-4340, or by email at ja252409@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

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By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature________________________________________ Date_____________

Printed Name________________________________________
Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer:
Participant (Pseudonym):

Personal Information
1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What grade level(s) and what subject(s) do you teach?
3. Did you grow up in a rural, urban, or suburban area? Please describe the area and its demographics.
4. How diverse was the school community in which you grew up?
5. Did you have any interactions with Chinese Americans before you began your teaching career? If yes, in what capacity did you know them? What was your impression of the Chinese Americans at the time? If not, did you learn anything about Chinese Americans and/or Chinese culture in school or elsewhere, such as in a professional workshop? Please describe.
6. How many Chinese American students have you taught and when did you have them?
7. Tell me something that you know about China (□ Geography □ History □ Economy □ Government □ Others)

Language
1. Please describe any travel experience you have had outside of the U.S. How did you handle any language barriers?
2. How many foreign languages do you speak? [Fluent, Average, poor?]
3. In American schools, English is typically the only language that is used in teaching and learning. What’s your perception on this “English Only” policy?
4. What is your opinion on providing bilingual education for students who are not fluent in English?
5. Do you think bilingual education is feasible in your school system? Please explain.
6. What can school personnel do to assist Chinese American students who are not fluent in English?
7. Do you encourage your Chinese American students to speak their native language at home? Why, or why not?
8. (If applicable) What suggestions do you have for parents to help the students improve their English?
9. How would you describe your communication with the parents of your Chinese American students? Please give some examples.
Cross-cultural Communication
1. Please describe the classroom participation of your Chinese American students in discussions. Please provide any explanations as to their level of participation in the classroom.
2. Among the different ethnic groups in the classroom, do you spend more time tutoring Chinese American students or other ethnic students? Please explain in detail.
3. Can you give an example of how you encourage your students to learn? Which motivation strategies do you use most with your Chinese American students?
4. What do you usually discuss with parents of Chinese American students during teacher parent conference?
5. When you communicate with the parents of your Chinese American students, do you notice whether they have any special needs? If so, please describe their needs.
6. During the teacher-parent conference, how do parents of the Chinese American student interact with you? Please explain the interaction.

Cultural Values on Education
1. Please describe your Chinese American students’ achievement levels.
2. In your opinion, what are the factors that motivate and guide this population to achieve in the classroom setting?
3. Regarding their academic studies, do you think Chinese American students are more intrinsically or more extrinsically motivated? Why?
4. In your opinion, are Chinese American students more involved or less involved, compared to their American peers, in extra-curricular activities? Please describe those Chinese American students who are active in extra-curricular activities. If they do not participate, in your opinion, what may be some of the underlying factors that prevent participation?
5. What interests have you noticed among your Chinese American students?

Individual Development and Identity
1. [After observing the classroom environment] Why do you decorate your classroom the way you do? (This question will vary depending on how the classroom is set up.)
2. How often do you change the classroom setting? In what ways do you change it, and why do you change your classroom setting?
3. According to the statistics, Chinese American students (Asian American students) generally do very well on standardized tests, so they are often considered as “model minority students.” What is your perspective on this?
4. What challenges/special needs do Chinese American students have in your classroom? Please describe.
5. Please explain your perception of Asian American students. Does it coincide with any stereotypes you may have seen or heard about? Please explain.
6. Based on your perception, do you find any of these stereotypes to be accurate?
   Please explain how you deal with these stereotypes in your teaching.

7. Please describe the interaction between Chinese American students and their
   American peers. Based on your perception, do American students generally
   accept their Chinese American peers? Please explain.

8. In your opinion, do Chinese American students assimilate well into the American
   culture? Please explain.

9. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you would like to add, or something
   that you would like to follow up on?
Appendix F: Interview Protocol for Parents

Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer:
Participant (Pseudonym):

Personal Information
1. How long have you lived in America?
2. What is your profession?
3. If applicable, what is your child’s other parent’s profession?
4. What is the highest level of education you (and your spouse) have completed?
5. Where did you get your degree? [In the United States or elsewhere.]
6. How would you describe your socioeconomic status? [Low, Lower Middle, Middle, High-Middle or High]

Language
1. What language do you speak at home?
2. If applicable, what language do you speak with your spouse?
3. What language do you speak with your children?
4. How important do you think it is for your children to have the knowledge of Chinese language?
5. (If applicable) When your child didn’t speak fluent English when s/he first started school in America, what did the school and teachers do to help her/him learn English?
6. (If applicable) Do you think American schools should implement bilingual education? Why?

Cross-cultural communication
1. What does your child’s teacher usually discuss with you during teacher-parent conference?
2. When you have questions/concerns about your child’s performance in school, how do you usually approach the teacher?
3. From your communication with your child’s teachers do you agree or disagree more often with them regarding teaching your child? Please explain.
4. Has the teacher been forthcoming in answering your questions? Please explain.
5. Do you think your child’s teacher shows due respect to you? How and why?
6. Do American teachers ever consult you regarding how to teach your children?
7. What are some of the most typical comments your child’s teacher has made regarding your child’s performance at school?
8. How did you feel every time after you talk with your child’s teacher?
9. What challenges do you or did encounter in your communication with your child’s American teacher? What can be done to improve your communication with your child’s teacher?

Cultural Values on Education
1. How do you value education? In your opinion, how important is education to your child?
2. What are your expectations with regard to your child’s education?
3. What differences do you notice between Chinese public schools and American public schools?
4. Are any differences in beliefs about education between you and your child’s school? Please describe.
5. How do you assist your child with his/her homework?
6. How do you usually encourage your child to learn?
7. How important is it for your child to get good grades at school? Why?
8. How many hours would you like [do you expect] your child spend on homework each day?
9. How often and how long (each time) do you allow your child to do things other than study?
10. Would you like for your child to participate in extracurricular school activities (e.g. sports)? Please explain.
11. In your opinion which is more important for your child, extracurricular activities or school work?
12. Do you like the curriculum and/or extra-curriculum in your child’s school? Please explain.
13. If any, what changes in the curriculum and/or extra-curriculum do you want to see at your child’s school?

Individual Development and Identity
1. What potential bias or discrimination against your child have you noticed at school?
2. What concerns do you have regarding your child getting an American education?
3. What kind of cultural identity would you like for your child?
4. Do you agree that Chinese American students are model students? Please explain.
5. To what extent do you believe it is necessary for American teachers to have some knowledge about Chinese culture so that s/he can relates more to your child’s learning?
6. What should your child’s teacher know about Chinese culture in order to be culturally responsive?
7. In your mind, what is the ideal American teacher?
8. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you would like to add, or something that you would like to follow up on?
Appendix G: Interview Protocol for Students

Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer:
Participant (Pseudonym):

Personal Information
1. Where were you born?
2. How old are you?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. What grade are you in?

Language
To Chinese American students who were not proficient in English:
1. How did your school help you to improve your English?
2. How did your teachers help you to improve your English?
3. What were your feelings when you realized that you couldn’t speak Chinese in school?
4. What language do you speak at home now?
5. Do you see the need for you to speak Chinese anymore? Please explain.

To Chinese American students who are fluent in English:
1. What language do you speak with your parents/siblings?
2. Do you speak Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese)?
3. Do you see the necessity for you to speak Chinese?
4. Have you ever taught your classmates how to speak Chinese? Why or why not?

Cross-cultural communication
1. When you have a question in your studies, from whom do you seek answers?
   Please rank: Teachers, Friends, Family members, Yourself. Why do you rank it this way?
2. Do you feel your teacher understands you? If so, in what way? If not, why?
3. How did/do your American teachers usually encourage you to learn?
4. When there is a classroom discussion, do you usually listen to your classmates’ talk or do you actively join the discussion? Why?

Cultural Values on Education
1. What do you like about school?
2. Do you feel comfortable at school?
3. What have you learned in school that reminds you of Chinese culture?
4. How do/did you feel when Chinese culture is/was discussed in class (proud, embarrassed, etc.)?
5. In what extracurricular activities do you participate at school?
6. If any, what sports activities do you participate in after school? Please describe.
7. Have your teachers encouraged you to be active in sports? If so, how did s/he do it?
8. How do your parents encourage you to learn?
9. How many hours do you spend on your homework every day?
10. Is it important to you to get “good grades?” Why? Why not?

Individual Development and Identity
1. Are there any signs (pictures/posters) that reflect Chinese culture in your classroom and in your school?
2. In what ways do you see yourself as being similar to your American peers?
3. In what ways do you see yourself as being different from your American peers?
4. Do you consider yourself Chinese or American? What makes you think so?
5. Do you feel your American teachers care about you? Why?
6. In your opinion, what makes a “great” teacher?
7. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you would like to add about your school/teacher[s], or anything else you would like to talk about?
## Appendix H: Coding Table

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code that infers theme</th>
<th>In vivo quote representing the code</th>
<th>Interpretation “this means x” be exact</th>
<th>Theme – covering multiple codes</th>
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Appendix I: Ohio’s New Learning Standards – K-8 Social Studies

Kindergarten. Theme: A Child’s Place in Time and Space

Culture, heritage and democratic principles are explored, building upon the foundation of the classroom experience. History Strand: 3. Heritage is reflected through the arts, customs, traditions, family celebrations and language.

Grade One. Theme: Families Now and Long Ago, Near and Far

Students begin to understand how families lived long ago and how they live in other cultures. Geography Strand: 7. Diverse cultural practices address basic human needs in various ways and may change over time.

Grade Two. Theme: People Working Together

They deepen their knowledge of diverse cultures and their roles as citizens. Geography Strand: 9. Interactions among cultures lead to sharing ways of life.

Grade Three. Theme: Communities: Past and Present, Near and Far

Geography Strand: 8. Communities may include diverse cultural groups.

Grade Four. Theme: Ohio in the United States

History Strand: 3. Various groups of people have lived in Ohio over time including prehistoric and historic American Indians, migrating settlers and immigrants. Geography Strand: 13. Ohio’s population has become increasingly reflective of the cultural diversity of the United States.
Grade Five. Theme: Regions and People of the Western Hemisphere

Geography Strand: 10. The Western Hemisphere is culturally diverse due to American Indian, European, Asian and African influences and interactions, as evidence by artistic expression, language, religion and food.

Grade Six. Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere

The geographic focus includes the study of contemporary regional characteristics, the movement of people, products and ideas, and cultural diversity. History Strand: 2. Early civilizations (India, Egypt, China and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structures, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics. The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.

Grade Seven. Theme: World Studies from 750 B.C. to 1600 A.D.: Ancient Greece to the First Global Age

The seventh-grade year is an integrated study of world history, beginning with ancient Greece and continuing through global exploration. All four social studies strands are used to illustrate how historic events are shaped by geographic, social, cultural, economic and political factors. Students develop their understanding of how ideas and events from the past have shaped the world today.
Grade Eight. Theme: U.S. Studies from 1492 to 1877: Exploration through Reconstruction

Geography Strand: 16. Cultural biases, stereotypes and prejudices had social, political and economic consequences for minority groups and the population as a whole.
Appendix J: Ohio’s New Learning Standards – High School American History

Course Syllabus

Topic: Industrialization and Progressivism (1877-1920)

12. Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.

13. Following Reconstruction, old political and social structures reemerged and racial discrimination was institutionalized.

Topic: Prosperity, Depression and the New Deal (1919-1941)

17. Racial intolerance, anti-immigrant attitudes and the Red Scare contributed to social unrest after World War I.

Topic: Cold War (1945-1991)

24. The United States followed a policy of containment during the Cold War in response to the spread of communism.


30. The continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migration from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, and the increase in immigration resulting from passage of the 1965 Immigration Act have had social and political effects.
Appendix K: Ohio’s New Learning Standards – High School Modern World History

Course Syllabus

Topic: Imperialism (1800-1914)

The industrialized nations embarked upon a competition for overseas empires that had profound implications for the entire world. This “new imperialism” focused on the underdeveloped world and led to the domination and exploitation of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

12. The consequences of imperialism were viewed differently by the colonizers and the colonized.

Topic: Achievements and Crisis (1900-1945)

16. Oppression and discrimination resulted in the Armenian Genocide during World War I and the Holocaust, the state-sponsored mass murder of Jews and other groups, during World War II.

17. World War II devastated most of Europe and Asia, led to the occupation of Eastern Europe and Japan, and began the atomic age.

Topic: The Cold War (1945-1991)

19. Treaties and agreements at the end of World War II changed national boundaries and created multinational organizations.

20. Religious diversity, the end of colonial rule and rising nationalism have led to regional conflicts in the Middle East.

21. Postwar global politics led to the rise of nationalist movements in Africa and Southeast Asia.
22. Political and social struggles have resulted in expanded rights and freedoms for women and indigenous peoples.

*Topic: Globalization (1991-Present)*

28. The rapid increase of global population, coupled with an increase in life expectancy and mass migrations have created societal and governmental challenges.