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Beyond Working Relationship-Chinese International Students' Acculturation Stress

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Beyond Working Relationship: Acculturation Stress of Chinese International Students

By

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A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

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Abstract

Chinese students form the largest group of international students in the U.S. today, yet research demonstrates that they experience significantly more acculturation stress than their European peers (Qi, Wang, Pincus & Wu, 2018). The purpose of this study is to analyze acculturation stress Chinese international students (CIS) face that stem from interactions with their American peers. This study takes a qualitative approach consisting of both group and individual interviews involving one focus group of seven American students and another focus group of six CIS. The researcher also interviewed two teachers and observed their classes. The research findings indicate that both Chinese and American students do not identify language as a major barrier to interactions between them. Moreover, students report that social media and Chinese language courses mediate the interpersonal barriers by facilitating increased connectedness between groups and individuals both inside and outside of school. Additionally, language courses and diversity initiatives developed at the school foster increased curiosity and cultural understanding between the two peer groups. The research demonstrates that more recent forms of media and communication have served to generally decrease the acculturation stress experienced by the current generation of CIS as opposed to students in previous decades. At the same time, the research findings pointed to a mutual lack of interest or motivation among students to get to know one another more deeply, facilitate greater understanding between peer groups and develop healthier learning environments. Society, school, and teachers need to help guide both Chinese and students to get beyond this “working relationship” and be truly friends with each other.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chinese international students (CIS) form the largest group among international students in the United States in recent years, with data showing that 31% of international students in American colleges are from mainland China (Heng, 2018). Many American schools have incentive to admit Chinese international students for the increased tuition, but these schools are often unprepared to adequately meet the challenges posed by the large influx of students from Mainland China (Heng, 2017). Insufficient preparation not only entails a more difficult transition for these students, it also delimits the academic and social enrichment that would benefit both international and domestic students in an increasingly globalized world. As part of the cross-cultural transition process, CIS experience acculturation stress, which includes factors such as their level of language proficiency, their experience of culture shock and their interactions with their American peers that transcend the academic realm. Ample planning and arrangements by schools can ameliorate the negative effects of these factors, particularly by working to foster closer relationships between CIS and their American peers. For as much as the university experience prepares students to meet the demands of their future professional lives, it also functions to provide students with the opportunity to develop the social skills needed to function in the increasingly dynamic, diverse, and close-knit global communities in which they will inhabit. There is an old Chinese saying about relationships: 我们是最熟悉的陌生人 (we are the most familiar strangers) which means that although you see or live with a person every day, you are not really friends with each other or even know one another very well. CIS and American domestic study together, but they hardly know each other. This lack of interpersonal knowledge leads to CIS being misunderstood by their American peers, with Chinese culture often serving as a scapegoat for the negative experiences (Zhang-Wu, 2018). Too often the

relationships between CIS and their American peers remain stagnant and strictly tied to academic concerns, thereby impeding both sides from fully cultivating the otherwise fecund ground of cross-cultural contact.

Statement of Purpose

Studies addressing the problem of acculturation stress encountered by CIS mainly focus on the influence of limited language proficiency upon academic performance, the degree of culture shock they experience and how they utilize social media to maintain interpersonal relationships in China while connecting with local students (Cao, Meng&Zhu, 2018). The majority of the studies were based on the views and experiences of CIS and did not survey attitudes of those with whom CIS interact. American domestic students (ADS) and CIS interact closely on a daily basis, so they can provide first-hand information about the behaviors of CIS at school as well as their personal perceptions of CIS. Disregarding this wealth of information has created certain gaps in the understanding of the issues at hand.

One of the gaps in previous studies is that they focus on broad factors affecting acculturation stress while failing to provide a close examination regarding the quality of interpersonal relationships between students. Another gap is that much of the data is outdated and increasingly irrelevant. The rapidity with which China has developed both economically and socially over the past two decades is difficult to fathom. Whereas previous generations of CIS grew up with scant resources and saw studying in the United States as a significant opportunity to better the lives of themselves and their families, the generation of CIS born after 2001 when China joined WTO grew up in much wealthier households and have a multitude of viable opportunities other than studying abroad (Ding, Sun&Yue, 2009). Therefore, the perspectives of students in this generation on studying in America and the acculturation stress it entails can be vastly different. A more inclusive investigation into the experience of CIS in American schools can serve to close the gaps in awareness regarding the acculturation stress faced by CIS.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the acculturation stress that CIS experience, including the issues raised by language proficiency and culture shock. In addition, the research examines the perceptions that American domestic students hold regarding their Chinese counterparts. This in-depth examination of CIS in an American school can help both groups better understand, contextualize and empathize with each other. I hope the information provided can help to facilitate a healthier, more cooperative and more enriching academic environment for all students and faculty.

Overview of the Research Design

The central research question guiding this study is, how do interactions with American peers affect the acculturation stress faced by Chinese international students? This coincides with three sub questions: What acculturation stresses do Chinese international students face? What perspective do American students hold towards Chinese international students? How can school support students to develop authentic friendships that go beyond the working relationship?

This qualitative study took place in a private Catholic high school. There are 550 students in this school ranging from 9 to 12th grade. Among them, 65% are white, 17% are Hispanic, 9% are Asian, 3% black, 2% are mixed races, and 1% each for pacific islanders and native Americans. My Chinese friend works at this school as a Mandarin teacher. She was very interested in my research topic as her school has large population of Chinese international students every year. I wrote IRB proposal. She showed it to the principal and asked for the signature. Then I started to conduct research.

It consists of both group and individual interviews involving one focus group of seven American students and another focus group of six CIS. They are all from different grades. 4 students from American focus group are white, 2 are Hispanic and 1 is American Chinese who

does not speak much Mandarin. 2 students from Chinese focus group are seniors, 2 are juniors, and 2 are sophomore. One of boys was born and grew up in America, but he went to China for middle school and came back to America for high school. One of the girls has been in America since middle school because her mom got a job in America back then. They are from relatively wealthy families whose parents either have good jobs or owns business. The researcher also interviewed one math teacher and one history teacher and observed their classes once.

The researcher grew up and earned a B.A in economics in China. She gained teaching credential in the U.S. and wanted to finish Master's in education. A friend of the researcher works at this school as a Mandarin teacher and is teacher for these students. She was very interested in the research topic as her school has large population of Chinese international students every year. The researcher wrote IRB proposal. The friend showed it to the principal and asked for the signature. The researcher made a short video introducing the research. The friend showed the video to her classes and asked for volunteers. The friend also talked to two teachers that she is close to and asked if they are willing to let researcher interview them and observe their class.

Significance of the Study: Research findings

The general findings of the research are rather positive and includes a broader range of perspectives. The research found that recent generations of CIS are more confident than previous generations. At the same time, ADS are more willing to initiate relationship with CIS. Furthermore, social media aids CIS and ADS in connecting with each other, especially outside the physical boundaries imposed by the school setting. These positive findings explain, in part, why there is a general decrease in acculturation stress among CIS. However, while it was found that CIS and ADS can maintain functional working relationships, both sides lack motivation to

develop true friendships. They became “the most familiar strangers” who see each other every day but hardly know each other holistically.

Significance of the Study: Implications

This study provides schools and teachers with information which allows them to more adequately meet the needs of both CIS and the ADS with whom they interact. The data indicates that educators should take a collaborative approach and be more open to advice from CIS themselves when trying to provide modification or accommodation. It also points to the efficacy of teachers and administrators creating structured social opportunities for CIS and ADS to connect more closely. Importantly, since both groups utilize social media platforms to a high degree, teachers can integrate social media Apps when designing lesson plans and assignments.

By providing the audience with a more nuanced and positive image of CIS as intelligent, creative and social, this study advances Equity and Social Justice in Education. If both sides are motivated to build true friendships, then they will see each other as a whole person. The knowledge of similarities and differences between them can eventually build greater cross-cultural understanding. The need for cross-cultural understanding is urgent as we live in an international environment. We have to master 21st century skills, including the need to collaborate and communicate across cultural differences, to truly become better global citizen.

As I am finishing this thesis, the entire state of California is Sheltering in Place due to COVID-19. China and America have been working together to fight over the virus. This is a perfect example of how international cooperation between China and the U.S. is not only be beneficial, but can actually save lives. By fostering cross-cultural relationships that are authentic and sustainable between CIS and American students, the next generation will be better positioned to develop solutions to global problems in our increasingly interconnected world.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. Ever since then, family incomes have increased rapidly with China's burgeoning economic development (Ding, Sun & Yue, 2009). Coinciding with this development is a growing demand for studying abroad. Among all the various groups of international students in the United States during recent years, Chinese international students represent the largest group overall (Heng, 2018). This new generation of Chinese international students born after 2000 grew up with strong economic backgrounds and a reformed education system (Ding, Sun & Yue, 2009). The development of wealth in China has increasingly incentivized American schools to expand admission rates for Chinese international students due to the increased tuition rates charged to out-of-state students and the relative ability of Chinese students to pay. However, schools are often unprepared for the unique challenges posed by the large number of students from China. There are not many on-campus services targeted towards Chinese international students and the particular adjustments and difficulties they face when making the transition to studying in a foreign country. The psychological aspect of the transition from life in China to life in the U.S. can be difficult for Chinese international students, who generally face language as well as socio-cultural barriers.

CIS often struggle to effectively deal with acculturation stress, while American students have little understanding of the socio-cultural context of daily life in China. Furthermore, Chinese international students tend to isolate themselves from the host culture, and American students often stereotype Chinese international students as passive and overly agreeable. Both groups hold misunderstandings of each other that hinder student productivity and the

maintenance of a collegial atmosphere on campus. Moreover, many classroom environments are unhealthy in that they do not foster substantial dialog and cross-cultural understanding.

All of these factors have a cumulative effect and negatively affect the academic performance of Chinese international students. The goal of this literature review is to gain a better understanding of Chinese international students and delineate how different aspects of society can contribute towards fostering a better schooling experience for Chinese international students. In what follows below, I first describe how both English language proficiency and local language proficiency (if they study in a non-Anglophone country) can be concerns for Chinese international students. Second, I examine the numerous strategies, such as popular social media applications, that can be utilized to help Chinese international students deal with several aspects of acculturation stress. In the final section of the literature review, I explore the cultural differences that these students face and explain how these differences can exacerbate the already stressful process of transitioning to daily life in a foreign country.

Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is the biggest barrier for Chinese international students in their adjustment to life in a foreign country. It can not only directly impact academic achievement, but it can also influence the acculturation stress levels for Chinese international students. Ward and Kennedy (1993) found that higher levels of language proficiency can encourage international students to have increased interactions with members of the host culture and therefore reduce the problems associated with socio-cultural adjustment. English is a lingua-franca that is studied in elementary and secondary schools around the world, including China where it a mandatory course of study. It is the most important communication tool for Chinese international students studying in English-speaking countries as well as countries where English is not the primary or

official language. However, if they study in a non-English speaking country, being able to speak a local dialect is necessary to connect with the local community. Hence, local language proficiency becomes a concern for students in terms of their global competency. Moreover, self-perceived language proficiency is an integral factor in the ability of Chinese international students to communicate effectively while studying abroad. In research that Yu and Shen (2010) conducted, it was discovered that linguistic confidence is not only related to linguistic acculturation, but more importantly, to cultural adaptation.

English proficiency. Due to their low levels of proficiency in oral English, Chinese international students experience higher levels of academic acculturation stress than many other international students (Xing & Benjamin, 2019). The English skills that Chinese students learn in China are called “dumb English” which means they can read and write but cannot speak due to the examination-oriented Chinese education system and lack of oral English in the teaching environment. This adds to the anxiety for Chinese students when they have conversations or classroom discussions with their American peers. To add to this problem, Heng (2018) states that Mainland Chinese students have to relearn language skills and communication skills when they study in America, particularly in speaking and writing because what and how they are taught in China is different from the reality they face when they arrive in the United States. For example, British English is standardized in the Chinese education system as a result of the colonial presence of England in Hong Kong, so the spelling and pronunciation that Chinese students learn is often different from American English. This is sometimes confusing to Chinese international students. Yan and Berlinear (2009) indicate that besides listening and speaking difficulties, writing academic papers is difficult for Chinese international students, especially for students in humanities major. They mechanically translate Chinese into English and do not consider how

Americans express similar ideas, so their professors might feel their papers are awkward and of low quality. One point of blame for this can be given to the many differences between Chinese and English grammar. One major difference, for example, involves responding to yes or no questions. Chinese grammar stresses answering if they agree with that person's question or not, while English grammar places greater stress on answering if that person's statement is true or not. Grammar-related differences like that can lead to very different or even opposite meanings being given to what Chinese students are actually expressing.

Local language proficiency. English proficiency, local language proficiency for non-Anglophone countries, and prior adaptation experience play important roles in the social ties formed by Chinese international students (Cao, Zhu, & Meng, 2017). Speaking a local language instead of universalized English with their peers when they study in non-Anglophone countries can help them to connect more authentically and meaningfully with the local communities in which they reside. Most Chinese international students rely on English for communication when they study in a non-Anglophone country. However, speaking the local language can help them to forge connections to the host community and improve their global competency, therefore allowing them to achieve higher levels of academic success and psychological well-being (Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2018). Fan et al. (2013) indicated that Chinese students with more proficiency in a local language can obtain higher global competence levels. If they express curiosity about the local culture then they will undoubtedly find information about it. Afterwards, they can share their knowledge and show respect to the local people. Being able to speak the local language provides them with a tool to connect with local community and enrich their social as well as academic experience of studying abroad.

Perceived language proficiency. Self-perceived English proficiency is closely connected with the communication effectiveness, academic performance, transnational adjustment ability and overall psychological well-being of Chinese international students. Chinese international students often identify themselves as “linguistically inadequate” and so do not actively participate in class discussions (Zhang-Wu, 2018). Although these students often attain relatively high scores on English tests such as the TOFEL, they perceive their conversational English to be not as good as scores would indicate. Importantly, higher levels of perceived English proficiency among students correlates with lower levels of acculturative stress (Zhang & June, 2018). Dewaele and Ip (2013) claims that self-perceived proficiency is connected with Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. McCroskey (1977) first introduced the definition of communication anxiety, which is the level of fear associated with actual or anticipated communication. If a student believes he or she is capable of communicating, then he or she will be determined to speak up no matter their actual language ability. Considering the fact that most Chinese follow the Confucian norm of humility, the perceived language proficiency is a very complex aspect of acculturation stress for Chinese international students. Furthermore, this complexity is heightened by the variables of personality, culture and actual language abilities.

Social Media

Internet usage is widespread nowadays and social media applications have become some of the most popular communication tools in the world. People use social media for entertainment, communication and tasks (Williams et al., 2012). Chinese international students are no different and social media plays an important role in helping them transition to life studying abroad. Social media usage provides increased opportunities for these students to

connect with people in America while staying in touch with family and friends in China. Some research suggests that the use of host country media advances the acculturation process while the use of home country media slows down the acculturation process even while enhancing ethnic identity (Lee & Tse, 1994; Hwang & Zhou, 1999). There is a positive relationship between the use of host country media and socio-cultural adaptation (Dalisay, 2012). Thus, research suggests that the use of social media by Chinese international students is a complicated issue that requires thinking about how best to balance the individual needs of each student.

Socio-cultural background of social media use among Chinese students. Chinese international students prefer direct face-to-face contact over contact through social media when they interact with Americans. It increases their levels of social connectedness and perceived social support while reducing the prejudice from the host culture (Cao, Meng, & Shang, 2018). This preference can be attributed to the socio-cultural context of daily life in China. Most Chinese have family or at least a close-knit group of friends who live nearby and who are willing to provide support when necessary, so Chinese are more likely to seek help directly from people in face-to-face manner. Comparatively, American students use various social networking sites (SNS) to help them cope with stress while Chinese students do not rely as heavily on SNS (Fang, Chao, & Ha, 2017). In Xu and MocarSKI's (2014) study, they suggested that American students spend more time on social media per day than Chinese students. They also found that Chinese students and American students use social media differently. American students use Facebook and Twitter to send and receive information while Chinese students like to participate in blogs and other areas for content creation and interactive communication. Since media is heavily censored in China, Chinese students normally do not talk about politics on social media and they are very careful in how they publicly discuss social topics that are sensitive in China. Many

popular western apps are blocked by the state-orchestrated Great Firewall. This contributes to the fact that Chinese international students only use western social media apps sporadically after they return to China (Tai, Lu, & Hu, 2019). At that point even logging in to certain social media websites or apps is troublesome and carries risk.

Connecting with the host culture. International students are a unique group of people living in a foreign country for a relatively short period of time in order to achieve their educational goals. Oftentimes, it is difficult for the diverse needs of this group to be met adequately or in a timely fashion. Chinese international students are forced to be resourceful and seek support from different sources. Social media can act as a source of relatively quick and effective social support or even provide students with important information that they might not otherwise receive. Furthermore, social media use is very convenient and, if nothing else, can add to the possible options for students to achieve a goal. Tai, Lu and Hu (2019) state that Chinese international students all have popular U.S social media accounts, but most of them use it for specific tasks. For example, they use Twitter for news-related updates, Facebook for connecting with local community in order to complete assigned tasks, and Youtube for entertainment. Ye (2019) claims that the more support Chinese international students receive from interpersonal networks in the host country, the less social difficulty they face.

Ye's findings coincide with aspects of social network theory. According to Marsden and Campbell (1984), social network theory is concerned with the properties of social support networks and social support and resource exchanges among network members. Chinese international students who engage in western social media have higher levels of English proficiency and cultural familiarity compared to their predecessors who studied in western countries in the 1980s and 1990s (Yu, Foroudi, & Gupta, 2019). Their predecessors did not have

various social media to help them gain greater access to information, support and other resources. This current generation grew up with mandatory English in school and had greater access to American TV shows and movies via multiple media sources. They are already familiar with many parts of American pop culture before they come to the U.S. Therefore, they are more confident in using English in communication with English entertainment (Yu, Foroudi, & Gupta, 2019). Knowledge of and the ability to talk about American culture is very important in facilitating socialization between Chinese students and their American peers.

Maintain Chinese connections. In a qualitative study by Hua (2018), a positive correlation between Wechat use and bridging and bonding social capital for Chinese international students was found. Wechat acts as a bridge that connects Chinese international students with their family and friends from China by helping them to maintain pre-existing social connections with friends and family members. The use of Wechat can smooth the transition to living abroad by allowing them to talk to people they trust and who can support them during the transition when they are still unsure about their new surroundings. Since Chinese culture and society hold collectivist values, Chinese students feel it is their responsibility to stay in touch with friends and family in China and report to them how they are doing in the foreign country. They create spaces in social media that are exclusive to their family members so that they can be close to their parents. At the same time, they also detach themselves from such intimate spaces in order to feel an increased sense of autonomy. On the one hand, they do not have to call their parents every day to report because their parents can access much of that information simply by viewing the Wechat posts of their children. On the other hand, if they do not want their parents to know about certain things, they are able to block their parents from viewing these posts. This allows them to resist family control temporarily and escape from the associated responsibilities.

They hold to a “disconnective intimacy” via social media to help them practice transitional family (Zhao, 2019). The time spent on Wechat can influence the subjective sense of well-being positively among Chinese International students (Pang, 2018). International students are able to access existing social capital through Wechat, which improves their life satisfaction and lowers the sense of loneliness.

Cultural Differences

There are multiple and varied cultural differences that influence the thinking and behavior of Chinese international students and can add stress to their acculturation process. China is considered to be a collectivist society while the United States is considered to be a place where individualist values are highest. Due to the influences of the collectivist society in which they grew up, Chinese students tend to try and maintain “harmony” in interpersonal relationships. They usually do not challenge authority or fight for individual rights. American students are much more concerned with values such as equality and individual liberty, and American culture encourages them to be bold in speaking up for themselves and expressing their opinions. Understanding cultural differences can help break down the stereotypes and generalizations that Chinese and American students often hold regarding one another. Ultimately, this will help build a more harmonious academic environment for both Chinese and American students.

Stereotypes. Fiske (1998) defines stereotypes as generalized assumptions about certain groups of people. Stereotypes are important to our understanding of intercultural communication practices and the impact of those practices on the academic environment. Stereotypes can provide basic information about groups, but often overlook idiosyncrasies and intersectional identities. Zhang and Ruble (2013) completed comprehensive research on the stereotypes of

Chinese students held by American students, and they discovered 5 main stereotypes. The first stereotype suggests that all Chinese students are hardworking and smart. This coincides with the idea that Asians are a high achieving “model minority.” This belief states that all Chinese students are nice and friendly, while contradicting other research findings that Asians are competent, cold and distant (Fiske et al., 2002). The third stereotype is that all Chinese are bad at speaking English, only make social ties with other Chinese, and lack many basic social skills. This stereotype is not seen as favorable by American students. The fourth and fifth stereotypes that American students hold about Chinese students are that they are quiet and shy, yet loud and oblivious to personal space in certain contexts. Obviously, the last two stereotypes are not held favorably by American students. These stereotypes might be accurate descriptors for some Chinese students, but they do not apply to all Chinese students. Most importantly, finding out the cultural background for these stereotypes is very crucial. American students can gain a better understanding of Chinese students and then they can approach Chinese students in different and more effective ways.

Education. As for education, America and China have two different cultural styles in teaching and learning. The American education system focuses on increasing the comprehensive abilities of students, which means that students learn to solve problems and master skills by trial and error. However, the Chinese education system values scientifically based academic learning and rote memorization (Huang & Garrett, 2015). This difference can be seen distinctly at the high school level. It is said that in China attending and graduating high school is more difficult than university. It is easier to gain admission to college in America but university-level coursework is much more academically demanding and rigorous than in China. Students in Chinese high schools have to study intensively to prepare for the “gaokao” (college entrance

exam). They have to memorize all of the content for all of the tests and there is one correct answer for each question. Chinese students mainly study Chinese, math and English while students in American high schools have history, sports practice, art, elective courses and other extracurricular activities. American students have many opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and practice creativity while Chinese students are conditioned to see learning in terms of black or white and right or wrong. In terms of teaching, Chinese teachers have absolute authority in the classroom. They simply tell students what to do and the students are naturally obedient. In Chinese classes, the teachers hold a dominant position in which their authority is unquestioned and students are expected to memorize the information presented in class. In America, teachers are more like mentors who stimulate students to spark ideas. Students are encouraged to solve problems on their own. They are allowed to challenge teachers and express their own opinions. American students master skills through trial and error (Jian, 2009). Since information about certain sensitive topics, especially anything related to politics, is limited and censored in China, Chinese international students appreciate the opportunity to study in the United States as there are more resources and increased freedom for academic study (Will, 2016). They also realize that they do not need to deal with corrupt authority figures in order to reach their academic goals. In addition, there is more information available when they conduct research, and they see that the information that they can access is relatively accurate since it is not censored strictly by the government.

Culture shock. One manifestation of cultural shock is very essential for understanding the experience of Chinese students in America. The concept of “face” is very important in Chinese culture, and Chinese students are quite concerned with how they are perceived by others, either in private or public. This concern affects academic performance through either

encouraging or discouraging engagement in class and with peer groups. Chinese international students actively choose to be silent so that they can judge if their peers' talking matches their level of thinking (Zheng, 2010). In America, students are pressured to talk, no matter if what they say is correct or incorrect, or if it is related to the topic or not. In China, students are only allowed to talk if they are sure about the correct answer. Hence, oftentimes, Chinese international students act more like an observer in American classes. During class they are concerned with judging if their American peers answer correctly or not and think about when is the best time to engage in the discussion of at all.

Cultural shock can be seen in many other small instances of daily living. Housing is taken care of by universities in China, but Chinese international students need to be responsible for finding a place to live when they get to America. Most universities are located in big cities in China that are convenient and exciting while some American universities can be in small towns which makes transportation difficult for Chinese international students. Furthermore, Chinese international students often feel bored within small town life (Lin, 2006). Finally, to the surprise of many American students, most Chinese students are not Buddhists or religious at all. Confucianism is more of a social philosophy and the related values such as harmony and humility are important parts of Chinese culture. Chinese international students feel that it is often difficult to communicate with peers who identify as strongly religious (Huang & Brown, 2009). Also, since America is so diverse, there are a multitude of religions and it can be hard for Chinese students to know about and be careful when discussing certain topics related to religion, such as holidays.

Conclusion

There has been much research in the field of Chinese international students and the acculturation stresses they face. This literature review has many strengths. Firstly, it clearly defines key concepts such as cross-cultural transition (Ye, 2017), stress (Zhang & Jung, 2018), and cultural differences (Will, 2016) . In addition, substantial background information on Chinese international students can be found in the existing literature, including on Chinese history, culture, religion, and politics (Zhang-Wu, 2018). Secondly, it discusses the deep psychological origins that affect the acculturation stress faced by Chinese international students (Cao, Meng & Zhu, 2018).

At the same time, there are also weakness in the existing academic literature. Most of the research is from the point of view of Chinese international students. Little research has been conducted about the American peers interacting with Chinese students. In addition, much of the research is based on negative assumptions and stereotypes of Chinese society and culture, while some of the stereotypes about Chinese students are seen as positive by their American peers.

One of the main gaps in the academic literature is the lack of information about supports and strategies that address the psychological origins of the acculturation stress experienced by Chinese international students. This needs to be conducted from the perspective of the students themselves. They need to have a safe place to speak up and seek support. This can be from American students, school teachers and administrations, American society or even family and friends in China. Another equally important gap is the perspective of American students. American peers are the ones who have direct contact with Chinese international students on a daily basis. Therefore, it is necessary to explore further what American peers think of Chinese

international students and how to better understand their beliefs about their role in helping Chinese international students make a better transition to American culture.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research was twofold. The first aim of this study was to more fully understand supports and strategies that can facilitate the increased ability of Chinese international students to understand the psychological origins of their acculturation stress as well as to cope with that stress. This was from the perspective of the students themselves. Chinese students are a marginalized group and too often they are not taken seriously by society. By conducting this research, students were provided a safe place to talk about their acculturation stress and how they want different aspects of society to provide support and improve their situation. The second main purpose was to understand what American peers think of Chinese international students and to explore how they perceive their role in the acculturation stress faced by Chinese international students. Only by knowing what to expect in the process of building a true friendship with CIS , American students can take action more effectively in helping Chinese students to succeed in America.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Questions

The purpose of the research was to identify and explore the strategies Chinese international students can utilize in order to make smoother cross-national transitions. Also, the researcher examined the relationship between American domestic students and Chinese international students with the aim of facilitating more efficient interactions between American domestic students and Chinese international students.

Description and Rationale for Research Approach

Considering the various features of this vulnerable group of Chinese international students, a qualitative approach was used for this research in order to gain access to personal stories and information from the participants. A qualitative approach provides increased opportunity to focus on questions that examine the meaning that students place on an experience itself. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2004). This matches my intentions to conduct research on the acculturation stress of Chinese international students during their cross-cultural transitions. I want to provide a safe space for Chinese international students to voice their opinions about the challenges they face at schools in the United States. Moreover, I gathered information from American students and teachers on what they think of Chinese international students as well as what, if any, part they see themselves playing in the process of cross-national transitions for Chinese international students.

To be more specific, I utilized both constructivism and a transformative worldview to inform my research. Creswell (2004) states that the constructivist worldview acknowledges that experiences are not simply imprinted on individuals, but rather are formed through interactions

with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in an individual's life. Chinese international students spend their years prior to college growing up in a strong collectivist culture, so their interpretations of this new environment must be different from their American peers. During my interactions with the participants, I reminded myself to listen closely to descriptions of specific contexts and unique interpretations. Although my own cultural background of being born and raised in China will more or less influence my viewpoints, I minimized areas of possible bias as much as possible by being aware of my pre-existing bias towards collectivist culture and communist government.

Chinese international students are a marginalized group, and the achievement of social justice for this group is an important aspect of my work. Therefore, I augmented the constructivist approach with aspects of the transformative worldview to boost the ability of this study to facilitate social justice. I am typically not focused on politics, but the recent trade tensions and heated political rhetoric regarding the topic of Sino-American relations has created a problematic atmosphere that I believe impacts the psychological well-being of Chinese international students. Creswell (2014) explains that the transformative worldview places importance on the study of the lives and experiences of diverse groups that have traditionally been marginalized. China has recently emerged from an era of global marginalization stemming from Western imperialism that resulted in a history of discrimination against Chinese in general and Chinese international students in particular. Thus, considering the current tense political situation of China-America relationship and the history of discrimination towards Chinese people in the United States, the transformative worldview fits the needs of addressing the issues of inequality and power differentials.

I interviewed two American teachers who have or who have had Chinese international students in their classrooms. I facilitated two focus groups of six Chinese international students and seven American domestic students to be interviewed. All the questions during the interview were open-ended. This allowed the students to feel more open about sharing personal experiences without worrying about whether they were answering questions right or wrong. My purpose was to gain a better understanding of Chinese international students by studying their cultural and historical contexts through the constructivism approach. Ultimately, due to my transformative approach to research, my findings advocate for educational policies and practices to support this group of students. Based on my approach to data collection, interviews were central to my research design

Research Design

Research Sites and Entry into the Field. St. Joseph High school is administered by a President and Principal and is staffed by a dedicated Christian community and serves more than five hundred and eighty students from Northern California. It has a strong commitment to serve those who could not otherwise afford a quality Catholic secondary school experience with one third of the student body receiving tuition assistance. The school operates a small on-campus boarding program for both domestic and international students as well as an international host family program. There are twenty countries represented in student body and forty-five percent of students from diverse backgrounds. Also, there are retreats and service to Philippines, Elk Paso, Tuscan, Montana, and Kairos. The school provides seven school and college counselors to maximize contact with each student. Ninety-nine percent of the St. Joseph graduates attend college and majority of them attend four-year institutions.

My friend works at St. Joseph High school as a Mandarin teacher. She told me there are Chinese international students in her school who might be interested in the study. She was also personally very curious about my topic of acculturation stress of Chinese international students. Through a personal introduction to the principal, I was able to get permission to conduct my research at St. Joseph High School.

Participants and Sampling Procedures. Teachers, Chinese international students, and American domestic students at St. Joseph High School were recruited for participation in the study. St. Joseph High School was purposely chosen because the Mandarin program was held in esteem by school staff and accessible for research purposes due to a personal contact. In addition, this school was diverse and each year had students transferring directly from China in preparation for college. These students primarily came from a wealthy family background. These students did not speak English as their primary language. The research also included seven American students who had CIS as classmates. The purpose of recruiting Chinese students to understand their psychological challenges during the cross-national transition in general and during their interactions with Americans specifically. The purpose of recruiting American students was to see what they think of Chinese international students. The purpose of recruiting teachers was to learn how they normally handle such a diverse student population.

The school contact emailed her colleagues who had Chinese international students in their respective classes and asked if they were willing to let the researcher observe a class. Two teachers agreed to the classroom observation, and after the observation I asked them to participate in a follow up interview following the classroom observations. The female white teacher taught AP math. She had ten years of teaching experience. The history teacher was white male. He had been teaching for thirty years. In addition, at the end of the lesson, all students in

the class received a parental consent form and asked to return the form if they would be willing to participate in a focus group during lunch time someday. Students who wanted to participate returned the forms to my friend's school mailbox before the end of that week and she gave them to me over the weekend. I contacted students through the emails they provide on the form.

I separated the focus groups for American and Chinese students on different days. They were all from different grades. The American group consisted of seven students. Three of them were boys and four of them were girls. The Chinese group consisted of six students. Half of them were boys and another half were girls. They were all from affluent family and came from different region in China. They had been in the U.S for over one year. Two of them were going to graduate from high school this summer.

Methods

On the day of the focus groups , those who returned parental consent forms were allowed to participate. The focus groups were held in the researcher's friend's classroom during the office hour. Each focus group lasted thirty minutes. The Chinese group was in Mandarin which was more convenient and comfortable for both the researcher and the participants. Students were provided with a more detailed explanation about my research and its purposes, and signed student consent forms. Next, I confirmed the confidentiality of their participation and let them know that the interviews were being recorded. I read the rules and expectations to them. I began asking the focus group questions (see Appendix A&B). I allowed them to have some time to organize their thoughts. If they seem to get stuck, I provided verbal prompts. Once one person finished talking, I asked if others have something to add or comment. Questions for Chinese students include, How does English affect academic achievement? Class participation? Your interpersonal relationships with American students? What culture differences do you notice

between you and your Chinese peers? Questions for American students include, What do you think of Chinese international students' social skill? Do you think they mostly make friends with each other? What are the culture differences you and Chinese international students have? Do these culture differences make it harder for you and Chinese students to be friends? What challenges do you assume Chinese international students might have? These questions gave me direct feedback of how American students think of Chinese students. After they answered all the questions, I thanked them for their participation and did a raffle for each focus group. One person from each group won \$10 Amazon giftcard. I reminded them that all information would be kept confidential.

I contacted teachers who agreed to an interview to arrange a time and date for the interview. I interviewed each teacher during the prep period and I audio recorded the interviews. I asked them how much experience they have for teaching Chinese international students, how do they usually modify or accommodate teaching methods for Chinese international students and how Chinese international students participate in class (see Appendix C). These questions provided me with a basic understanding of if equity is important in this school and how Chinese international students are provided with extra attention. They were tied to the research question of how can school communities help CIS handle acculturation stress during cross-cultural transition?

Data Analysis

Considering the qualitative approach I chose, qualitative data analysis methods were used to collect and analyze data. Following the focus group interviews, I audio-recorded and transcribed the discussions. Creswell (2005) explained that a preliminary exploratory analysis in qualitative research consists of exploring the data to obtain a general sense of the data and

considering whether you need more data. Thus, after the conclusion of each interview I reviewed the respective transcriptions multiple times in order to explore the data more intensively, wrote memos to capture ideas, and prepared for the next interview. In addition, I reviewed the fieldnotes compiled during classroom observations and analytic memos written after teacher interviews.

Next, I read and coded all the transcriptions using an open coding format. Open coding helps me to develop a more general theory of what's going on, but not depend on this theory (Maxwell, 2013). Since I interviewed Chinese international students in their first language (Mandarin), I spent more time translating their transcriptions into English. In the initial coding process, I wrote down phrases as potential codes while placing brackets, boxes and arrows around relevant text in order to simplify identification. In addition, I did peer coding with her classmates during the open coding process to explore different interpretations of the data. Several codes were expected during the initial open coding process, including "Chinese are quiet at class." Or "Speaking is still my biggest problem." Other codes were unexpected, including "They (Chinese international students) definitely do their part." Or "I do not want any accommodations or modifications."

I did not finish all of the coding at once. Instead, I conducted the review over a number of separate sessions to add more text segments relevant to each code during focused coding and when necessary, I emailed the participants for more information. Typically, I coded each transcript twice, once using open coding and then subsequently using focused coding as I looked for evidence to support identified codes.

Themes were not created until after the coding process. I took the individual codes and groups the codes into several main themes through the process of concept mapping. I have a

background with math and holds an interest in concept-mapping because it utilizes clear categorization that renders concepts more comprehensible to wide audiences. I utilized the research questions to guide identification of relevant themes. Each theme had several relevant codes. I grouped the codes together and into themes on chart paper. Moreover, I connected these concepts and delineated certain relationships between them. A concept map is a simplified and incomplete model of a more complex reality (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, the process of concept mapping to generate themes is a constant working process. I kept revising the concept map and make better arrangements and connections every time. I also asked peer feedback on emerging themes during the concept mapping process.

Validity

Although only qualitative methods were used, I collected data from multiple sources. The use of triangulation for collecting data can help lower the risk of possible bias or limitations that one method has. This can improve the validity of the research conclusion. For example, data from teachers were collected from classroom observations, formal interviews and informal chatting. In addition, data from students were collected not only from Chinese international students, but also from the perspective of American domestic students. These multiple sources provided a broader perspective for me by exploring different aspects of each topic which eventually highlighted four important themes. Therefore, the conclusions that I reached are more accurate than if the data had been collected from only a single source.

As a researcher, I have limited teaching experience and I was not working this year, so collecting data was more complicated than I had anticipated. However, I conducted student teaching in a very diverse middle school in the East Bay which had a large population of Chinese international students. During that time, I forged close relationships with many of these students

and their parents. This experience provided me with background information about the topic. Additionally, a Chinese friend who teaches Mandarin provided support during this research process. She collaborated with me to make arrangements, recruit students and teachers, etc. She conducted a weekly Chinese club at school and shared with me relevant information or ideas from the club. My friend and I both experienced being Chinese international students ourselves in the past, so we have an understanding of the struggles Chinese international students face in the United States. Interviewing American students was a new and challenging idea for me because I held biases about how American students view Chinese students or how Americans view Chinese in general. My friend as well as my mentor from the student teaching site kept encouraging me and giving me advice on how to effectively interview American students. This helped me to become more aware of the biases that I held, and I was able to minimize the impact of bias through remaining mindful and self-reflective. This helped to increase the validity of the research findings.

During each interview, I listened to the answers and left time for the students to comment on each other. Sometimes, different students held different opinions around similar experiences because they interpreted the experiences differently or had found meaning from experiences where others had not. They provided valuable discrepant data for the research. Identifying and analyzing discrepant data is a key part of the logic validity testing in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013).

Another concern was that there was no way to test if all participants were telling the truth. However, based on the relationships I made with participants, trust was built and the level of validity was thus enhanced. My friend held Chinese club every Friday. It was the most popular club at this school. The participants of the research were part of the club. My friend and

the participants often had informal conversations about this research at the club. Over the weekends, my friends and I met at local coffee shop to discuss some of the details. This bonded me and the participants as through my friend, me and the participant got to know each other more. Also, I interviewed Chinese students in their native language Mandarin, so Chinese students felt more comfortable expressing their ideas. The safe environment helped students to be more open sharing their experience which eventually increased validity.

Maxwell (2013) admitted that some validity threats are unavoidable and we need to acknowledge these in the proposal or conclusions. Since the unavoidable threats were relatively minor in the collection of this data, the researcher focused mainly remaining open-minded and curious while keeping the interviews comfortable.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings of this research are organized into four central themes below. The first theme focuses on the increased confidence and competency of recent Chinese International Students. Although acculturation stress still exists among Chinese international students (CIS) during cross-cultural interactions, this type of stress is generally decreasing within more recent generations of CIS who were born after China's accession into the WTO in 2001. They grew up with strong economic background, increased family income and reformed Chinese education system (Ding, Sun & Yue, 2009). The second theme discussed in the findings explores American students' willingness to interact with Chinese International students. They are also more interested in Chinese culture and language. Third, I explore the role of social media in helping CIS effectively handle acculturation stress. Social media allows CIS to maintain connections with friends and family back home while also forging relationships with local students. However, the relationship they have with local students are typically superficial. They can maintain a very functional working relationships, but both sides lack motivation to bring this relationship any farther. Finally, in the fourth theme, I discuss the ways in which acculturation stress continues to exist for CIS. They work cooperatively with American students in class, but both sides lack of motivation to develop this functional working relationship into true friendship.

Increased Confidence and Competency

The Chinese economy, infrastructure, and education system have witnessed rapid growth since China was accepted into the fold of globalized groups such as the WTO. This opened up many sectors of China's economy to foreign investment, leading to tremendous gains in incomes overall and the creation of an upper-class with the desire to demonstrate their new-found wealth. The allowances made for foreign investment created a more open environment in which Western

cultural influences began to have a greater impact on Chinese culture. This also led to changes in the education system as the government at large and an ever-increasing number of families began to realize the need for their children to study English as the lingua franca of the global economy. CIS born after 2000 grew up in a more open international environment which facilitated their increased cultural understanding of Western countries. Furthermore, whereas rigorous studying has always been a hallmark of the Chinese education system (stemming from the demands of the Imperial Examination system) China's entry into the global economy has led to the prominence of English language studies and equipped them with superior language skills.

Language proficiency. The current generation of CIS are more prepared for the challenges that they might face in a new learning environment in which English is the standard language. They studied English intensively starting at an early age and continuing through high school. As far as academic performance, both math and history teachers whom I interviewed held that CIS are easily able to achieve high grades. Even though CIS have some difficulty with subjects such as American history because, as Mr. J explained, "they did not grow up here. They are still able to manage high marks because they have good study habits and they are just bright kids. They are not just hard-working students." All of the students in the ADS focus group agreed that CIS have good English skills. One student explained, "There's no problem communicating with them." A second student agreed, "They understand well." All students from the Chinese focus group said they have no problem in STEM classes. For this group of students, language does not pose insurmountable problems in the majority of their academic courses. These language skills combined with a more comprehensive understanding of culture in the United States has made more recent generations of CIS savvier and more confident.

Cultural understanding. This generation of CIS are, generally speaking, more open-minded about embracing American culture than their counterparts in previous generations due to advances in the Chinese education system as well as increased opportunity to be exposed to information about the United States. Previous generations grew up in China during times of political turmoil, more rigid state control of industry and enterprise, and before the initiatives of “reform and opening-up” had taken full effect. More recent generations have much more exposure to cultural influences from Western countries, particularly the United States, and this situation has given them a better cultural understanding about American students as well as culture in the United States. One CIS, Cheng, considered American students to be very welcoming and pointed to their use of friendly greetings. He commented that American students use “better manners and they are polite. Being polite is better than nothing.” Cheng joked that being overly polite is better than being overly rude. Instead of simply saying that warm greetings are unnecessary and uncomfortable in Chinese culture, the newer generations of CIS are more able to empathize with ADS and appreciate their efforts to make CIS feel welcomed.

CIS that I interviewed were also very open-minded and accepting about “what they want school to improve for them.” They did not expect exceptions for schoolwork or extra attention from teachers because “we chose to study here, so we need to adapt to the American environment.” Furthermore, CIS often favor the American education system over the Chinese education system. Xinxin’s mom got a job in America some years ago and so Xinxin has studied in the United States since middle school much longer than most other CIS who typically do not attend school in the U.S. until high school or college. Before moving to America Xinxin’s mother did research to find information about good schools. Xinxin spoke highly of the American education system during my individual interview with her. “American teaching style is

slow. It takes longer to finish a chapter or a concept. All the knowledge you learn, you have to explore the rules or knowing why. But Chinese teaching style is you have to memorizing the format without knowing why.” During the focus group, her Chinese friend commented that “American grades make more sense because every little test as well as everything throughout the year counts towards the final grade unlike only the big final test counts in the Chinese education system.” CIS prefer not to “put all their eggs in one basket” as is required by the stringent demands of the examination system in China. Conversely, they enjoy the freedom and flexibility offered by the American education system. This newer generation of CIS hold more effective understandings about academic culture in the United States, and they are willing and able to compare and contrast the differences between education in America and China. Their knowledge and outlook helps them to experience a smoother cross-cultural transition that increasingly involves more than just academic achievement.

Extracurricular Life. The competence level of newer generations of CIS is reflected in the extracurricular activities that they participate in beyond their dedicated academic studies. Unlike previous generations of CIS who focused mainly on academics, more recent generations of CIS are heavily involved in numerous aspects of extracurricular life, which can provide increased interaction with ADS. The Chinese international students I interviewed participate in soccer, student government, robotics club, and drama group. Although they do not see these extracurricular activities as a serious part of their life in the way that many American students regard sports and clubs, they are open-minded, curious, and willing to try different things during their spare time. Yanka explained that one Chinese student in her class even ran for Student Council and “he was very popular.” It is clear that many CIS are seeking opportunities to engage with ADS and aspects of American culture outside of the classroom. This confidence can be

seen as a by-product of their academic competence and decreased need for extra attention from teachers and faculty.

Modification/accommodation. Teachers are often told that they need to provide modifications and accommodations for English language learners. However, I found that these CIS were adamant that they do not expect or want any modifications or accommodations. It might be that CIS in this Chinese focus group are a sub-set of excellent students since they were willing to take time from their busy schedule and participate in my research. Nevertheless, they all agreed that they do not need any modifications/accommodations because their English is good enough. Additionally, as one student explained, “we need to get used to America, not America get used to us.” Some commented that they might feel embarrassed when teachers single them out for accommodation. Xinxin stated that she appreciated when her history teacher gave her Chinese subtitles when they watched videos, but “it was little embarrassing when he asked me if I need Chinese subtitles in front of the class.”

American students similarly felt that CIS do not require special attention and believed that singling CIS out regarding accommodations in front of class was uncomfortable. Some stated that because the English language competence of CIS is very good, they do not need modifications. One student from the American focus group said he felt upset when his teachers gave CIS modifications because that made him feel that his teachers did not think CIS are smart enough. Ryan gave me a very rational way of looking at it. “I see lots of CIS pretty much get treated like other American students in class. That’s probably good because they can get the same education.” When I asked him to qualify his view, his way of thinking was very convincing, “You know if it is hard for them at high school, it is going to be harder in college. If you have accommodation and you rely on it, you might not have access to the same education.

Or it's going to get really hard when you go to college." According to his viewpoint it is better for CIS to get used to American teaching earlier rather later, particularly given the difficulty of coursework in American universities. He worries that if they slow down, it will limit their possibility of receiving "equal opportunity or equal resources."

I followed-up with the history and math teachers to gain their perspectives on modifications/accommodations. They do not provide major modifications for CIS although, if they do, they do it for "all students, because if it fits them, it must fit others." For example, all students can ask for more explanations if they did not understand the concept. But if other students ask that question, the teacher will still explain that. From the conversations with teachers it seems that they also understand that singling out CIS is not an automatic necessity, and they mirrored the preference of CIS and ADS for equality in the classroom.

The fact that CIS, ADS, and teachers are, relatively speaking, on the same page regarding accommodations and modifications points to the increased cross-cultural understanding between these groups rather than reliance on stereotypes and preconceptions. Improved language skills and better understanding of American culture give CIS a better chance to succeed in the American academic environment and better prepares them for moving on to the next level, be that university or professional careers. CIS involvement in extracurricular activities and their lack of expectations regarding modification and accommodation demonstrates the increased confidence among CIS to tackle the challenges placed in front of them. Similarly, deeper interactions and relationship-building between CIS and ADS can further augment cross-cultural understanding and, therefore, increased confidence, competence, and overall success for CIS.

American students are more willing to interact with CIS

From their close observations on the peer level ADS have a view of CIS that is often more nuanced and informative than teachers or other parties. Furthermore, as their interest in Chinese culture increases they are more motivated to learn about Chinese language and learn about their CIS counterparts as people in a holistic manner. Meanwhile, school provides a diverse environment and close interactions, both academically and socially, which allows students to engage one another with a sense of curiosity and cultural humility.

Perception of CIS by local students. The American students I interviewed spoke highly of CIS, especially their work ethic. In particular, the ADS pointed to the part that CIS play in group projects. “They are good at time management. For example, when we do group projects, they know what time we should do what and finish in time.” They also consider CIS “punctual” and “never late for anything.” Their views demonstrate that the American students are increasingly able to navigate stereotypes and arrive at more nuanced views of their CIS counterparts.

Diversity activities. Advocating for diversity is very important part of the school agenda in many places, particularly in Northern California. St. Joseph School holds diversity retreats where students from all sorts of cultural backgrounds get together to spend a weekend in the woods and get to know one another more authentically. One Chinese student said “I felt we were like a big family. Everyone was very united.” She became emotional when she talked about the diversity retreats that she attended. Another way that the school promotes diversity is by broadcasting diversity news as a daily routine at the school. Each day, the school broadcasts a call for participants to attend daily diversity activities. For example, the activities encourage students to pray in different languages, do a quick quiz about world history and news, or

participate in a weekly cultural club. Interestingly, the Chinese club has the biggest amount of student participation at this school, suggesting that increased personal interactions fosters a curiosity to learn about other cultures in a more authentic manner.

Mandarin lessons. People are often surprised at the diversity of Mandarin speakers in Northern California. It was surprising when I found out almost all of the American students in the focus group for this research are proficient in spoken Mandarin. Two American students started Mandarin class this semester, three have been taking Mandarin class for one year, and two are in the AP Mandarin class. Ryan is in the AP Mandarin class as well as being president of the Chinese club. He also attended the AP math class that I observed., and during that class he sat with CIS and spoke fluent Mandarin with them approximately 50% of the time. Foreign language learning is an effective way for students to transcend exotic stereotypes and the normative process of Othering.

Interest in Chinese culture. Asian culture has often been seen as exotic and inscrutable to Americans. As China is rising on the global stage people are becoming more and more fascinated by the richness of Chinese culture. The school where I conducted interviews has an immersive exchange program wherein students can go to China for 2 weeks at a time, accompanied by both a Mandarin teacher and a history teacher. Five out of the seven American students in the focus group have been to China. Ryan has been to China many times, with school and on his own. "I spent a whole summer in China with Chinese people sometimes. I conducted research in Tianjin," Ryan proudly said. History teacher Mr. J went to China with the Mandarin teacher and he also went there to visit his friends last year. He talked at length about how much he loves Chinese food and the historic sites that he visited. He shared that, "It was short visit with the school group and I went back again myself to visit a Chinese friend. It is great for

students to see and learn different cultures. My son's best friend growing up was a Korean girl and they are still very good friends. "

More nuanced perspectives of CIS held by local students is not only helpful for CIS, it also facilitates a cultural humility in ADS that guides them to be more competent global citizens. Schools play a role in this effort by providing activities to promote diversity and providing courses such as Mandarin language to augment and enrich the learning environment for both CIS and ADS. The resulting genuine interest in Chinese culture by ADS gives them more motivation to connect with CIS and transcend the working relationship. All of these factors serve to increase interactions between CIS and ADS and thereby reduce acculturation stress. A key tool in this process for CIS, ADS, and teachers is social media.

Social media helps CIS deal with acculturation stress

CIS not only use social media to maintain their Chinese connections but also to build relationship with local students. It first provides a bridge in connecting CIS and ADS in a virtual world, which then might lead to the cultivation of authentic friendships in real-life. The interactions between them via social media ease social anxiety because it is not face to face and affords the users ample time to prepare responses that more truly match their thoughts and feelings.

CIS. The social media phenomenon has not been without its critics. Many teenagers are addicted to it, so it has often been regarded at times as a tool with a negative impact on young people. However, I found that social media plays a positive role in helping CIS handle acculturation stress. Firstly, CIS use platforms such as Wechat to maintain connections with friends and family in China. They can instantly check in with people back home and use it as a respite from their feelings of homesickness. Additionally, they utilize social media to connect

more deeply with local students. “I mainly use Wechat with Chinese friends and I use Snapchat with local students,” the Chinese student Xinxin said. CIS know which social media platforms are suitable for their needs. She added, “Social media is helpful. Snapchat has a function. If you send one picture a day to a friend, it’s like a daily check-in and you get a heart.” Social media acts like a scaffold to help CIS to connect with local students. Chinese student Cheng mainly uses the Chinese social media app Wechat to talk with his Chinese friends and family. The American student Ryan also uses Wechat. He and Cheng are good friends, so they talk on Wechat a lot. Although Cheng stopped using American social media after he found several good American friends on them, he explained how important social media is for CIS. “I see a lot of CIS using Snapchat and Instagram, maybe it’s easier for them to absorb into American culture. Those social media have pictures. If you see pictures and “like” them, American students might make friends with you.” From what he said, social media made it easier or accessible for CIS to make friends with American students.

American domestic students (ADS). Wechat has become popular among people who have had international experiences and wish to maintain connections with international friends. Although some American students downloaded Wechat initially because it was an assignment for Mandarin class, some began to utilize it earnestly, like Ryan. Wechat is Ryan’s major social media outlet. He likes Wechat because it allows him to know what is going on with CIS during school breaks. “I will look at my Chinese friends’ photos every day. I use it as normal social media. It’s great way to keep up with what they are doing in their lives or how they feel.” American students are also aware of which platforms are more heavily used by CIS and change their own social media habits as a result of creating friendships with CIS. Yanka used WeChat and Snapchat to talk to CIS. She does not use Instagram that much because “I don’t think that’s

the major social platform for them (CIS).” Social media provides American students a time and space to talk to CIS when they cannot in the hustle and bustle of daily life. “Having Snapchat definitely helps because I talk to them on Snapchat. If I didn’t, I would not have talked to them that often because I don’t see them that much on campus.”

Although it is not without its shortfalls, social media provides a path for both CIS and ADS to begin the process of getting to know each other in a less pressurized environment. It also reduces acculturation stress for CIS by allowing them to remain intimately connected with friends and family in China. The access to connectedness is available to ADS as well, who often use platforms such as WeChat to communicate with the CIS friends while they are on break or return home to China. Requiring students to download WeChat for use in their Mandarin class is an example of efforts that teachers can make to facilitate greater engagement between CIS and ADS.

Acculturation stress exists among CIS

It is certain that CIS face acculturation stress during their cross-cultural transition. Lack of local language proficiency and culture shock are common difficulties they have. Increased competence and confidence among CIS can soften the blow of their transition and allows them to develop working relationships with their peers and to excel academically. However, creating true friendships that are beyond the working relationship can further decrease stress and is an area that both CIS and ADS need to work on.

Language proficiency. Writing and speaking proficiency are still major concerns for CIS studying in the U.S. After conducting interviews with Chinese students, I found that writing English that is appropriate and grammatically correct is just as difficult as speaking English in front of others for many CIS. In general, performing in mathematics courses is easier for CIS

because it is more about the universal language of numbers and is more straight-forward, but literature-related classes can be especially difficult for CIS. One of the CIS that I interviewed who majored in humanities explained that

“language proficiency doesn’t affect academic performance that much if your language proficiency just means speaking. If your language proficiency includes everything, it matters, especially most of the classes I take is language related. If you can’t talk and write, it’s harder for you to get good grades. Language proficiency is really important for things like humanities and social studies. For math class, it doesn’t affect so much”.

When I interviewed Chinese students during a focus group, some of them expressed that it takes time to learn and utilize the academic English terms in math classes. This renders a relatively easy subject for many CIS into one that can be challenging and frustrating.

Taking longer to process the information can serve to decrease class participation. CIS are generally not highly participatory in class while studying abroad, and they mostly prefer to listen and observe. Both the English and math teacher that I interviewed agreed that CIS do not tend to speak in public. “They don’t like to raise hands. They prefer talking to peers next to them but not in front of the whole class. They might talk to me one-by-one after class if they have a question.” The comments from the math teacher are consistent with what one American student Yanka observed about her Chinese classmates, “They don’t raise hands unless they get called on, and they speak quietly”.

Limited language proficiency also affects CIS interactions with American peers. From my observations during AP math class, CIS tend to solve problems silently and occasionally check if their teammates need anything from them. Most of the time, they simply listen and

observe others during group interactions. When I asked the focus group of American students about how conversations between CIS and local students are initiated, almost all of them spontaneously answered that they (ADS) always have to initiate conversations with CIS. Although the history teacher I interviewed (Mr. J) was not very concerned about the ability of CIS to interact with American students, the teacher also stated “They (CIS) have no problem interacting with American peers in class. I observe them during lunch. They sit at the same table. I notice they still prefer to talk to other Chinese.” CIS and ADS are fully capable of interacting with one another on a deeper level but most often choose not to.

As the saying goes, it takes two to tango. A general lack of motivation to interact with each other is evident on both sides. First of all, there is a large population of CIS in this particular high school, so CIS can easily spend time mostly within the growing Chinese community. Cheng is a senior in this high school. When he first came to this school, there were only a few Chinese students, so he had to utilize his English and, as a result, he is now accustomed to speaking with American students. Since CIS currently form the largest population among all international students in this school, Chinese students can get by simply talking to each other. Cheng described “Sometimes my American friends told me that Chinese students don’t want to talk to them. It is kind of true. Now there are more Chinese students in my school so Chinese don’t feel like they need to talk to other American students. They feel pretty happy and comfortable in the Chinese group.” It is evident that it is not merely lack of language proficiency that is serving as a barrier to increased interaction between CIS and ADS. Cultural differences and the ease of access to peers with similar cultural backgrounds also contributes to this issue.

Cultural differences. Both Chinese and American students experience culture shock when interacting with one another. From the perspective of CIS, American students tend to be

overly friendly, but in a manner which many CIS regard as superficial. Xinxin's impression of American students is "They like to greet and hug no matter if you are close friends with them or not, but that's all, nothing deep." She also felt frustrated when she often heard American students complaining too much. She explained, "I do not know how to make them feel better. I guess I can be like them and say: you can do it! It's hard to have a conversation with them when they literally complain about everything." Chinese students, culturally speaking, are generally more accustomed to keeping their head down and forge ahead without complaint. American students, on the other hand, feel free to express themselves, air grievances, and utilize more intimate gestures such as hugging.

On the other hand, from the perspective of American students, European international students are easier to relate to than CIS. One student from the American student focus group said "European international students are easier to interact with because their English is better and we have similar cultural backgrounds. It is easier for them to adapt to America." Another student from the same group added "European international students are less shy, so it is easier to talk to them in some way." One student simply said he has more European international students as friends because they have the same interests. European international students and American students have relatively similar backgrounds and a shared cultural heritage, so it is not surprising that American students find it easier to interact and form friendships with European international students than CIS. One of the American students Yanka reported that she has five Chinese friends. Two of them are in the same grade as her, so she is good friends with them. At this high school, she also made some Chinese connections through a Chinese girl who went to the same middle school as her. When she was asked what cultural differences she has noticed between CIS and local students her way of describing the situation was very cogent. "The biggest difference is

the way they act around other people. Around people who are not Chinese, they are just very introverted. It's hard to socialize with them. I mean with other American students or European students, you feel easier to reach out and say hi. But for those Chinese students, they look less friendly than actually they are." A common aspect of Chinese culture is that people are very friendly to people that they are familiar with, but they can appear cold, aloof, and indifferent when they interact with people they do not know very well.

The general introversion among CIS as well as their ability to inhabit a comfort zone of CIS peers provides less opportunity to expose local students to authentic Chinese culture and customs. American students simply do not know that much about the reality of the experience of Chinese students in the U.S. as well as in China. When I asked the American student focus group if they have noticed any cultural differences most of them said they do not notice any cultural differences because they do not know much about Chinese culture. One American student (Ryan), who is the president of Chinese club, provided me with an explanation. "In my high school, they have not noticed any culture differences because many people don't interact with CIS that much or at all. In class they interact but go separate ways after class. The tiny difference between them that they can maybe see is from class or when they study together." Thus, the lack of interactions outside of class between CIS and ADS has resulted in a situation in which both sides know little of substance regarding one another. In turn, this lack of knowledge has had the effect of a creating a decreased sense of cultural differences, and thus reduced culture shock. While it has a positive effect of reducing acculturation stress, the opportunity to reduce that stress in a more sustainable manner is lost when the relationships between CIS and ADS remain at the working level.

Working relationships. Chinese and American students can maintain a very functional working relationship both in and out of school. American students in their respective focus group regarded CIS as having a good work ethic. Students commented that, “They get things done” and “They do their part.” CIS and American students are polite with each other on campus and say hello to one another. They also interact with each other on social media. The history teacher Mr. J said CIS get along well with American peers in class. “I see them talk and interact.” At the very least the task of maintaining a positive and fruitful working relationship between CIS and their American peers appears to be relatively simple.

While students have benefited from the increased interaction between CIS and ADS, both sides lack the motivation to transcend the working relationship into true friendship. Mr. J noticed that CIS still prefer to hang out with other Chinese students during lunch. Cheng explained one of the reasons he stopped using American social media is “The friendship you have may be superficial. You can “like” the photo, but that’s it. Nothing deep.” Ryan was the one who provided the term “working relationship” to describe the unique relationship between CIS and American students. He defined it as “relationships which don't extend beyond working on things such as homework, studying, school projects, etc.” He mentioned after classwork ends, the Chinese and American students split into their own social groups and usually don't attempt to mix socially. “It is the isolating result of both sides.” He hoped true friendships can be developed out of working relationships.

When speaking about accommodations, both CIS and ADS recognized the efficacy of holding all students to the same standards because, at some point, CIS will be faced with situations in which accommodations are not available. This same idea can be transferred to the issue of remaining at the working relationship. At some point, CIS who stay in the United States

for a longer period to study further or work professionally will be faced with circumstances in which relying on social interactions with Chinese peers is not viable, leaving them isolated and vulnerable to stress. By working to transcend the working relationship with ADS, CIS can not only forge meaningful and more long-term friendships, they can also gain valuable practice and experience in preparation for future exploits.

Limited language skills and gaps in cultural understanding create barriers for CIS to more fully adjust to American life. Maintaining a functional working relationship is good for getting schoolwork done efficiently but getting to know each other holistically and developing more authentic relationships can further ameliorate acculturation stress and do so in a way that is sustainable and sets both CIS and ADS for future success as citizens in the competitive global marketplace of goods and ideas. China and America can discard all biases and work together to fight against COVID-19 because both countries know their needs to want to survive and succeed in this challenging situation. If Chinese and American students are well trained to be a global citizen, then they will be ready for this type of situation anytime again in the future.

Conclusion

This research indicates that recent generations of CIS are more confident and competent than previous generations. Their improved language proficiency and cultural knowledge render classroom modifications and accommodations unnecessary, and facilitates greater participation in extracurricular activities, helping them to achieve skills beyond those gained through their academic studies. Many of the first steps have been taken and, generally speaking, the findings are positive. However, it also demonstrates that ADS and CIS require more incentive and opportunity to interact with one another beyond the working relationship. While the study found relatively small amounts of acculturation stress, culture shock and the limits imposed by

language differences still exist among CIS and hamper their efforts to find sustainable success.

The relationships between CIS and ADS most often stay on a superficial, working level. CIS, ADS, teachers, and school administrators all need to work together to foster more genuine relationships that set students up for sustained success as global citizens.

Chapter 5: Implications

There were three central research questions of the study, and each central question included one or more sub-questions. These questions were:

- What acculturation stresses do Chinese international students face?
 - What lies behind these acculturation stresses?
 - How can the school community help Chinese international students to handle acculturation stress?
- What perspective do American students hold towards Chinese international students?
 - How can the school community facilitate bonds between Chinese international students and American domestic students?
- What forms of acculturation stress do Chinese international students face that stem from interactions with their American peers?
 - What role do American domestic students play in the cross-national transition process of Chinese international students?

There are several similarities between my research findings and the theoretical frameworks presented in the Literature Review. The first similarity is that CIS do experience significant acculturation stress, and this stress is modulated by language proficiency levels and the individual subjective experience of cultural differences. The second similarity is that both CIS and ADS hold cultural misunderstandings about one another that lead to decreased interaction and ability to transcend working relationships. The third similarity is that social media platforms play an overall positive role in facilitating successful cross-cultural transitions for CIS.

Although more recent generations of CIS are more confident, proficient in English, culturally competent, and able to maintain good working relationships with ADS, the transition from China to studying in the United States can be difficult and fraught with stress. No matter their preparations, CIS must still work hard apprise themselves of myriad cultural mores as well as academic expectations that are quite different in quality from that which they experienced in China. Their coursework is all conducted in English and they must orient themselves to an academic style that, unlike in China, emphasize critical thought and experimentation. Although CIS in certain schools are able to rely upon other CIS peers, they must also take part in group activities with their ADS peers and interact with American teachers. Even attempts by teachers to make the transition easier, such as providing accommodations, can be stress-inducing if handled in certain ways, such as singling CIS out during class. On top of the changes in their academic experience, CIS must also deal with other areas of difference and stress such as food, shopping, leisure, extracurricular activities, transportation, and remaining connected with friends and family back home. The academic and social concerns are mediated by the individual level of local language proficiency as well as the subjective experience of difference. CIS from similar backgrounds and language proficiency may experience quite different levels of acculturation stress based on aspects of their personality and their subjective view of the transitional process.

The subjectivite experience of each CIS also plays an integral role in the second similarity between the academic literature and the findings from this study, which relates to mutual cultural misunderstandings and mutual lack of motivation to transcend the working relationship. CIS are often stereotyped by American peers as being passive and co-dependent (Heng, 2018). They are misunderstood by their American peers, and Chinese culture is often blamed for the negative experiences (Zhang-Wu, 2018). Although more recent generations of

CIS have greater exposure to American culture before arriving for their studies, much of that is sourced from mass media and pop culture elements that do not exactly provide them with authentic information about the cultural experience in the United States. Thus, they come pre-equipped with misunderstandings and exotic notions of life in America. ADS are similarly exposed to cultural information about China that is exoticized, exaggerated, and often biased. Although media outlets in the U.S. are not censored per se, they are still beholden to the economic interests of their respective CEOs and shareholders, rendering their views regarding China as biased. In terms of ADS the research found that schools have facilitated a positive multi-cultural environment by providing Mandarin lessons and promoting diversity activities. This contributes to an increased interest in American domestic students about Chinese culture, leading to more objective and positive perceptions of CIS.

Although social media platforms can also harbor much disinformation that leads to or exacerbates cultural misunderstandings, the third similarity between this study and the Literature Review points to the overall positive role of social media in ameliorating acculturation stress among CIS. CIS utilize social media platforms to help them maintain their social connections in China as well as to build relationships with local students (Cao, Fang, & Ha, 2017). Besides using social media as language tools, many American domestic students utilize social media to keep updated with the daily life experience of their CIS peers.

Implications for the Literature

This study found that there are the decreasing levels of acculturation stress among CIS. Based on my literature review, I had thought that CIS continue to face immense challenges studying and living in the United States, and they are steadfast in their isolated mentality. They have to relearn language skills and communication skills. They brought with them different

logical thinking, critical thinking and divergent thinking styles than their peers from the U.S (Heng, 2018). However, from the interviews that I conducted with several CIS and American domestic students, I found that CIS are competent and confident. They have proficient language skills as well as working knowledge of cultural mores in the United States. Besides their academic studies, CIS are increasingly involved in extracurricular activities. They also have the ability to rather easily maintain good working relationships with American students. I think these unexpected findings are due to the increased preparation of recent generations of CIS before they enter America. Recent generations of CIS have increased knowledge of American culture due to the globalization of media outlets, and they benefit from intensive English education throughout their schooling in China (Ding, Yue&Sun, 2009).

Another finding is that American students are quite willing to interact with CIS and they have relatively objective and less stereotyped perceptions of CIS. In the past, some American students stigmatized Chinese international students and perceived Chinese international students as annoying (Bresnaham & Zhu, 2018). I had expected to find that American domestic students make little effort to build relationships with CIS, with my assumption being that interpersonal relationships were predominantly initiated by CIS. Actually, I found that most often American domestic students initiate social interactions with CIS. This unexpected finding has to do with both societal and academic environments. In Northern California as well as this particular school, Asian culture is popular. There are lots of programs and activities for American students to learn about Chinese language and culture, and they are exposed to concepts such as diversity and multi-culturalism in a positive manner. The significance of these factors is that these American students hold to images of CIS that are generally more positive than in previous generations and different locales. The relative lack of more negative presuppositions between

CIS and American students facilitates greater understanding and eases the burden of cross-cultural transition faced by CIS.

Given that ADS are often the drivers of increased interactions between themselves and CIS, a glaring lack of information in previous studies are related to perceptions of CIS held by American students. Most research focused on CIS and their respective perceptions. In my study, in addition to interviewing CIS, I also conducted interviews with American students. They provided me with first-hand information about what CIS face socially and academically in American schools. This included insights such as that CIS prefer to hang out with other Chinese even though their English is fluent. ADS also provided personal impressions of CIS, for example, that CIS are efficient and punctual at school but quiet and reticent during class.

In addition, most of the existing research is lacking the perspective of newer generations of CIS. The overwhelming majority of research has been conducted during the time when there were not as many CIS and most of them were selected to study abroad based on scholarships or their ability to pay high tuition rates (usually restricted to children of party cadre). This new generation of CIS now forms the biggest group of international students in the world (Heng, 2018). They were born after the “Opening of China” and grew up during a period of intense economic growth and social changes that afforded a much broader population the ability to have their children study abroad. Most of them chose to study in America rather than being selected by various committees and are able to afford the tuition. I was able to interview these millennials and gather their perspectives.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Teachers. Faculty can learn from my findings that CIS do not necessarily expect modifications or accommodations to teaching strategy. Many CIS can perform as well as

American students or even better without modifications. What teachers should do differently in their own classrooms is to ask for advice and consult privately with students before offering any accommodations. Another thing that teachers can learn from my findings is the importance of social media for CIS. They can encourage the usage of social media by utilizing social media Apps in lesson plans or homework. Since CIS and American students can maintain positive and productive working relationships, teachers can plan more group projects and pair-share activities. Perhaps by working together more often and more closely, they can transcend the working relationship.

During my research, I noticed that most CIS go by their English names rather than their actual names when they study in America because their Chinese names can be difficult for Americans to pronounce. I think being called by their real names can make them feel that their cultural identities are being respected. Hence, another policy I suggest is that everyone should call CIS by their real Chinese names. Teachers should set a good example by learning to pronounce the syllables of CIS names, even if they are unable to produce the tones involved.

Schools. One policy that should be implemented at the school level based on my research findings, is that every school should have activities that promote diversity and, if at all feasible, provide Mandarin as an elective course. In addition, schools can create structured social opportunities for both groups. For example, school committees can plan to observe major Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year, and include both CIS and ADS in the festivities. Another option would be to create a social group that engages in social outings that pair CIS and ADS and alternates language use for each outing over the weekend.

Contribution to social changes. My findings contribute to fostering social justice by decreasing negative stereotypes of Chinese. Chinese are often regarded as “hard-working” and

“passive,” but my findings will hopefully open minds about the nuances within the CIS and broader Chinese communities. Perhaps more Americans will recognize that Chinese are not just hard-working drones, but are also intelligent, creative and proactive. This new image can encourage people to respect and welcome Chinese more. As a result, the change might make the United States a more comfortable place for Chinese to live and study. If authentic relationships are created by CIS and ADS, they can know each other as a whole person and have more empathy towards each other.

One current example is provided by the coronavirus pandemic. The current U.S. President and many others have chosen to refer to the coronavirus as the “Chinese virus.” Although the current pandemic originated in China, calling it the “Chinese virus,” rather than something such as “COVID 19” serves to link an entire ethnicity to the current situation. My findings point to the positive ability of ADS to hold to more nuanced understandings of culture, ethnicity, and nationality that avoid the rather dangerous rhetoric that is too often seen in the current discourse.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that I was unable to separate CIS into different groups based on their grade level and interview them accordingly. Without this differentiation, I was unable to understand how the length of time they stay in America changes their experience and acculturation stress. Another limitation to this study was the number of students who participated. Interviewing more students would have provided more data to either substantiate issues as occurring in a pattern or provide alternative perspectives. For this same reason, it would have also been helpful to interview students from other schools, specifically public institutions. Students from public schools might have very different experience and perspectives. Finally, this

study lacks the perspective of parents and their impressions of the experience of their children in American schools. By interviewing parents, I might be able to glean information that did not come up during my interactions with CIS.

Although my friend and the students had a very good relationship which essentially helped students to trust me as a researcher, there is a chance that my participants provided a limited perspective because they were not my students and so the time available to interview them was limited. There is also the possibility that they were not comfortable speaking to me about their experiences. Secondly, this is a private Catholic school, and my participants are from relatively wealthy family backgrounds. Their perspective might be based on privileged life experiences. What I am missing in my research are the perspectives of students from public schools where there is a broader spectrum of socioeconomic factors.

My findings are specific to my research site because the school is a private Catholic school where most students are from relatively comfortable backgrounds. It is diverse insofar as the multitude of nationalities represented at the school, but Caucasian students are still the majority. This school has a very positive and nurturing environment where everyone is expected to be nice and polite to others according to the Bible. Hence, the research site may have produced overly positive perspectives.

Finally, since I am Chinese and empathize with the experiences of CIS, ADS might not feel comfortable to tell me some of the truth or negative perspectives of CIS. It is possible that they just said positive things about CIS to be polite or show respect to me.

Directions for Future Research

One significant direction for future research is to explore how the relationship between China and America affects both American and Chinese students' perspectives. With COVID-19,

the relationship between China and America has been tricky. On the one hand, there is some tension between them because both sides believe opposite sides started the virus for politics. On the other hand, they have to work together to fight against the virus. This tense situation relationship between China and America made some residents from both sides hold prejudice against each other. The startling news from the media can affect how Chinese and American students think of the situation and each other. The next direction in literature might be the different perspectives of students from public and private schools since students from public and private schools have very different life experience and school environment, especially students from wealthy private schools with lots of resources and students from poor schools with little support. Providing Mandarin lessons and diversity activities might not be a focus or priority for lots of public schools that are struggling to teach basic academic skills. Students' experience with other culture can be limited. In addition, CIS in public school are not necessarily from wealthy family that can spend money on extra English training. These Chinese students' language proficiency is perhaps not as good as the ones in private schools. Therefore, future research can continue to advance this line of study by collecting data from a public school where many students are less affluent. Finally, a critical area in need of further research is to explore how schools can train students to be a better global citizen who can succeed in this ever-changing, competitive and international world.

The new insights I have been exposed not only add to the general conversation in academic literature about CIS, but they also bring greater clarity to the problem I originally identified - how to build genuine and sustainable relationships between CIS and American students that are beyond the "working relationship." If everyone makes effort to know people around you as a whole person, the world will be a more loving and comfortable place for all.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Questions for Chinese International Students

1. How many siblings do you have and how old are they?
1. How did your family influence your decision to study in an American school?
2. Have you ever been to the United States before entering Justin-Siena High School? How long have you been in Justin-Siena High School?
3. What do you think your English level was when you first entered Justin-Siena High School? What is your English level now?
4. How does English affect academic achievement? Class participation? Your interpersonal relationships with American students?
5. Do you think your actual English proficiency is better or worse than English test scores?
6. Who do you usually spend time with? Other Chinese international students or American peers?
7. Do you have interaction with American peers? Usually who initiates the conversations?
8. Do you think your teachers need to do modification or accommodation for you when they teach? How?
9. Do you use social media? How?
10. What is the difference between American education philosophy and Chinese education philosophy that you have noticed? Which one do you like better?
11. What culture shock did you experience?
12. In what ways do you think the school or your American peers could better help you transition to American life?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions for American students

1. What experience did you have with Chinese international students?
2. What is the difference you can notice between European international students and Asian international students? Which group is easier to interact? Do you tend to have more European international students as friends or more Chinese international students?
3. How do you use social media? What kind of friends do you have on social media?
4. How does the teamwork go if you have Chinese international students as partners?
5. Do you have any interaction with Chinese international students on daily basis? Usually in what occasion and who initiates the conversation?
6. What do you think of Chinese international students' language skill? Is that easy or hard to communicate with them?
7. What do you think of Chinese international students' social skill? Who do they make friends with as far as your notice?
8. What are the culture differences you and Chinese international students have? Do these culture differences make it harder for you and Chinese students to be friends?
9. What challenges do you assume Chinese international students might have?
10. What advice do you have for Chinese international students?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What is your experience of having Chinese international students in your class?
2. How is their language skills?
3. What is their academic achievement in your subject?
4. How is their class participation as well as their interaction with American peers?
5. What do you think of school environment as far as diversity?
6. What accommodations and modifications of teaching strategy do you provide for CIS?
7. How do you help your Chinese International students make friends with Chinese international students?

Appendix D: IRB Acceptance Letter



12/11/2019

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50 Acacia Ave.
San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Wenjing Zhao,

On behalf of the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants, I am pleased to approve your proposal entitled **Acculturation Stress for Chinese International Students** (IRBPHP IRB Application #10819).

In your final report or paper please indicate that your project was approved by the IRBPHP and indicate the identification number.

I wish you well in your very interesting research effort.

Sincerely,



Randall Hall, Ph.D.
Chair, IRBPHP

Cc: Jennifer Lucko, Ph.D.