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THE EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GRADUATE MUSIC EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Item Type	Dissertation (Open Access)
Authors	Li, Kailimi
DOI	10.7275/12457897
Download date	2026-03-08 00:40:10
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/17577

**THE EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GRADUATE
MUSIC EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES**

A Dissertation Presented

by

KAILIMI LI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2018

Music Education

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who gave me love, strength, bravery, and wisdom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Lisa Lehmborg, at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has been a wonderful advisor, mentor, and source of support to me. I have been extremely lucky to have an advisor who cared so much about my work, and who responded to my questions so promptly. She has taught me, both consciously and unconsciously, how quality music education is practiced. I appreciate all her contributions of time, ideas, and an assistantship position to make my Ph.D. experience productive and stimulating.

In addition, I would like to thank my dissertation committee members: Dr. Sara Jones and Dr. Lan Wang-Hiles. Dr. Jones is a great professor and friend. She guided me to see the broad view during the process of this research and has always responded promptly to my questions no matter where she was. Dr. Wang-Hiles is genuinely interested in my research and provided invaluable feedback to my research, especially after I moved away from Fredonia, NY, and had many questions to ask her.

I am also deeply thankful to my participants. Their names cannot be disclosed, but I want to acknowledge and appreciate their help during my research. Their information has helped me complete this dissertation.

I would like to thank my previous professors at the State University of New York-Fredonia (SUNY-Fredonia), Dr. Kevin Kearns, Dr. Katherine Levy, Dr. Christian Bernhard, and Dr. Jill Reese, for the patient guidance, encouragement and advice they provided throughout my time as their student. They helped me develop my idea and vision of what an educator should do, and also contributed recommendation letters for my Ph.D. program.

My time at UMass-Amherst was made enjoyable in large part due to the many friends and groups that became a part of my life. I am grateful for time spent with them for the memorable road trips, concerts, and group projects. They made my cross-cultural adaptation experience meaningful and enjoyable. I thank the following people for spending time with me during the process of this research: Catherine Han and her husband Zheyuan He, Qingfang Sun, Beyza Alpaydin, Will Hastie, Anthony Tracia, Victor Zheng, Yue Liu, Fangzhou Liu, and Yi Jin. My time at UMass-Amherst was also enriched by my internship team members at the Sullivan Career and Life Planning Center, Longmeadow, MA; the UMass-Amherst International Program Office (IPO), Amherst, MA; and the YMCA-Hampshire Region, Northampton, MA.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for all their love and encouragement. For my parents who raised me with a love of music education, for unconditional support and encouragement to pursue my interests, even when the interests went beyond the boundaries of language, field, and geography. I also thank my aunt Helen Li and uncle David Li, for sharing

their graduate school experience, for listening to my complaints and frustrations, and for believing in me. I am very much thankful to my best friend Zheyuan (Joey) Du whose faithful support during the final stage of this Ph.D. is so appreciated. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN GRADUATE MUSIC EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

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The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States. Specifically, it explored participants' perceptions of (a) their educational experiences (past and present), (b) the challenges they faced, (c) their strategies for success, (d) the benefits they experienced as international graduate students in the United State, (e) the effect of this experience on their thinking, self-perception, and behavior, and (f) how they planned to move forward or move on following this experience. Participants were six native Chinese graduate students enrolled at the time of data collection in master's and doctoral level music education degree programs within U.S. higher education institutions, including myself as participant-observer. Data included interview transcriptions, online discussion forum posts, personal statements from participants' graduate school applications, and research notes. Qualitative techniques were used to analyze

data and identify emergent themes and meta-themes, which were then used to address research questions and draw conclusions. From the results, models were generated of (a) Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States, and (b) the three-stage cross-cultural adaptation process of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. In a broad sense, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on international students in U.S. higher education institutions. More specifically, results could help to provide understanding and insight into the experiences of Chinese students enrolled in graduate level music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States, and may illuminate considerations for how these experiences might be improved. Results could also help U.S. educators and music educators in higher education institutions to better understand Chinese music education graduate students' experiences at different stages and could provide new ideas concerning effective strategies for working with them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, international students have been strongly present in higher education institutions throughout the United States. According to the *Open Doors Report* (Institute of International Education, 2016), the total number of international students in the 2015-2016 academic year in the United States was 1,043,839. China was the leading country of origin for students coming to the United States, sending 328,547 students who constituted 31.5% of all international students studying in the United States. This report also indicated that of the 328,547 Chinese international students, 123,250 studied at the graduate level.

International graduate students are important contributors to many fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Le & Gardner, 2010). In 2011 alone, approximately 40% of all doctoral degrees granted by U.S. higher education institutions to international students were earned by Chinese international scholars (National Science Foundation, as cited in Y. Zhang, 2016). These scholars were not only contributors to research in STEM fields, but also served as teaching assistants for various undergraduate courses (Zhang, 2016). In addition to their assigned responsibilities, they helped their students to explore different cultures and to gain a deeper understanding of diversity (Heyward, 2002; Zhang, 2016).

Additionally, international students provide revenue to the U. S. economy and individual host states through boarding and educational expenditures. These include room and board, books and supplies, transportation, health insurance, support for accompanying family members, and other miscellaneous items (Choi, 2012; Le, LaCost & Wismer, 2016). During the 2015-16 academic year, collegiate international students contributed more than \$32.8 billion dollars to the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2016). Chinese students in particular contributed \$11.43 billion dollars to the U.S. economy (Tsuruoka, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the significant presence of international students in the United States and the large proportion of Chinese graduate-level international students, international students' perceptions of their learning experiences in U.S. higher education institutions have been relatively unexplored in research. However, a limited body of research has indicated that Chinese graduate students experience considerable difficulties in U.S. colleges and universities, including (a) unfamiliarity with the North American educational system; (b) cultural shock; (c) financial difficulties; and (d) language barrier (Liu, 2016, Zhang, 2016). As far as can be determined, only one study has examined the experience and perceptions of Chinese *music* students in U.S. higher education institutions (Choi, 2012). The study involved East Asian international music students and included Chinese music students. Results indicated that the

professor's reputation, scholarships, and the program's reputation were perceived as the most influential factors impacting participants' degree program choice. The most problematic issues reported were language barrier and cultural differences between participants' host and home countries (Choi, 2012).

Although researchers have studied Chinese music students' adjustment and acculturation, it remains relatively unknown how Chinese music education graduate students perceive their own transition experience in the United States. Therefore, in this study I focused particularly on understanding the cross-cultural adaptation that Chinese music education graduate students experience during their studies in the United States. I hope my research will help to increase future understanding of Chinese music education students at higher education institutions in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

Cross-cultural adaptation is a widely recognized area of study in the field of education. Young Yun Kim (2005) developed a theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation which serves as the framework for this study. Kim's theory posits that cross-cultural adaptation is an interactive process that involves both newcomers and their host environment. Central to this adaptation process is host communication competence, or the ability to communicate in accordance with the norms and practices of the host culture and actively engage in its social

communication processes (Kim, 2005). Individuals who achieve host communication competence are able to accept the differences between their culture and the host culture, even though they might face challenges when first entering a new cultural environment (Hamad & Lee, 2013; Shafaei & Razak, 2016). Achievement of this type of competence requires immersion and participation in the interpersonal and mass communication processes of one's local community within the host culture (Kim, 2005).

One can assume that Kim's theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (2001) also applies to Chinese music education graduate students in the United States, because like all international students, they need to make adaptations in both academic and social environments. Like other international students, Chinese students may encounter acculturative stress because of differences in cultural norms and academic expectations in China and the United States. (Wang, 2009). For example, U.S. culture exhibits more characteristics that emphasize individualism, while Chinese culture reveals more characteristics that are congruent with collectivism. Additionally, it is likely that Chinese international students may encounter difficulties fitting into the U.S. style of social conversation, which features more direct expression of feelings, assertive expression of opinions, and direct communication (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). It is through the lens of Kim's theory that the research questions and data of this study were approached.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States. Specifically, it explored participants' perceptions of (a) their educational experiences (past and present), (b) the challenges they faced, (c) their strategies for success, (d) the benefits they experienced as international graduate students in the United States, (e) the impact of this experience on their thinking, self-perception, and behavior, and (f) how they planned to move forward or move on following this experience.

Research Questions

- What are the current and prior educational experiences of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States?
- What are Chinese music education graduate students' motivations for pursuing a music education degree in the United States?
- What are the challenges experienced by Chinese music education graduate students attending U.S. higher education institutions?
- What benefits do Chinese music education graduate students experience while attending U.S. higher education institutions?

- Do Chinese music education graduate students' ways of thinking and behaving change as a result of interaction with U.S. culture?
- From the perspectives of Chinese music education graduate students, how should future students be effectively prepared to study music education at the graduate level in the United States?
- How do participants plan to move forward or move on after this experience?

In a broad sense, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on international students in U.S. higher education institutions. More specifically, results could help to provide understanding and insight into the experiences of Chinese students enrolled in graduate level music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States. and may illuminate considerations for how these experiences might be improved. Through an in-depth examination of participants' thoughts and feelings about their experiences as international music education graduate students, this study may also provide a greater understanding of these types of experiences.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are utilized in this study, and are listed in alphabetical order:

- Acculturation. The term *acculturation* refers to changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people and environments (Gibson, 2001; Schwartz, Unver, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010). In other words, acculturation is a process which occurs when people adjust to the mainstream culture (Sam, 2000). Although these changes can take place as a result of almost any intercultural contact (Arnett, 2002), “acculturation is most often studied in individuals living in countries or regions other than where they were born—that is, among immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and sojourners” (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 237).
- Adaptation. The term *adaptation* is defined as “the satisfaction of needs related to survival, or the process whereby an individual accommodates to an environment” (Feng, 1991, p. 4).
- Bi-cultural. The term *bi-cultural* refers to having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups (*Oxford Living Dictionaries*, 2017).
- Cross-cultural adaptation. This term refers to individuals’ responses to a new cultural environment (Berry, 1970). These responses range on a continuum from acculturation, or the selective acquisition of traits from another culture (Marden & Meyer, 1968), to assimilation, or absorption into another culture (Kim, 2001).

- Culture. The term *culture* encompasses the values, beliefs, and worldviews that structure people's lives. It is composed of acquired knowledge of (a) means of communication and interaction, as well as (b) the beliefs and values that motivate people and groups (Lehmberg, 2009). Collectively, culture can be defined as being composed of elements of human interactions; therefore, culture is the product of human interaction (Fung, 1994).

The Chinese term for *culture* comprises the two characters of “wen” and “hua” (文化).

The first character “wen” (文) means language, literacy and art. The second character “hua” (化) means to change, cover, transform, or influence (Fung, 1994). As a result, culture in Chinese society is a dynamic process that affects human life by combining language, literacy and art.

Culture is also a word that scholars frequently use in discussing music (Fung, 1995). Music is a product of a culture in the form of humanly organized sounds, which are then produced through interaction (Damm, 2006; Green, 2001; Kramer, 2003). The way by which these sounds are organized reflect the surrounding culture and customs. Because of this, music becomes a major medium through which culture is expressed and passed along (Campbell, 1997; Wade, 2004).

- Culture shock. The term *culture shock* refers to the difficulty people experience when adjusting to a new culture that differs significantly from their own (Lewis, 2006). Values and unwavering core beliefs can, and do, suffer damage when individuals travel outside of their country of origin (Hurny, 2014). An individual's core beliefs

take different paths according to the culture imposed upon them (Lewis, 2006; Hurny, 2014). In other words, culture shock is a feeling of disorientation that people undergo when experiencing a new way of life.

- Deculturation. The term *deculturation* refers to the process of purposefully divesting a person or group of their indigenous traits, usually against their will (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2011).
- Intercultural. This term describes something that pertains to, takes place between, or is derived from different cultures, including different religious groups or people of different national origins (Aneas & Sandin, 2009).
- Traditional Chinese music. This term refers to music that has developed over thousands of years in China through unique music systems, structure, transmission, and style (Lau, 2003). The development of Chinese traditional music has been influenced by Chinese philosophy, geography, cultures, and traditions. The three types of traditional Chinese music include Chinese opera music, traditional Chinese ensemble/orchestra music, and traditional Chinese solo instrumental music (Liantao, 1998).

Delimitations

Participants in this study were six native Chinese graduate students who at the time of data collection were enrolled full-time in music education master's or doctoral degree programs in the United States. All participants were age 21 or older and had previously earned a music degree from a Chinese university located in China. All were volunteers, meaning that they were not compensated for their participation. As the researcher and as a native Chinese graduate student enrolled in a Ph.D. program in the United States, I participated in the study as well, in the role of participant-observer (Kawulich, 2005).

Limitations

Like most qualitative studies, this study was not without limitations. Potential limitations included sample size, sample selectivity, observational bias, researcher bias, and generalizability.

The first limitation was sample size. The sample size was small, mirroring the small population of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. A choice of small sample sizes could be problematic if there was no enough data. To ensure that I collected a rich data set, I utilized triangulation (Patton, 2002), which involved collecting evidence from multiple sources (interviews, online discussion forum, personal statements, and research notes). Through this process, I was able to obtain rich descriptions of participants' experiences to help

answer the research questions and provide an in-depth look at participants' experiences and perspectives (Yin, 2009).

A second limitation related to sampling was sample selectivity (Patton, 2002), which in this study related to the participants who were selected for interviews. I contacted 50 professors in the United States to ask for recommendations of native Chinese music education graduate students who might be available to participate in this study; however, all who agreed to participate self-identified as female. It is possible that their perspectives were not representative of Chinese music education graduate students of other gender identities. Another potential limitation of this study was observational bias. This can occur when an interview is too short in length or fails to collect a sufficient amount of data (Onwuegbuzie, 2003). I attempted to control for this by conducting more than one interview and by allowing a sufficient amount of time for each interview in order to collect a rich data set. Interviews were semi-structured (Wengraf, 2001), which also helped me to collect a rich data set. I utilized a pre-determined set of open-ended questions, but I allowed and encouraged participants to discuss anything additional that they believed related to the purpose of the study. Additionally, semi-structured interviews helped create a relaxed atmosphere in which participants felt more comfortable conversing (Fylan, 2005). Finally, I attempted to control for observational bias by utilizing member checking (Onwuegbuzie, 2003) to ensure the accuracy and completeness of interview data. I

provided the interview transcripts to corresponding participants for review. At that point each participant could add information not covered in the interview questions, but that they believed to be relevant. Participants also had opportunities to delete or change their interview comments at this time.

A third potential limitation of researcher bias occurs when the researcher has preconceived ideas or personal prejudices that could affect how data is collected, analyzed, or interpreted (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003). This can particularly be problematic when the researcher is also the data collector because participants' responses can be affected by the researcher's biases (Onwuegbuzie, 2003). As a Chinese graduate student currently enrolled in a music education doctoral program in the United States, it was possible that my own preconceptions and experiences could affect the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. I used peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to attempt to control for this. The goal of peer debriefing is to keep the researcher honest and objective by having a disinterested colleague (who is familiar with the type of research being conducted) question and review the method and emerging conclusions, to help the researcher re-examine the purpose of the study and identify and address any apparent biases (Spall, 1998).

A fourth limitation was generalizability. Due to the small sample size, it cannot be expected that results from this study will be generalizable to the entire population of Chinese

music education graduate students in the United States. However, it is possible that results could be comparable across similar settings with similar groups of participants.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The remaining chapters present additional information that is pertinent to this research study. Chapter 2 presents a review of research and literature from the fields of education and music education that relates to Chinese music education graduate students in U.S. higher education institutions. Chapter 3 presents the methodology utilized in this study, including information on research design, sampling scheme, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 contains the results of the study, including an analysis of data as well as relevant tables. In Chapter 5, results are summarized and overall conclusions are presented. Implications of findings for future Chinese music education graduate students, music education professors, and higher education institutions are shared, and recommendations are given for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review, I examine scholarly literature related to Chinese music education students enrolled in graduate degree programs in the United States. I begin with an overview of research on cross-cultural adaptation theory, which comprises concepts that are relevant to this research topic and that relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. I critique the literature by focusing on the different perspectives of the nature of cross-cultural adaptation theory. Next, I review Kim's (1988) integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Kim provides insights into how newcomers in general negotiate the challenges they face in adapting to a new cultural environment. These newcomers' challenges greatly affected how I examined identity issues of Chinese music education graduate students through cross-cultural adaptation perspectives. I then go on to review research focusing on native Chinese graduate students in the United States, and Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education degree programs in the United States. This is followed by an overview of influences on Chinese music education, including a brief history of philosophical perspectives and Western influence relative to current practices in music teacher education. Finally, I organize themes from the literature, from the broad to the narrow, and conclude with a synthesis that points toward new directions for future research.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural adaptation has been a topic of interest among scholars since the beginning of the 20th century (Kim, 2001). *Adaptation* is defined as "the satisfaction of needs related to survival, or the process whereby an individual accommodates to an environment" (Feng, 1991, p. 4). These needs include housing, communication, food, and physical and psychological

wellbeing (Surdam & Collins, 1984). According to Berry (1970), *cross-cultural adaptation* refers to individuals' responses to a new cultural environment. If placed on a continuum, these responses range from acculturation to complete assimilation. *Acculturation*, found at one end of the adaptation continuum, refers to the changes in individuals whose primary learning has been in one culture and who selectively acquire traits from another culture (Marden & Meyer, 1968). The selective nature of this form of adaptation is quick but incomplete, because only a few cultural traits are chosen for acquisition (Marden & Meyer, 1968). On the other end of the continuum, *assimilation* refers to a "more comprehensive change whereby individuals become 'absorbed' into another culture" (Kim, 2001, p.15), acquiring as many traits as possible and actively integrating into the culture (Berry, 1970).

In related research, Schumann's (1987) theory of acculturation is based largely on the social factors experienced by those who learn English as their second language within the mainstream culture. Schumann (1987) explained that "the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language" (p. 34). In other words, the social and psychological distance between the learner and the mainstream culture determines the rate of language acquisition. Cross-cultural adaptation has been investigated from different perspectives (Anderson, 1994; Oberg, 1960). Some researchers have addressed the culture shock or psychological problems that arise when newcomers encounter unfamiliar environments (Chen, 1992; Kim, 2001). Oberg (1960) posited that culture shock is "precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p. 17). Furthermore, culture shock is a psychological disorientation arising from a lack of knowledge, limited prior experience, and personal rigidity (Chen, 1992). Most cultural newcomers report negative experiences of adjustment to new environments (Anderson,

1994). Lysgaard's (1995) culture shock model presents the entry point for newcomers as "being on a honeymoon high, followed by a bottoming out resulting from cultural maladjustment, and finally a climb up and out to cultural acceptance and adaptation" (Lysgaard, cited in Y. Chuang, 2015, p. 24). In other words, in order to adapt to the host culture, newcomers must first go through the experience of culture shock (Anderson, 1994). Culture shock is commonly perceived as a necessary stage for newcomers to navigate in order to be integrated into the host culture (Adler, 1987).

Some scholars have considered the developmental and growth-facilitating nature of cross-cultural adaptation (Adler, 1987; Anderson, 1994; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kim, 2001). The cross-cultural adaptation process is defined as a dynamic interaction which individuals undergo in new cultural environments (Berry, 1997; Chuang, 2015; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Researchers have assumed that these newcomers are highly likely to undergo a variety of challenges to make adjustments in their new environments (Chuang, 2015; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). For example, in order to adapt to a new culture, newcomers should learn rules for interpreting the new environment and fit into it (Anderson, 1994). Adler (1987) asserted that cross-cultural adaptation should be viewed as a phenomenon that leads to profound learning, growth, and self-awareness. For example, in order to adapt to a culture, newcomers must acquire its sociocultural mores and enhance their learning abilities to handle problems and meet the demands of the new environment (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kim, 2001; Oberg, 1960). Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (1993) further explains that cross-cultural adaptation is a learning and recovery process: it moves from first existing solely in one's own culture to subsequently recognizing and accepting different cultural values, then actively evolving one's view of new cultures. There seems to be a consensus among these scholars that

cross-cultural adaptation is a learning-and-growth-oriented process that can lead individuals to not only gaining awareness about cultural differences, but also to developing their own learning skills in new environments.

The different conceptualizations of cross-cultural adaptation are integral to my research topic: the experience of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. These conceptualizations show that cross-cultural adaptation presents both culture shock and opportunity for newcomers to adapt to the new environment. As such, they particularly shed light on the cultural adaptation that Chinese graduate students tend to experience when crossing a cultural border and provide an analytical lens to examine how they change from cultural outsiders to increasingly active and effective cultural insiders in the United States. (Jiang, 2010). In the next section, I discuss a theory of cross-cultural adaptation that articulates a learning and growth process.

Kim's Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Kim's (1988) integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation emerged as a predominant concept of cross-cultural adaptation in the 21st century. Kim (2001) defines cross-cultural adaptation as "the phenomenon of individuals who, upon relocating to an unfamiliar socio-cultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment" (p. 31). Kim (1988, 2001, 2005) explains cross-cultural adaptation as a process in which an individual adapts to a new and unfamiliar environment, and places adaptation at the intersection of familiar and unfamiliar environments. Kim's theory also offers insight into individual adaptation processes making essential the role of communication. Cross-cultural adaptation is therefore explained in terms of a dynamic interaction between the environment and the person.

With this definition, Kim (2001) sets three boundary conditions in which cross-cultural adaptation occurs: (1) the strangers have had a primary socialization in one culture and have moved into a different and unfamiliar culture; (2) the strangers are at least minimally dependent on the host environment for meeting their personal and social needs; and (3) the strangers are at least minimally engaged in firsthand communication experiences within that host environment. Kim's theory also focuses on the transformation of the stranger within the boundary conditions of socialization, dependence, and contact; here Kim's theory operates under the following three assumptions: (1) humans have an innate self-organizing drive and capacity to adapt to environmental challenges; (2) adaptation of an individual to a given cultural environment occurs in and through communication; and (3) adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that brings about a qualitative transformation of the individual (Kim, 2001). Grounded in this systemic conception of cross-cultural adaptation, Kim's theory addresses two questions: (1) What is the essential nature of the adaptation process that newcomers experience over time?, and (2) What are key factors influencing newcomers' adaptation process and the individual transformation that occurs during the process?

Kim (1988) addresses the first question through a three-pronged "stress-adaptation-growth" model of cross-cultural adaptation (p. 308) that illustrates the psychological movement of newcomers. In order to adapt to a new environment, stress, adaptation, and growth together define the internal dynamics of the newcomer's intercultural communication experience in a new cultural context (Kim & Ruben, 1988). Kim (1988) notes that this model does not describe a smooth linear progression but follows a cyclic and continual "draw-back-to-leap" pattern: each stressful experience is responded to with a temporary setback which, in turn, "activates adaptive energy to reorganize and re-engage in the activities of cultural learning and internal change,

bringing about a new self-reintegration” (Kim, 2012, p. 234). In other words, this pattern indicates figurative stepping backward and leaping forward motions. For example, when a newcomer experiences stress and withdraws, their withdrawal activates an adjustment sequence through which newcomers can manage their stress and reorganize themselves, subsequently propelling them to leap forward with new insights. Thus, newcomers develop more successful interaction patterns and experience less stress (Kim, 2001; Pitts, 2009).

Furthermore, Kim (2001) argues that communication is a driving force behind this process of stress management and adjustment. In this pattern, the inability to competently communicate results in stress, which increases the motivation to adapt, followed by growth and further experimentation leading to more stress, and the cycle repeats itself (Harvey, 2007). Stress occurs whenever the capabilities of the individual are not adequate to the demands of the environment. On the other hand, stress also leads to adaptation and growth because newcomers strive to meet the challenge by acting on and responding to the host environment (Kim & Ruben, 1988).

Building on the process model, the theory turns to the second basic point: “integrating various factors addressed by different investigators as constituting and/or predicting differing levels or rates of adaptive change” (Kim, 2008, p. 508). Kim (1988, 2001, 2005) addresses this point within three types of key factors that facilitate the adaptation process: communication, environmental, and predisposition factors.

Communication Factor

Kim (2005) explains that cross-cultural adaptation is a process of cultural learning and intercultural transformation achieved through communication competence. She breaks

communication competence down into three factors: cognitive, affective, and operational (Harvey, 2007).

The *cognitive* aspect of communication competence is split into an individual's knowledge of the communication system and cultural understanding. According to Kim (1988), knowledge of the host communication system is primarily knowledge of the language, but it includes linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and phonetics; it also includes the knowledge of how language is used in formal and informal settings. Cultural understanding, and obtaining a full knowledge of the host culture, involves an extensive understanding of its history, political, economic, religious, ideologies, arts, sciences, beliefs, values, and reciprocal role requirements (Harvey, 2007). Kim claims newcomers' knowledge of the host culture is simplistic and stereotypical, but that through interaction with the host environment they gain proficiency in understanding the communication system and host culture.

The *affective* aspect of communication competence is composed of the newcomer's adaptation motivation and identity flexibility (Harvey, 2007). Adaptation motivation, or the willingness to adapt and become functionally fit, is played out as an internal conflict between newcomers' self-command to act and their resistance to acting. This conflict influences how newcomers envision their relationship with the host environment. The most essential of the adaptation motivations is the expectation of a future relationship with the host culture. Therefore, those who expect to live in the host culture for a long time tend to have a stronger motivation to adapt and thus expend more effort in learning about the host culture; by contrast, temporary newcomers have a low motivation to adapt because they do not expect to use the knowledge they acquire over the long term (Harvey, 2007). Identity flexibility refers to the psychology and social orientation of newcomers in terms of how they view themselves, their host culture, and their

original culture (Kim, 2001). Flexibility is associated with newcomers' higher levels of openness and lower levels of prejudices toward new cultural experiences (Harvey, 2007).

The *operational* aspect of host communication competence comprises newcomers' technical skills, synchrony, and resourcefulness. Technical skills are those necessary for daily life and social roles and include job skills, basic language skills, academic skills, and the ability to locate sources of information necessary to function within society (Harvey, 2007). Synchrony refers to the ability of newcomers to effectively communicate with people from the host culture in ways that are compatible, congruent, and harmonious (Harvey, 2007). Synchrony is developed through contact with the host culture and via trial and error and is considered more difficult than acquiring technical skills (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2013). Resourcefulness refers to the ability to understand and reconcile cultural differences and use that understanding to come up with plans of action. It is used in day-to-day interactions such as face-to-face encounters, maintaining relationships with members of host culture, and problem solving. Higher levels of resourcefulness are associated with increases in the quality of interpersonal encounters and the ability to effectively cope with differences, allowing newcomers to negotiate different identities in given situations with appropriate basis (Harvey, 2007).

In short, at the heart of communication competence are the individual's communication activities; that is, his or her engagement with the host environment through participation in host culture interpersonal and mass communication activities. (Kim, 2001). These activities require the knowledge of the host language, culture, and history. This knowledge helps newcomers access the host environment and communicate with native speakers in local contexts.

Alternatively, there are less direct methods. Through a wide range of mediated communication systems—such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, movies, art, literature, music, and

drama—non-natives interact with their host cultural environment without direct interpersonal involvement. Such mass communication activities, direct and indirect, all help broaden the scope of new cultural learning beyond one's immediate social context.

Environmental Factors

As discussed previously, participation in mass communication activities can be helpful for newcomers in the initial phase of the cross-cultural adaptation process. The individual's communication activities cannot be fully explained in isolation from the conditions of the environment (Kim, 2005, 2012). "As different societies and communities present different environments for cross-cultural adaptation, a given stranger can be more successful in adapting to a certain environment than to another one" (Kim, 2012, p. 236). Of various environmental characteristics, three key elements are identified in Kim's theory as significant with respect to newcomers' adaptation process: (1) host receptivity; (2) host conformity pressure; and (3) ethnic group strength (Kim, 2012).

Host receptivity refers to the degree to which the receiving environment welcomes and accepts newcomers into its interpersonal networks (Kim, 2012). The host society can be more hospitable towards certain groups of newcomers while unwelcoming towards certain others. Along with receptivity, individuals face differing levels of *conformity pressure* from the host environment. In addition, newcomers also face host conformity pressure to the extent to which the host environment challenges them. Different host environments show different levels of acceptance and appreciation of newcomers and their ethnic characteristics. A welcome and hospitable community can be more helpful for newcomers to adapt to the new culture, making easier their developing interpersonal networks and receiving various forms of informational, technical, material, and emotional support in the new environment (Kim, 2001).

Ethnic group strength refers to the relative status or standing of a particular ethnic group in the context of the surrounding host society. Depending on relative group size or status, stronger ethnic groups are likely to provide their members with a more vibrant subculture and practical services. In doing so, however, a strong ethnic society tends to encourage the maintenance of ethnic culture, and even exert its own pressure to conform to the ethnic cultural norms, “thereby discouraging individual community members’ active social engagement with the host environment at large” (Kim, 2012, p. 237).

Predisposition Factors

Newcomers begin the cross-cultural adaptation process with different backgrounds that help to set the parameters for the way they relate to the new environment and their adaptive changes (Kim, 2012). These different backgrounds of newcomers are grouped into three categories: (a) preparedness; (b) ethnic proximity/distance; and (c) personality predisposition. These characteristics of predisposition help us define the degree of newcomers’ adaptive potential (Kim, 2012).

Preparedness includes the level of readiness to undertake the process of cross-cultural adaptation by developing host communication competence and participating in host culture communication activities (Kim, 2012). Influencing the newcomers’ readiness are differing levels of formal and informal learning of the host language and culture prior to moving to the host environment. In addition, preparedness is often influenced by whether the move to the host environment is voluntary or involuntary. For example, long-term immigrants who voluntarily enter the host environment likely have greater willingness to make the necessary efforts to adapt, compared with temporary visitors or those who relocate unwillingly for reasons other than their own volition (Kim, 2012).

Ethnic proximity/distance addresses the extent to which the ethnicity of an individual newcomer plays a role in the cross-cultural adaptation process by serving as a certain level of advantage (Kim, 2012). Newcomers' physical characteristics, such as height, skin color and facial features; speech characteristics, such as accents and other speech patterns that serve as ethnic markers; as well as intrinsic ethnic characteristics, such as religious beliefs and cultural values; potentially influence the degree of host receptivity in terms of the native peoples' willingness to welcome them into their interpersonal society (Kim, 1988).

Along with preparedness and ethnic proximity/distance, newcomers' *personality predisposition*, or set of sensibilities, facilitates their own adaptation process. The personality predisposition serves as the inner resource, forming the basis from which the individual pursues new cultural experiences with enthusiasm and success (Kim, 2012). Three interrelated personality traits help to facilitate newcomers' adaptation by enabling them to endure stressful challenges: (1) "openness, an internal posture that is receptive to new information; (2) strength, the quality of resilience, patience, hardiness and persistence; and (3) positivity, an affirmative and optimistic outlook that enables the individual to better endure stressful events with a belief in the possibilities of life in general" (Kim, 2012, p. 238).

Overall, Kim's integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation attempts to increase understanding of the process of its inherent factors. Kim (2005) views adaptation as a dynamic process that makes adaptation to a new culture possible within a stress-adaptation-growth model. In addition, through the interactive workings of the previously-mentioned factors of communication, environment, and predisposition, the process of cross-cultural adaptation unfolds. Additionally, adaptation is an approach that requires newcomers to enhance their communication abilities to meet the challenges in the new cultural context. Kim

(2005) emphasizes that the process of communication with the host culture actively leads to identity stress, and the newcomer's reaction to the stress leads to adaptation into the host culture and subsequent growth. Through participation in various communication activities in the new society, newcomers will achieve an increasing functional fitness. Kim (2005) also provides an in-depth explanation of environmental as well as individual factors in the adaptation process of newcomers. The core of this explanation is the notion of achieving an environment-individual "fit." This is made possible through engaging in intercultural encounters and developing norms and behaviors appropriate for the new environment, in order to achieve a closer fit for the environment. Kim's theory serves as a natural framework for a discussion of the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese graduate students, which follows in the next section.

Cross-cultural Adaptation of Chinese Graduate Students

This section presents research on the cross-cultural adaptation of native Chinese students who come to the U.S. for graduate degree programs. I begin with brief introductory information on native Chinese collegiate-level students in the United States, and then focus more specifically on the literature related to Chinese graduate students' cross-cultural adaptation.

Statistics from the past 10 years have revealed large numbers of Chinese students enrolling in U.S. universities. In the 2015–16 academic year alone, 328,547 native Chinese students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions (which represented an increase of 8.1% over the previous year), constituting 31.5% of the total international student population in the United States.

Among these Chinese students, 37.5% studied at the graduate level (Institute of International Education, 2016). Furthermore, Chinese students represent a significant percentage of international students obtaining doctoral degrees each year (Zhang, 2016). These figures reveal the importance of understanding their experiences in the United States. With the increase in

numbers of Chinese students in the United States, an increase in research has followed, focusing on cross-cultural adaptation and the challenges Chinese students face as they transition to American culture and higher education institutions (Jiang, 2010; Li, 2016; Wan, 2001; Wu, 2012; Zhang, 2013).

Dimensions of difficulties in cross-cultural adaptation

According to the literature, despite the positive results that come out of the cross-cultural adaptation experience of Chinese graduate students in the United States., the difficulties inherent in the adaptation process are significant. Research specific to Chinese graduate students has identified three dimensions of difficulties experienced in the cultural adaptation process: cultural awareness, language proficiency, and academic achievement (Sun & Chen, 1999). Difficulties related to these dimensions have been found to significantly influence Chinese graduate students' adjustment and satisfaction in the United States. (Leong & Chou, 1996; Liu, 2012; Wan, 2001; Yuan, 2011). The challenges of cultural awareness, English language proficiency, and academic achievement of Chinese graduate students are discussed in more depth in the next three subsections.

Cultural Awareness

Culture is regarded as the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a society (Hofstede, 1991). It influences people's ways of thinking and their behaviors (Hofstede, 1991) and is often viewed as a barrier that impedes Chinese graduate students' adjustment to the United States (Chen, 1996; Rawlings & Sue, 2013; Sun & Chen, 1997).

Chinese graduate students grow up within different cultural contexts than those of the U.S. (Zhang, 2013); thus, they may feel uncertain about how to handle problems in various situations in American society, causing them to feel inadequate, misunderstood, or dejected (Rawlings &

Sue, 2013; Zhang & Xu, 2007). Research shows that when Chinese students move to the United States for graduate programs—abruptly entering a completely new cultural environment—most are underconfident about speaking and behaving appropriately. Additionally, their limited knowledge of the U.S.—its history, contemporary social and political issues, and popular culture—causes a major barrier for engaging in cross-cultural interactions (Jiang, 2010). Their prior knowledge of the U.S. gained from textbooks becomes less useful in their life. They face difficulty participating in conversations and feel ill-equipped to initiate social interaction with their U.S. colleagues (Jiang, 2010).

English Language Proficiency

Chinese graduate students' difficulties with English are identified and discussed in a number of research studies, which found that these students view the English language as one of the major obstacles to their academic success in the United States. (Cheng & Erben, 2011; J. Huang, 1998, 2006; Y. Huang, 2012; Kuo, 2011; Lee, 2015; Ma & Wang, 2012; Ramos, 2013; Xue, 2013; Zhou, 2012). A lack of English proficiency is common among Chinese students, since most have little, if any, immersion experience within an English-speaking environment in China (Li, 1993). It is the first time for most of them to learn in a classroom where academic lectures are in English, targeted at native English speakers (Li, 1993). In addition to the challenges and difficulties in reading and oral communication in the classroom, Chinese academic writing sharply contrasts with academic writing in the United States., in that writers' opinions are much more strongly expressed in the United States. and supported more fully with quotations and citations of scholarly references (Zhou, 2010). Moreover, the Chinese language uses ideographic characters for written language and Romanized letters for pronunciation (Zhou, 2010), while the English language uses the same set of characters for writing and speaking. The

grammatical features of Chinese also make learning English difficult, particularly concerning tense, plurals, and articles.

In addition, Zhu (1992) compared Chinese students' prior English study with their academic experience in the United States. She found that Chinese students' prior English preparation in reading skills was good, but listening was mediocre, while speaking and writing preparation were poor due to a pedagogical focus on grammar and reading. Thus, these students did not do well in classroom activities, in-depth discussions, and classroom presentations. They had difficulty in describing experiments and ideas for technical reports because their thinking processes differed from those of U.S. natives, and they had insufficient working vocabulary. Overall, linguistic features and breadth of prior English study experience caused these Chinese graduate students significant problems in navigating the English language in the United States. Although Chinese graduate students improve their English abilities by preparing for and taking English language tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Jiang, 2010), Kuo (2001) pointed out that such scores only show how well one performs in the English language generally, and not in one's academic area. There are many English training courses and programs targeted to help students pass the standardized TOEFL overseas; however, these courses do not focus on developing the language skills students need once they live in the United States. (Kuo, 2011). As a result, many students have high TOEFL scores, but still experience an enormous amount of difficulty with oral and listening comprehension (Kuo, 2011). The standardized test scores fail to predict academic language success once students arrive on campus (Kuo, 2011).

Contrarily, although the issue of language barrier is the most common topic of discussion in scholarly literature on Chinese students, some Chinese graduate students in science and

engineering were shown in research to be less concerned about improving their English ability. Wang's study (2004) examined Chinese graduate students' academic experiences in U.S. universities. He found that participants in science and engineering majors largely focused on working in the laboratories and doing research; they did not have time to attend to their English skills until they had achieved doctoral candidacy. More significantly, their limited English speaking abilities did not hold them back from earning a degree and graduating on time.

Academic Achievement

Empirical studies indicate that the lack of language proficiency has resulted in much frustration for Chinese students in the area of academic achievement in the United States. (Jian, 2012; Lin, 2013; Sun & Chen, 1999; Wan, 2001; Yan & Berliner, 2009; Ye, 1992). Specifically, this lack of proficiency caused stress, pressure, and undermined confidence in speaking English (Cheng & Erben, 2011). Chinese graduate students expressed a hesitancy in sharing their opinions in class because they feared they would embarrass themselves due to their poor English (Zhao, 1993). Jiang (2010) concluded that the inability to express their opinions in class, or to carry out substantive conversations with professors and peers, masked students' academic competence and personality. Furthermore, Chinese graduate students have been found to have serious problems in understanding lectures in the U.S. classroom (Lee, 2015). Chen (1996) noted that understanding the host culture is based on participants' reflective thinking on what they see and experience. However, misunderstanding within conversations is common among Chinese students in the United States. For example, some Chinese students could not understand their professors' and classmates' jokes or use of slang in classes. Moreover, the use of metaphors and slang in class often led Chinese students to misunderstand details of lectures and instructions. If

they missed a word or phrase in class, they tended to pause and figure out meanings, but then missed the following part of the lecture (Jiang, 2010).

Success in classroom instructional settings precludes that students mentally work on several tasks simultaneously, such as retrieving previous knowledge to make sense of the lecture, forming and asking questions, and taking notes (Huang, 1998). Research has shown that Chinese students required extra time for converting concepts from English to Chinese in class (Qian, 2002). Therefore, they had to work harder and tended to spend more time than their native peers to understand a lecture and prepare for class (Jiang, 2010).

Although Chinese students may believe that additional language preparations are sufficient to help them study in the United States, in reality even those who demonstrate passable English skills still struggle to communicate with their professors (Zhang & Mi, 2010). Language proficiency issues also affect professors' perceptions of Chinese graduate students (Kuo, 2011). Difficulties in expressing ideas and participating in classroom discussions cause Chinese graduate students to have doubts about their English abilities (Lin, 2002). In turn, professors doubt their academic ability and learning motivation.

Though the language challenge faced by Chinese graduate students in U.S. universities can negatively affect their academic study (Huang, 1998, 2006; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Sun & Chen, 1999), Chinese graduate students are often highly motivated to achieve academic success. Upon encountering difficulties, they consciously seek resolutions and most of the time can overcome difficulties through diligent work (Zhang, 2010). Their generally high rate of success in academia (Johnson, 2001) supports the assumption that Chinese graduate students do develop effective learning strategies to meet the challenges they face (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Lin, 2002). Chinese graduate students appreciate their advisors' encouragement, which facilitates

their progress and motivation. These students are goal-oriented and motivated to pursue excellence in their programs of study with a strong commitment for success. While perceiving the differences in academic environments, they still enjoy learning (Zhou, 2010).

Differences in Teaching and Learning Styles

The literature shows that differences in teaching and learning styles pose a major challenge for Chinese graduate students in the United States, and affect their classroom participation (Huang, 2006; Sun & Chen, 1999). U.S. graduate degree programs may be challenging for any student; however, research suggests they are particularly so for Chinese graduate students (Jiang, 2010), in part because these students lack the experience of learning in the culture of the U.S. classroom (Sun & Chen, 1999). Liu (1994) found that if Chinese graduate students transferred their Chinese cultural values and beliefs into the U.S. education cultural context, it created problems for their academic achievement. In China, teachers are regarded not only as authorities of knowledge but also as students' moral mentors (Fu, 1991). Chinese teachers are very serious and tend to use a lecture format in the classroom. Students learn by paying attention to lectures and memorizing textbook content. Chinese students in classrooms are mostly silent and learn by listening and reading, rather than through classroom discussion and thinking independently (Sun & Chen, 1999).

In contrast, U.S. professors often use humor and varied informal teaching methods to engage students (Upton, 1989). They may also regard themselves as facilitators of learning rather than authorities of knowledge (Upton, 1989) and tend to have less structure in teaching and learning, with more fluid boundaries between students and teachers in the classroom (Liu, 1994). For example, students are encouraged to challenge teachers and work in groups. Also, students and teachers both engage in a great deal of conversation in the U.S. classroom (Jiang, 2010).

This type of learning environment helps students explore knowledge and enhances their individual talents and intellectual development (Dobrossy & Dunnett, 2001). However, this type of learning occurs through active participation in the class activities, leading of discussions, and offering of opinions and comments; elements often absent from the experience of Chinese graduate students (Tsai, 2002). Although some Chinese graduate students have no problems in classes taught in English, U.S. professors perceive their lack of classroom interaction as a weakness of their overall performance (Tsai, 2002).

Though cultural awareness, English language proficiency, and academic achievement issues are critical in Chinese graduate students' adjustments to the United States, the literature also suggests that Chinese graduate students' adaptive challenges include social and psychological issues (Jiang, 2010; Sun & Chen, 1999; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yan & Cardinal, 2013; Zhang, 2013). The next section discusses these challenges.

Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment

Studies addressing the psychological and sociocultural problems that arise when Chinese graduate students encounter unfamiliar environments have shown that these students experience significant psychological and sociocultural difficulties in the United States, and that identified difficulties are compounded by differences between the U.S. and Chinese cultures (Leong & Chou, 1996; Luo & Gilliard, 2006; Wan, 2001). *Psychological adjustment* refers to “psychological wellbeing or satisfaction” (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 660). Psychological adjustment issues include forms of psychological distress, such as homesickness, depression, and anxiety (Zhang, 2011). *Sociocultural adjustment* refers to the ability to fit in, to acquire culturally appropriate skills and to negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment” (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 660). A small body of research has sought to increase knowledge of native

Chinese graduate students' psychological and sociocultural adjustment to life in the United States, including how Chinese students apply effective coping strategies to handle difficulties related to these. Since these two areas are closely related and often overlap, literature from both is discussed together by topic in this section.

Attachment and Acculturation

Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) examined adult attachment and acculturation as predictors of Chinese international students' psychological adaptation in the United States. Attachment avoidance, which involves an excessive need for self-reliance and a fear of interpersonal dependence, "was a significant predictor for both sociocultural and psychological adaptation difficulties" (Sumer, 2009, p. 35). On the contrary, Wang and Mallinckrodt also found that acculturation was a significant predictor for Chinese students' psychological and sociocultural adaptation to American culture. Furthermore, findings showed that the inability to engage in host social and cultural activities resulted in lower levels of adaptation to the host culture and high acculturative stress, with acculturative stress found as positively associated with depression among participants. In particular, participants with high levels of anxiety were unlikely to engage in the exploration of U.S. society because they were experiencing enhanced feelings of loneliness and distress.

Initial and Ongoing Challenges

Research conducted by Li (2016) found that challenges experienced by Chinese graduate students in the United States related to daily living include facing unfamiliar yet necessary experiences, such as finding housing, opening a bank account, opening a cell phone account, and becoming familiar with directions and transportation to and from school and home. Additionally, the cultural divide is observed in different cultural values and holiday celebrations (Huang &

Klinger, 2006), with the two countries having different holidays celebrated in different ways at different times. For example, U.S. natives celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter, while the Chinese celebrate Spring Festival and Moon Festival (Feng, 1991). Chinese students do not generally celebrate U.S. holidays and are often in class during Chinese holidays, away from family and friends (Feng, 1991). Instead of engaging in U.S. cultural activities and events, many Chinese graduate students mainly spend their free time surfing the internet, playing sports, or “hanging out” with other Chinese friends. The ensuing sense of isolation felt by Chinese students only deepens the divide between them and their native peers, resulting in misunderstandings of each other’s culture and customs (Zhang, 2016).

After moving from China to the United States, Chinese graduate students also face challenges in establishing new friendships. They may not feel comfortable interacting with their U.S. peers because they do not have the same culture, values, and beliefs (Tsai, 2002). As a result, it is common for Chinese graduate students to socialize only within their Chinese circle of friends in the United States, because they at least can understand each other’s feelings of homesickness (Zhang & Xu, 2007). As was stated in the previous paragraph, these students tend to shy away from their surrounding community and isolate themselves from the host culture. Consequently, they fail to develop cultural understanding. This, in turn, negatively impacts their cultural adjustment and English language proficiency (Feng, 1991).

Cultural differences can also reduce Chinese graduate students’ desire to participate in extracurricular activities in the United States. (Feng, 1991; Huang & Klinger, 2006). Research has uncovered a palpable difference in interests between Chinese graduate students and their U.S. peers (Feng, 1991; Huang, 2006; Lin 2002; Wan, 2001). For example, their U.S. peers may

talk about popular sports, such as hockey and baseball, or about TV shows, however, Chinese graduate students may have limited knowledge of these (Huang, 2006).

Furthermore, in China, students are encouraged to engage in collectivism, in which culture and behavior emphasize the needs and goals of the group of people over the needs and desire of the individual, while U.S. culture traditionally stresses individualism, which requires independence and self-assurance (Wan, 2001). For example, Ku & Ho (2010) claimed that Chinese students' tendency is to look for answers from authorities or other people, rather than arriving at individual conclusions based on evidence and reason. Their research confirmed that in Chinese society, which has strong traditional collectivist values, people are used to giving priority to consensus; therefore, diverse opinions are not highly appreciated. On the other hand, U.S. society values self-expression and speaking out as means of resolving problems, and natives of the United States are likely to use confrontational strategies when dealing with interpersonal problems (Hofstede, 1991).

The initial and ongoing challenges experienced by native Chinese graduate students studying in the United States reflect the differing complexities and layers of Chinese and U.S. cultures. To navigate these substantial challenges, Chinese students utilize a variety of coping strategies, which are described in the next subsection.

Coping Strategies

Chinese students who move to the United States for graduate study must find ways to reduce their uncertainty in order to make a smooth transition to their new environment (Yuan, 2011). For example, in order to successfully complete their degree programs, they must become proficient in the use of English for both written and oral communication. They must develop the ability to understand instruction within courses designed for native English speakers (Dempsey,

2012). Native Chinese students also must find ways to adjust to daily life in the United States., including solving issues of housing accommodations, food, health, and recreation (Dempsey, 2012).

Although cultural differences, language proficiency, and academic achievement seem to be the major difficulties in the adjusting process of Chinese graduate students, these students are highly motivated to acquire new knowledge (Zhang, 2016). Zhou's (2010) phenomenological narrative research explored the lived experiences of five Chinese graduate students and their views on factors shaping their personal, academic, and linguistic growth in the United States. Results showed that one coping strategy participants cultivated was to seek internships, because these provided an opportunity for immersion in the local community and developed their critical knowledge of U.S. society. Some participants experienced stress due to loneliness and overwhelming workloads, but they managed to cope by cultivating friendships and relationships within and outside the university community (Zhou, 2010). Related research by Jiang (2010) found that Chinese graduate students developed friendships through involvement in popular sports, student groups and clubs, or church activities. In a third study, Chinese graduate student participants suggested that future students become more active in seeking opportunities, asking for help, and asking questions about things they do not know (Li, 2016).

In an investigation of Chinese graduate students' application of educational strategies to break down language and culture boundaries in the United States, Chen (1996) suggested that supportive instructors and classmates are important factors in facilitating adjustment to U.S. classrooms. Professors' one-on-one tutoring and counseling are helpful because they provide specific guidance for each student to follow, and students' academic stress is lessened (Wan, 2001). Universities also offer special orientations on U.S. social and academic culture (Huang,

2012). Additionally, in a cross-cultural study of U.S. and Chinese college students, Jiang (2010) explored participants' unique learning experiences and perceptions of personal gains. Results showed that all participants felt challenged by the intensity of the doctoral programs and their research responsibilities. Participants learned to adapt through observation, classroom discussion, and conversations with their professors, and learned what they were capable of accomplishing and how to study effectively in the new academic environment. Other supportive efforts can include seminars by professionals, international students' recounting of their experiences in the United States, and organizations where friendship ties can be developed with local classmates (Lin, 2002).

Miscellaneous Research

A few studies relate to Chinese graduate students in the United States, but do not fit into any of the topics mentioned previously. These include Chinese graduate students' views about internet use, opinions about their leisure time experience in the United States, and the academic success of Chinese graduate students within specific fields of study.

Internet Use

One study focused on the internet use of Chinese graduate students in the United States. Mikal, Yang and Lewi (2015) examined the effects of Chinese students' internet use, both prior to and during study abroad, on stress, integration, and learning while abroad. In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 Chinese undergraduate and graduate students studying in the United States. Findings indicated that although online media and resources provide valuable information to Chinese students, they may also set the stage for entry into established, cohesive co-national peer groups, thereby discouraging integration.

Leisure Time

A few researchers have explored Chinese graduate students' leisure experiences and how these relate to their cross-cultural adjustment to the United States. The term *leisure* refers to activities done for the sake of relaxation or entertainment (Leung & Stahura, 2010). Research shows that leisure activities represent an important component of college students' lives, and that the study of these can lead to better understanding of the perspectives of culturally diverse segments of the college student population (Leung & Stahura, 2010). In an investigation of the leisure experiences of Chinese graduate students in the United States, Li and Stodolska (2006) found that although Chinese students focus on academics first, then leisure, they nevertheless deeply value leisure time in their lives. This study also showed that Chinese graduate students' transnational status resulted in a variety of constraints on their leisure experience, such as lack of time, language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of friends. As a result, most participants interviewed were not satisfied with their current leisure life in the United States and were wistful for their life in China.

Fields of Study

A limited, but related body of research has examined the academic success of Chinese graduate students in the United States within specific fields of study (Johnson, 2001; Le & Gardner, 2010; Zhou, Golde & McCormick, 2007, Zhang, 2016; Zhou, 2014). In a study of native Chinese engineering doctoral students' negotiation of new cultural environments in a U.S. university, Johnson (2001) noted trends in the flow of Chinese graduate students into science and engineering majors. He also found that Chinese students who contributed to academic research subsequently found employment in highly skilled postdoctoral positions in higher education institutions and industry fields in the United States. In a study of Chinese doctoral students in

STEM fields, Zhou (2014) found that these students may lack an accurate understanding of the nature of doctoral education in the United States, particularly the intensity of research and the harsh job situation in academia for Ph.D. graduates. An additional finding was that Chinese doctoral students, particularly those in STEM fields, bring economic, academic, and ethnic/cultural diversity benefits to American higher education and economy

In the following section, I narrow the discussion to the limited body of scholarly literature on Chinese graduate students in the U.S. music degree programs. Only one study (Choi, 2012) falls into this category.

Chinese Graduate Students in U.S. Music Degree Programs

According to Huang and Tatiana (2016), United States has recently become a top destination for Chinese students to pursue music degrees. For a number of years, Chinese students, many of whom study piano, have enrolled in music departments in the United States (Choi, 2012). According to Brand (2001, p. 170), “Asian students are typically viewed as highly talented, incredibly diligent, and extremely hard working.”

Research on Chinese graduate students in U.S. music degree programs has concerned the issues they experience in the United States and factors that impact degree program choice and provides recommendations for educators who work with these students. Choi (2012) examined attitudes of East Asian international graduate level music students (from China, South Korea, and Japan) toward U.S. universities and found that the most problematic issues among participants were the language barrier and cultural differences between their host and home countries. These findings are supported extensively in research discussed earlier in this chapter; for example, in the finding that Chinese students often experience a language barrier, culture shock, and socio-cultural differences (Sun & Chen, 1999). Furthermore, results from Choi’s

study indicated that the music professor's reputation, scholarships, and the program's reputation were perceived as the most significant factors impacting participants' degree program choice. The professor's expertise, in particular, and the improvement of musical skills were perceived as the most influential factors impacting students' satisfaction levels with their educational experience in the United States. Choi (2012) also recommends that educators be aware of cultural differences, attempt to understand the life and learning experiences of these students, and help them to develop a more successful and satisfactory educational experience in the United States. As far as can be determined, no literature exists on the experiences of Chinese music education students enrolled in graduate programs in the United States, highlighting a significant gap in research. This study is thus poised as groundbreaking in its exploration of this topic.

Influences on Chinese Music Education

Considering the limitations of previous research, my study focuses on Chinese music education graduate students' experiences in the United States. It is important to consider the influences that Chinese music education graduate students bring with them to the United States, including philosophical perspectives and the overall music education foundation provided in their undergraduate degree programs in China. Chinese music education graduate students could potentially be influenced by these perspectives while studying in the United States. In this section, I specifically discuss the intersection of traditional ethics of Confucianism and Western influence within Chinese music education. Additionally, I examine the current state of Chinese music teacher education in higher education institutions and highlight incongruencies that affect the needs of Chinese music education graduate students while studying in the United States.

Confucianism and Other Philosophical Influences

A mainstream classical philosophy in Chinese society, Confucianism is named after the philosopher and educator Confucius (551-479 BC) (Fung, 2018; Ho, 2010). Confucius is recognized as the first great teacher of Chinese history and as the founder of the Confucian school of thought. His ideas have permeated deep into Chinese culture and have shaped Chinese music education philosophy in many important ways (Ho, 2010; Lau, 2003; Tan, 2015). Of the Chinese mainstream classical philosophers, Confucius is regarded as having the greatest influence on philosophical thought related to Chinese music education (Hammerschmidt, 2013).

Confucius created an ideological system that described six skills or arts, including music, rites (moral education and ceremony), archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics (Ho & Low, 2004; Law, 2006). Music was one of the most crucial subjects of the six arts for educating citizens (Ho & Low, 2004; Law, 2006). Furthermore, music education was regarded as an important factor for personality education that could improve one's artistic appreciation. Confucius stated, "as for a versatile person, he will become a perfect person if he is additionally taught with rites and music; people's cultivation starts from learning poetry, and then it is enhanced via learning rites, and finally it becomes perfect through learning music" (Long, 2014, p. 165). This quote generalizes the significance of music education in fully perfecting personality. In addition, Chinese philosophical thought objectively emphasizes the relationship between "people" and "music" advocated in Confucianism (Law & Ho, 2011; Titan, 2002). As a result, people can help music to flourish, music can also influence people, and people and music are interactive, which highlights the mutual dialectical relationship between the two. Confucius said that only those who are well educated are qualified to be civil servants in the administrative system of the traditional Chinese government, whose members were selected via

competitive examinations. In order to prepare for these exams, Chinese people spent their whole lives reading books (mostly on Confucian philosophy), and writing essays and poems (Yue, 2006). Thus, a Confucian perspective on education emphasizes rote learning over original thinking and form over substance. The exams managed to produce an elite grounded in a common body of teachings and Chinese students faced fierce competition in a series of exams dealing primarily with Confucian texts and conducted on the prefectural, provincial, and national levels (Yue, 2006).

The philosophical foundation of music education in ancient China was also based on three assumptions by Xunzi, a widely-known Chinese philosopher in ancient times. These assumptions include the following: (a) music is joy and a necessity of humans, (b) music transforms humans, and (c) music has the power to improve society (Tan, 2016).

Western Influence on Music Education in China

The phenomenon of Chinese music education's fascination and engagement with Western classical music and its culture has existed since the beginning of the 20th century. The Qing Government included music as a subject taught in schools after 1906 when China moved from the prefectural, provincial, and national exam-based education system to that of public, normal schools for the general population (Ward, 2014). Chinese music educators began to mimic the Western music education systems of France and Germany in the creation of singing classes. At the same time, during the first decade of the 20th Century, Chinese music students who studied music in Western countries returned to China and composed patriotic songs for educational purposes (Gong, 2010).

Chinese higher education music institutions followed this same path toward embracing Western music in the music education curriculum. For example, the Shanghai Conservatory of

Music (founded in 1927), utilized a teaching methodology based on that of the Leipzig Conservatory of Music (Ward, 2014). The China Central Conservatory of Music (established in 1950) employed a faculty of music educators who had studied abroad. Furthermore, Russian pianists were sought after to teach at both conservatories between 1930 and 1960 (Lin, 2002; Ward, 2014). This cultural exchange resulting from Western music professionals visiting or working in Chinese higher education institutions and Chinese music students studying abroad continues in present times (Ward, 2014). Furthermore, there has been a high representation of Chinese music students in the U.S. higher education institutions, many of whom study piano (Huang, 2011).

Western music has become an integral part of the music education curriculum in China (Huang, 2011). In many degree programs designed to prepare music teachers, undergraduate students must complete four years of study in music and dance (Brahmstedt & Brahmstedt, 1997). Chinese music education degree programs emphasize Western music techniques (Han, 2001; Huang, 2011), requiring students to memorize details of model compositions through disciplined and structured technical practices (Huang, 2011). Chinese college music education curricula also emphasize imitation and rote memorization as a means of learning music skills (Xu & Sun, 2011).

Incongruencies

China is currently experiencing a mix of Confucian and other philosophical foundations and Western cultural influences (Ho, 2010), raising the challenge of combining traditional Chinese philosophical ideals and Western cultural ideals in music curricula (Titan, 2002). The proliferation of Western music and its teaching methods have reduced traditional Chinese music, and with it traditional Chinese philosophy, to the status of a sideshow (Yip, Leung & Lau, 2003).

Chinese music educators need to find ways to help students achieve their music learning goals through Western music while being influenced in musical appreciation through Chinese philosophical ideals (Titan, 2002).

Additionally, Chinese music education degree programs have been criticized for an overemphasis on performance skills and a lack of attention to preparing graduates with effective pedagogical skills (Xu & Sun, 2011; Yeh, 2001; Yip, Leung & Lau, 2003). Within music instruction based on the Western conservatory model, Chinese teachers too often require students to memorize details of model compositions through disciplined and structured technical practices (Huang, 2011). In contrast, U.S. music education degree programs emphasize pedagogical practices for teaching ensembles and general music (Heller, 2015). Students learn through various classroom teaching and learning experiences and via early field experiences in K-12 schools. These differences between China and U.S. music education degree programs may cause knowledge gaps for Chinese music education graduate students studying in the United States. Several researchers stated that Chinese graduate students who bring Confucian perspectives to their studies in U.S. higher education systems may experience problems (Feng, 1991; Huang, 2006; Huang & Klinger, 2006; K. Li, 2013; Z. Li, 2016; Tsai, 2002; Washington, 2010; Zhou, 2010), because the Confucian education perspectives emphasize study as preparation for examinations. In contrast, the U.S. learning environments in higher education include student-centered classes with professors using a variety of teaching methods to encourage students to participate in class activities instead of exam-based assignments. In addition, Confucian-oriented Chinese students tend to be comfortable in more formally structured teaching and learning environments (Ho, 2010); however, the U.S. education system focuses on developing individual student talents, personal values, and creative spirit (Zimmermann, 1995). All are reasons why

Chinese graduate students (include music education graduate students) may feel unfamiliar and even uncomfortable with the U.S. education culture.

Summary, Conclusions, and Suggestions for Future Research

This chapter reviewed scholarly literature on the concept and theory of cross-cultural adaptation, and on cross-cultural adaptation as related to Chinese graduate students (including Chinese music graduate students) enrolled in degree programs in the United States. Kim's (1988) cross-cultural adaptation theory follows an open system perspective and describes how individuals adjust to a new cultural context. It offers a useful framework for analyzing Chinese students' cross-cultural adjustment experiences in a systematic manner. Congruent with research on cross-cultural adaptation, Chinese graduate students enrolled in music degree programs may experience challenges related to language, culture, and academic achievement in adjusting to the U.S. higher education system. Also, the Confucian education perspective may guide the learning of Chinese music education graduate students while studying in the United States. Although research has identified a wide range of problems and issues that Chinese graduate students encounter in the United States, few studies have examined the underlying reasons why they struggle with these issues, how they perceive and respond to them, and why they respond as they do. Additionally, most studies do not stratify students according to major areas of study, leading to questions as to whether these students' real situations may be more complicated than research findings indicate. This literature review finds that no researchers have examined Chinese graduate student growth after completing a degree program or student perspectives on what has been helpful in real life experiences.

This review also illustrates the need for greater knowledge of the experiences of Chinese *music education* graduate students in the United States, including their (1) perceptions of the

challenges they encounter and responses to these challenges, (2) overall experiences within U.S. graduate music education degree programs, including the benefits they experienced (3) perceived growth over time, and (4) plans for the future. Subsequently, this study's focus on Chinese music education graduate students' experiences in the United States is timely in its examination of their perceptions of the following:

- Adaptation to the challenges of their new cultural environment
- Effectiveness of strategies they used in facing challenges
- Overall experiences within U.S. graduate music education degree programs
- Personal and professional growth over time
- Plans for the future

Findings from this research could help U.S. educators and music educators to better understand Chinese music education graduate students' experiences at different stages. Findings could also provide ideas concerning effective strategies for working with Chinese music education graduate students, which could be especially important for college and university music education faculty. Results from this study will also contribute to the body of knowledge on cross-cultural adaptation and the unique experiences of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States. Specifically, I examined participants' perceptions of (a) their educational experiences (past and present), (b) the challenges they faced, (c) their strategies for success, (d) the benefits they experienced as international graduate students in the United States, (e) the effect of this experience on their thinking, self-perception, and behavior, and (f) how they planned to move forward or move on following this experience. This chapter describes the methodological procedures utilized in this study, including information on the research design, population characteristics, sampling scheme, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

This research study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research provides rich descriptions of participants' experiences related to research questions (Patton, 2002). Researchers can, through first-hand observation and connection, understand how participants derive meaning from their experiences and how this influences their perspectives and behavior. Through qualitative procedures, researchers can interpret and understand the complex reality of a given situation and generate practical implications (Creswell, 2003).

This study is grounded in the theoretical perspective of phenomenology. The phenomenological approach emphasizes the human experiences of participants and how their experiences integrate with their consciousness (Patton, 2002) One assumption of phenomenological inquiry is the importance of understanding "the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of [a] phenomenon for an individual or group of people" (Patton,

2002, p. 104). A second assumption is that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience,” and that “these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” (p. 106). In this study, the examined phenomenon was the experience of native Chinese students in graduate music education degree programs in the United States. Congruent with the assumptions of the phenomenological approach, interviews were utilized as an appropriate means of examining and making meaning of participants’ experiences. The inclusion of myself as researcher in the role of participant-observer (Patton, 2002) was also congruent with the phenomenological approach, in that it allowed me to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible and use the experience I shared with other participants to help uncover the essence, or core meanings, of this phenomenon.

A multiple case study design was utilized in this study. “Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). A case study investigates a phenomenon or phenomena in depth, in a real-life context, especially when the boundaries defining a phenomenon and its context are not clearly distinguishable (Yin, 2009). It utilizes “multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin 2009, p. 18). Multiple case studies involve more than one case. They allow the researcher to gain more insight into the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002), with the collective evidence often considered to be stronger and more convincing, and the overall study regarded as more robust (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). Analysis of multiple case study data involves organizing the data by specific cases. This allows for the in-depth study of each case and cross-comparison to tease out emergent themes and to identify similarities and differences across cases (Patton, 2002). I attempted to gain insight by studying multiple cases of native Chinese graduate students enrolled in master’s- and doctoral-level music

education degree programs in the United States; therefore, this research is considered to be a multiple case study. Though each participant is a native Chinese student enrolled in a music education graduate program in the United States, all come from different backgrounds, have different sets of life experiences and perspectives, and are in different educational situations. These differences necessitate examining the experiences of each participant as a separate case.

Population Characteristics

The number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities surpassed one million for the first time during the 2015-16 academic year to reach a new high of approximately 1,043,839 (Institute of International Education, 2016). Within this group, the largest percentage of students came from China (31.5%; 328,547 students) (Institute of International Education, 2016). Of the Chinese students enrolled in degree programs in the United States, a majority (37.5%) studied at the graduate level (Institute of International Education, 2016). Native Chinese students continue to represent a significant percentage of international students obtaining doctoral degrees each year (Zhang, 2016). Though statistics are available on the overall number of Chinese students enrolled in graduate degree programs in the United States, the number of Chinese students enrolled in graduate level music or music education degree programs is unknown.

Participant Characteristics

The six participants in this study were native Chinese graduate students enrolled at the time of data collection in master's and doctoral level music education degree programs within U.S. higher education institutions. Each participant previously completed an undergraduate degree in music in China. All participants were age 21 or older. All participants had been enrolled in prestigious undergraduate music education programs within music conservatories or

comprehensive universities in China before arrival in the United States. They had also been among the top music education students of these institutions. At the time of data collection, they had been accepted and were progressing through master's or doctoral level music education graduate degree programs at one of six different universities in the United State. All participants met their U.S. university's English entrance requirement and could speak and write in English fluently enough to succeed in their degree program. Two master's participants had applied to U.S. universities immediately after finishing their undergraduate study in music education in China. The third master's participant had taught general music courses full time in an elementary school for one year prior to arrival in the United States. The three master's participants had been in the United States for less than two years at the time of their interviews. One doctoral participant had taught music and music education courses at a university for a few years in China before coming to this country. The two other doctoral participants came to the United States after completing bachelor's degrees in China. During their undergraduate years, they spent approximately two years in preparation for their study abroad, including learning English and searching online and applying for U.S. music education graduate degree programs. The three doctoral participants had been in the United States for less than six years at the time of their interviews.

I was a member of the group of six participants, and I assumed the role of participant-observer (Patton, 2002). Similar to the other participants, I was fully engaged in the experience of being a native Chinese student enrolled in a graduate music education degree program in the United States. I employed the "multiple and overlapping data collection strategies" (p. 265) of participation, while talking with other participants about their experiences (Patton, 2002). As a participant, I wrote answers for both interview and online discussion forum questions. I also

provided my graduate school application personal statement essay. I coded and analyzed this data within the same process used to code and analyze the data of other participants. As the researcher, I also reflected on both the interview data and the interview process to create a set of researcher notes, which were then added to the data set, coded, and analyzed.

Refer to Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of each participant at a glance. To protect participants’ privacy, I identify each by a pseudonym (except for myself). Additionally, the names of participant’s universities and the cities in which they are located are not disclosed.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Hometown Region in China</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Graduate School Location in United States</u>	<u>Year in United States</u>	<u>Music Education Degree Program</u>	<u>Degree Capstone</u>
Lucy	Eastern	25	Northeast	1.5	Master’s	Thesis
Nancy	North	24	Northeast	1.5	Master’s	Thesis
Zoe	North	23	Northeast	0.5	Master’s	Thesis
Coco	Northeast	26	Southeast	3.5	Doctoral	Dissertation
Sherry	Southern	28	Mid-Atlantic	2.5	Doctoral	Dissertation
Kailimi Li	North	28	Northeast	5.5	Doctoral	Dissertation

Sampling Scheme

Sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of qualitative research (Coyne, 1997). Purposeful, homogeneous sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). It is also used when a researcher wishes to gain information about groups who

possess similar characteristics (Patton, 2002). I set the sample size at 6 for this study. The small sample size allowed for in-depth interviews with each participant, in order to learn as much as possible about their unique experiences, answer the research questions, and address the overall purposes of the research (Yin, 2009).

I utilized snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 2002) to recruit study participants. Snowball sampling “is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases” (p. 237). Snowball or chain sampling allows the researcher to identify a study sample through referrals made by key people who know of others who meet the criteria of the study and qualify as research participants (Patton, 2002). The key people I contacted were faculty members from colleges and universities in the United States who potentially could recommend Chinese music education graduate student participants. Immediately after receiving approval from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst Institutional Research Board in November of 2017, I contacted 50 key people in different regions of the United States to ask for recommendations of native Chinese music education graduate students who might be available to participate in this study. I also asked for potential participants’ contact information at that time. Once potential participants were identified, I emailed the approved recruitment letter to each individual. The approved recruitment letter can be found in Appendix A. In this letter, I clearly described the nature and procedures of the study and invited them to participate. I asked them to respond via email and confirm their willingness to participate in the study. Two weeks after the initial interview invitations were sent, potential participants who did not respond to the first invitation were sent a second interview invitation. If they did not respond to the second invitation, no further contact was made. As soon as I received a confirmation email from a potential participant, I responded by emailing an informed consent form and asked them to print,

complete, and return it in hard copy to me via U.S. mail. I scheduled interviews with each participant via email after I received their completed informed consent form.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to address the research questions and purpose of the study optimally, data came from multiple sources and perspectives. Specifically, data sources included participant interviews, online discussion group posts, personal statements from participants' graduate school applications, and research notes.

Interviews

From the period of November 2017, to March 2018, I conducted two individual online interviews with each participant via an online audio chat application, with each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. The two interviews were separated by a period of approximately 3 weeks. All interviews were recorded via the Audacity multi-track audio editor and recorder application (Audacity, 2017) and saved as audio (.mp3) files.

Following an extensive review of relevant scholarly literature, I created separate sets of open-ended questions for each of the two interviews. Interview questions explored participants' perceptions of the following: (a) their overall experiences during their study in the United States, (b) their prior educational experiences in China, (c) their motivations for studying music education in the United States, (d) their preparations for pursuing a music education degree in the United States, (e) the difficulties they faced while transitioning from the Chinese educational environment to a U.S. environment, (f) strategies that helped them to succeed in the United States, (g) benefits that they experienced while attending U.S. higher education institutions, (h) whether and how their ways of thinking and behaving changed as a result of interaction with U.S. culture, and (i) how future Chinese students should be effectively prepared to study music

education at the graduate level in the United States. A complete set of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I used a pre-determined set of open-ended questions, but allowed participants to deviate from these questions in order to discuss anything additional that they believed to be relevant to the study. This provided each interview with a plan to follow while not being rigidly defined (Fylan, 2005), and allowed both the interviewer and the participant the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues in a more natural conversational setting (Galletta, 2012). It was important to honor the participants' experiences; therefore, I used empathetic statements, reflections of feelings, encouragement, restatements, and non-judgmental attitudes in communication with each participant in order to help them feel valued and that their contributions were important (Galletta, 2012).

Interview audio files were uploaded to the password-protected website of a trustworthy professional transcription service for transcription. After the completed transcriptions were returned to me via email, I utilized member checking (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) to ensure the accuracy and completeness of data. In this process, I provided each participant with a copy of their respective interview transcription. At that point, they had the opportunity to add, delete, or change information to more accurately reflect their experiences and perceptions of such. As a result, one doctoral participant added extra information about her current music education doctoral program. One master's participant more fully explained the challenges she faced while studying music education in the United States and offered extra examples. The remaining four participants did not add, delete, or change information. The final version of each transcript was then coded and analyzed.

Online Discussion Group Posts

Utilizing Google Groups, I set up a web forum as a vehicle for asking follow-up questions in addition to those posed in the interviews. I set the forum up as a private group and shared access information only with the participants. I posted two questions after each interview session and participants responded to the questions and to the posts of other participants. Various quotes from these posts are shared in Chapter 4. The online discussion group posts made it simple for me to asynchronously communicate with participants in a format that could be accessed at their convenience, since they were not in the same location or time zone. I assigned each participant a pseudonym to use in the forum, so that each individual could remain anonymous while communicating with other participants. Online discussion group questions can be found in Appendix C.

Personal Statements

I asked each participant to provide their personal statement essay from their graduate school application. These essays provided additional information about participants and helped me better understand their unique personal histories, philosophies, and long- and short-term goals. Quotes from these essays can be found in Chapter 4.

Field Notes

Field notes can help researchers to better understand the phenomenon of interest, participants' experiences, and the context of the study (Groenewald, 2004); thus, I chose to make field notes throughout the interview process. These included reflections on participants' comments, as well as reflections on the broader experience of data collection. The purpose of these notes was to record what I heard, saw, experienced, and thought during the process of collecting data and in reflecting on the data collection process later on (Groenewald, 2004). My

notes included the following types of information: (a) major topics or themes discussed by participants, (b) further questions arising from these discussions, and (c) my thoughts on how interviews related to each other. This information included reflections, comments, and ideas about the study. My notes were organized by date, so that I could later correlate them with the data and easily and thoroughly reflect on what happened during each interview. They helped me to further understand participants' overall experience in the United States and led to topics to discuss later on, via a subsequent interview or the online discussion forum. The field notes served as one of multiple sources of evidence, which when combined, allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge of the participants, phenomenon, and the process of the study (Maxwell, 1996).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Constant comparison is a qualitative data analysis process whereby each emergent finding and/or interpretation is compared with existing findings and interpretations (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004). This method serves as a tool for developing classifications of phenomena and for establishing whether phenomena that emerge individually or at different times within a research study can be explained by the same cause. The constant comparison method also provides an analytical framework for examining differences across phenomena (Ragin, 2014).

According to Saldaña (2016), researchers should classify data by taking the text or qualitative information apart to look for categories, commonalities, differences, and themes. This process is referred to as coding. In this study, I utilized three types of data coding within three stages: descriptive coding (Stage 1), in vivo coding (Stage 2), and magnitude coding (Stage 3) to identify emergent themes. I created broad categories by which data could be grouped, labeled

and organized data by codes and subcodes, counted the frequency of utilization of each code and subcode, then identified emergent themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005).

Stage 1: Descriptive Coding

In the first stage, I utilized descriptive coding and subcoding to organize the data into categories and identify emergent themes. I began by coding the data into categories that related to the interview questions; however, at the same time, I remained open to letting new categories emerge. Descriptive coding “summarizes in a word or a short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 88). Meanwhile, subcoding involves using second-order tags assigned after a primary code to detail or elaborate on the entry, depending on the volume of data or the specificity one may need for categorization and data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2016). Within the coding process, the most general code is called the “parent” while its subcodes are the “children.” Subcodes that share the same parents are “siblings” in a code hierarchy (Gibbs, 2007, p. 74).

In order to ensure the reliability of the codes, I asked another music education researcher to code a portion of the data near the beginning of the data analysis phase. The codes of that researcher and myself then were compared to determine similarities and differences. As a result, that researcher recommended that an initial category, “Strategies for success” be regarded as a component of the “Suggestions” category; that “Professional goal,” be regarded as a component of the “Professional career goal” category; and that “Prior educational experience,” be regarded as a component of the “Music education characteristics” category. I accepted these recommendations and made the appropriate changes to the code hierarchy.

Stage 2: In Vivo Coding

In the second stage, I used in vivo coding. This form of coding can be especially helpful when researchers interact with participants from a particular culture or microculture to help highlight how those participants use specific words or phrases in their interactions that might not otherwise be understood when using other forms of coding (Manning, 2017), in which codes represent inferred meanings derived from comments that were not conveyed in standard English (Saldaña, 2016). It means that these participants may not have been able to express in English exactly what they were thinking. It was an appropriate way to honor participants' voices in the study and deepen "understanding of their cultures and worldviews" (p. 106). This type of coding also helps to circumvent language barriers because participants may not have been able to express in English exactly what they were thinking during the interviews. From an emic (insider) perspective (Patton, 2002), I realized what participants were trying to say and then coded accordingly for meaning.

Stage 3: Magnitude Coding

In the third stage, I utilized magnitude coding to identify the frequency of the code as well as evaluate the intensity of the content (Saldaña, 2016). I first counted the frequency of occurrence of each code. The higher the frequency of occurrence of a code, the more importance it was interpreted as having; lower frequencies of occurrence were interpreted as having less importance. For example, if the frequency of a code was six, I regarded it as potentially important, because the total number of participants was six. A determination of the number of times the idea was stated by each participant was helpful at that point to shed further light on the importance of the code (as is discussed further in Chapter 4). The second part of the magnitude coding process was to examine the intensity or emphasis with which each coded datum was

stated or presented in writing. In this process, I examined the *level of intensity* with which each datum was shared. If a datum was communicated with a high level of intensity (positive or negative), I regarded it as potentially important and denoted it with a hashtag before the frequency count digit of the respective participant.

Data Analysis Software Application

During the thematic coding process, I utilized the NVivo qualitative data analysis software application (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2015) (not to be confused with the in vivo coding process) to develop a code key (hierarchy of code categories) through which I could determine relationships among the data. First, I created a new NVivo project and imported all data files into the NVivo application. I then reviewed each data file and simultaneously used the NVivo application to create broad code categories, referred to as *nodes* in NVivo. I cut and pasted corresponding text from the data files under these nodes, creating multiple subcodes (*subnodes*) under each node that were linked directly to the corresponding datum chunk. This allowed me to organize the data into clear hierarchies from broad to narrow concepts. This was helpful in identifying emergent themes. Once all files were coded, I reflected on the coded data and its categories to look for similarities and differences across the data set and identified emergent themes. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

I also utilized two different tools within the NVivo application that were specifically designed to aid in data visualization. The hierarchy chart tool allowed me to examine the distribution of data by nodes or sources within tree map or sunburst displays and in summary form. The query tool allowed me to run a word frequency count to identify the most-used words in the data set and view them in word cloud or summary format. Both of these tools helped emergent themes to become more apparent and easily identifiable.

Legitimation

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the research and reducing bias are important considerations in any type of research project. In this study, member checking (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), identification of personal biases prior to creation of categories (Onwuegbuzie, 2003), and consistent re-examination of the purpose of the study were utilized to ensure the reliability of the findings and also ensure that findings added to the general body of knowledge of the topic, rather than attempting to generalize findings to the population (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003).

Ethical Nature of Data Collection

All data collection was completed according to University of Massachusetts Institutional Research Board (IRB) guidelines. Data collection was only performed with written, informed consent of the participants. No deception was used. No participant was subjected to physical or mental discomfort or harm while participating in the study. No participant was subjected to danger while participating in this study. Participants had opportunities to ask questions about the study, and they were informed that they had the right to decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Participants' confidentiality was protected throughout the research project and continues to be protected.

I was the sole collector of data. My research qualifications include successful completion of doctoral level courses in statistical analysis and music education research.

All digital files related to this study were password protected and stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. I am the only person with access to this office. Persons other than me who had access to collected data were my doctoral committee chair, a professional music educator and researcher who re-coded a portion of the data, and a professional who was

employed to transcribe interviews. After six years, I will permanently delete all files from this research study. In any report of this research, participants will be referred to by pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present analyses of the data collected from interviews, an online discussion forum, participants' personal statements, and research notes. I also discuss the rationale for selection of participants, along with an analysis of similarities and differences among participants. Finally, I identify, analyze, and discuss emergent themes, and conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Participants

A total of six participants were involved in this study, including myself in the role of participant-observer (Patton, 2002). Each participant was regarded as a separate case within a multiple case study research design. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I utilized snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) to recruit all study participants except for myself. As I stated in Chapter 3, participants were similar in that they had gained a solid music education foundation in China, and all had had private piano or voice lessons since kindergarten age. Their initial goal in studying music education in the United States was to become more professional in the field and to form connections in music education between the United States and China. In addition, participants were diverse in several aspects, such as professional connections, values, and professional career goals. For example, the doctoral student participants had attended several conferences and made professional connections via those, while the master's students had not done so. One participant was a strong advocate for feminist and LGBT issues, another focused on enjoyment of the U.S. lifestyle, while others were more focused on music education issues. Additionally, master's students were less focused than doctoral participants concerning career goals. Furthermore, participants had studied in different U.S. universities for different lengths of

time and had different personalities and different ways of dealing with people and situations. They also exhibited different strategies for adjustment to the United States.

As was also mentioned previously, I was involved in this research in the role of participant-observer. According to Patton (2002), participant observation aims to produce knowledge both in and through interactions between people. During interviews with the five other participants, my role as a participant-observer helped to define me as both an insider and an outsider, i.e., as having both an emic and etic perspective (Patton, 2002). I had spent the past five years studying music education at two U.S. universities as a graduate student from China. As an insider (emic perspective), I shared with participants the experience of matriculating into a U.S. music education graduate program and a new academic environment while adjusting to the U.S. lifestyle and its sociocultural challenges. Despite these experiences, I was also an outsider (etic perspective). My experiences were not identical to those of the participants, and as the researcher, I tried to maintain the distance necessary for objectivity. However, my experiences helped me to access their worlds, and also shaped the lens I utilized in interpreting the study's findings.

Lucy

At the time of the interviews, Lucy was in her second year of a music education master's degree program. Her university was located in the northeastern United States. Lucy was born and grew up in eastern China. When she was a child, she studied piano privately, building a strong music foundation. Lucy decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in music upon graduation from high school and enrolled in a Chinese comprehensive university as an undergraduate music education major. Her university offered many cultural and educational exchange programs, taught completely in English by U.S. professors. These programs offered opportunities to gain

knowledge about music education in U.S. institutions. Lucy also had opportunities to serve as a translator for masterclasses, concerts, and music lectures in her university. After graduation and before she came to the United States, she taught elementary general music courses full time for one year in a Chinese K–12 school. While in the United States, Lucy had many K-12 teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and in the community, which enriched her career path toward working with children in the field of music education. She was working toward the long-term goal of teaching music to K–12 students in China.

Nancy

At the time of the interviews, Nancy was in her second year of a music education master's degree program. Like Lucy, her university was located in the northeastern United States. Her hometown was located in a city of historical importance in northern China. Her undergraduate school, located in her hometown, was one of the top music conservatories in China. Nancy began to study piano and voice privately as a child, under the tutelage of several renowned piano and voice professors.

Nancy became interested in Western music education practice through her interactions with visiting U.S. music professors in her undergraduate institution. She ultimately decided to pursue a graduate degree in the United States. Nancy had travelled to many different cities during her undergraduate years in China, but she had never travelled overseas. She wanted to experience a different life in a Western country. At the time of this study, Nancy was writing her master's degree thesis, which compared music education curricula in the United States and China. Her goal was to apply what she learned in the United States to teaching general music and voice to high school students in China.

Zoe

At the time of the interviews, Zoe was in her first year of graduate study within a master's degree program in music education. Like Lucy and Nancy, her school was located in the northeastern United States. Her hometown was in a southwestern province of China. Her mother was a dance instructor; consequently, Zoe began dancing at very young age. She also began private piano study around the age of five, when she was in kindergarten. She regularly performed publicly as a dancer and pianist during her teenage years in China. Zoe decided to pursue a bachelor's degree upon graduation from high school and was admitted to study music education in one of the top music conservatories of China. Because music education degree programs in China differ from those in the United States in that they focus primarily on piano and vocal performance, Zoe's next objective was to earn a graduate degree in music education in the United States, with the goal of learning more about music education pedagogical practices in a Western country. In the junior year of her undergraduate degree program, Zoe concurrently enrolled in an English language school, which she attended on weekends, to prepare for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Although she scored highly on this test, Zoe still encountered language barriers later on in communicating with native English speakers in the United States. Zoe also completed her degree program's required early field experience in an elementary school music classroom during one semester of her senior year of undergraduate school. During this teaching experience, she prepared teaching demonstration videos for her graduate school application. In the interviews for this research study, Zoe mentioned that she was considering pursuing a doctoral degree in music education and that her long-term goal was to teach music education at the collegiate level in China.

Coco

At the time of the interviews Coco was in her first year of study within a music education doctoral program in the United States. Her university was located in southeastern United States. Prior to this graduate program, she had taken an English preparation course in a university-based language school on the west coast of United States for one semester. This course was for international undergraduate and graduate students preparing to enter a college or university in the United States. The curriculum was designed to improve understanding of English usage through writing, listening, and reading. One semester later, Coco was admitted into a graduate music education degree program in the United States. She completed a master's degree in music education and immediately entered a music education doctoral program in the United States.

Coco's hometown was located in the northeast region of China and is a popular tourist destination. Coco began to study piano when she was in kindergarten and concurrently took English language classes. In high school, she decided to pursue a music education career. Later, she was also encouraged to do so by her Chinese professors and prepared for studying in the United States. Coco believed that her outgoing personality made her a good fit for U.S.-style courses and extracurricular activities. Her short-term goal was to gain some teaching experience in the United States. Her long-term goal was to teach music education in a college or university in China.

Sherry

At the time of the interviews Sherry was in the first year of a music education doctoral degree program. Her university was located in Mid-Atlantic region of United States. Sherry was born and raised in Southern China. Her parents provided her with private piano lessons and many music activities outside school. After earning a bachelor's degree in music education, Sherry

studied abroad for one year in the United Kingdom, earning a master's degree in arts management. After graduating with her master's degree, she taught for approximately two years in a Chinese university in her hometown. At that university, she taught undergraduate-level group piano classes, an introductory music education course, and conducted research in collaboration with her music education colleagues.

In order to achieve a promotion at this Chinese university, Sherry applied for a master's degree program in music education in the United States. During her master's study, she conducted several research studies and presented her findings at major music education conferences in the United States. Upon graduation, she enrolled in a music education doctoral degree program in the United States. Her goal was to conduct as much music education research as she could while in this country. After finishing her doctoral degree, she planned to return to work at the same university in China.

Kailimi (Shelley) Li (Researcher)

At the time of data collection, I was in the fourth year of a music education doctoral program in the United States. My university, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, was located in the northeastern United States. I grew up in a city in an eastern province in China. My music education was influenced by my mother, who was a teacher of early childhood education. At age 17, I left home for the first time to attend a boarding high school, after which I attended a music conservatory in China where I spent four years in undergraduate music education study. During that time, my relatives in the United States travelled back to China to visit my family and shared their experiences with me. Subsequently, I decided to study abroad in the United States and explore the outside world.

I came to the United States in 2012, when I matriculated into a music education master's degree program at a university in the Northeastern United States. Soon after I arrived, I was overwhelmed by academic pressures and the stressful life in the United States. Similar to study participants, I went through challenging times as I began my study, trying to balance coursework and research assignments. In my second year, I decided to apply for a U.S. music education doctoral degree program.

The U.S. study abroad experience helped me to grow up. My life in the United States became more stable and organized as I learned to manage my time better, with the help of a schedule planner. I also began to find more balance in life by attempting to keep my academic work to weekdays and enjoy the weekends. My goal for the future is to teach music education at the university level. Recently, I had the opportunity to work in a university career center in the United States.

Thematic Coding

Thematic coding is an analysis method for qualitative research studies which involves identifying and labeling passages of text that are linked by a common idea, allowing researchers to index the text into categories and then establish a framework or hierarchy of thematic ideas (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Saldaña (2016):

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. ... A code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or translates data ... and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes. Just as a title

represents and captures a book, film, or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence (p. 4).

I utilized thematic coding in the data analysis process for this research study. I began the analysis process by organizing data into the same categories as I had used to organize interview questions: (a) Benefits, (b) Challenges, (c) Education System Differences, (d) First Class in the United States, (e) First Day in the United States, (f) Interactions, (g) Leisure time activities, (h) Music Education Characteristics, (i) Motivation, (j) Professional Career Goals, (k) Suggestions, and (l) Transformation. These categories were developed from the scholarly literature I reviewed prior to the commencement of this study. I hoped to control for researcher bias by integrating the framework of the study into the analysis, yet still allowing new categories and sub-categories to emerge within this framework.

I developed and utilized a code key (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2010) throughout the three-stage coding process. A code key is a hierarchical set of codes that serves as a guide in data analysis (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2010). The code key helped me to organize data for the purpose of determining commonalities and emergent themes, and also simplified the process of revision as I gained clearer insights about the data.

As was discussed in Chapter 3, I utilized descriptive coding in Stage 1, in vivo coding in Stage 2, and magnitude coding in Stage 3 (Saldaña, 2016). Also discussed in Chapter 3, I used the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) throughout this process to review and revise the code key as appropriate, until I believed that potential categories, codes, and subcodes had been exhausted and further analysis did not provide new information or insights. Concurrent with the coding process and also to help determine magnitude, I maintained a count of the frequency of occurrence of each code (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005). The frequency of

occurrence of each code was tallied both for individual participants and overall categories. A code with a high frequency of occurrence was cautiously viewed as being important; however, magnitude was also taken into account. Concurrent with this process, I utilized the NVivo tree map and word frequency count tools to create visual displays of the data and look for additional emergent themes. Results of these processes supported the themes I had already identified through coding.

Table 2 presents the complete code key utilized in this research study and represents all three stages of coding. It includes each code with its frequency of occurrence. Codes are represented in alphabetical order on the left. The frequency count for each code is found at the right of the code and consists of seven digits. The first six digits represent the frequency of occurrence of the respective code for each participant. Each digit represents the response of an individual interviewee, occurring in the following order: (a) digit 1: Lucy, (b) digit 2: Nancy, (c) digit 3: Zoe, (d) digit 4: Coco, (e) digit 5: Sherry, and (f) digit 6: Kailimi Li (researcher). The seventh digit (in bold type) represents the total frequency of occurrence of the respective coded theme across all participants. Additionally, category totals are represented in bold font.

Descriptive codes are represented in standard text without the use of special characters other than a colon. The code “Professional Career Goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: High school music teacher” is an example of descriptive coding. The descriptive coding summarizes in a word or noun the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016). The passage that prompted this code (from Nancy) was as follows:

I am studying in music education and I am also majoring in vocal performance track. Also, I learned voice for many years. I want to be a senior high school music teacher. I think it is easy for me to communicate with older students From this year, I learned

lots of teaching methods and pedagogies about how to teach high level students. I am good at these things. So, I want to be a senior high school teacher. (Nancy, Interview 2). Thus, I concluded that her career goal is to be a senior high school music teacher and created the descriptive code listed above.

The code “Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: The U.S. life style” (frequency count: 0/0/0/0/“1”/0/1) is an example of in vivo coding. During Sherry’s second interview, she shared, “Some of the acculturation like lifestyle . . . when I speak with some of my friends, I will use some English word to my friend. I don’t know how to translate that vocabulary into Chinese.” In this instance, the language barrier kept Sherry’s true meaning from coming through; however, I knew that Sherry meant to say that after staying in the United States for a while, Sherry assumed some American characterizes and behaviors; for example, she used body language when talking with people. In modern U.S. families, as children grow older they become more independent. When Sherry talked with her parents, it became more like talking with friends. The quotation marks around the frequency count digit for Sherry (digit 5 in the frequency count 0/0/0/0/“1”/0/1) signify that it is an in vivo code, meaning that I coded the *meaning* of Sherry’s comment rather than what her actual words conveyed.

Magnitude coding was utilized to denote intensity of response. In the frequency counts within the code key, magnitude codes are marked for respective participants via use of the special character of hashtag (“#”). The inclusion of this character signifies a high level of intensity (positive or negative) in an individual participant’s response. An example of magnitude coding can be found within the code “Challenges: Academic: Academic writing” which had a frequency count of “1/0/0/7/#2/#1/11” The code represented the answers of Lucy (digit 1), Coco (digit 4), Sherry (digit 5), and me (researcher, digit 6), who shared their academic writing

challenges while studying in the United States. The two hashtags (“#”) indicated that both Sherry and I strongly emphasized this challenge, speaking with great intensity.

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count

Code	Frequency
Benefits (total)	12/9/14/8/13/10/66
Benefits: Conference experience	0/0/0/1/1/1/3
Benefits: Conference experience: ISME	0/0/0/0/0/1/1
Benefits: Conference experience: State music educator conference	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Benefits: Conference experience: Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium	0/0/0/0/1/1/2
Benefits: Good library system	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Benefits: Grew up: Became more independent	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to cook	0/1/1/1/0/0/3
Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to furnish an apartment	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Benefits: Learned more about music education	1/2/4/1/#3/1/12
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: K-12 music education experience	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: New teaching strategies	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: Work with disabled students	1/0/1/0/1/0/3
Benefits: Mentorship of professors	3/0/0/0/0/1/4
Benefits: Music performance experience	1/1/0/0/0/1/3

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Benefits: Music performance experience: Marching band	0/0/0/0/1/0/1
Benefits: Research experience	2/0/2/1/2/1/8
Benefits: U.S. travel experience	1/1/0/0/1/0/3
Challenges (total)	27/25/24/36/42/11/165
Challenges: Academic: Academic writing	1/0/0/7/#2/#1/11
Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions	1/1/1/2/4/0/9
Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions: Lack of teaching experience	1/1/1/1/0/0/4
Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions: Lack of teaching experience: Work issue of limited access to education employment opportunity (visa-employment issue)	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Challenges: Academic: Gap with peers	0/0/0/0/3/0/3
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier	3/1/3/3/8/1/19
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Correct Expression takes time	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Limited participation in class discussions	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: TOEFL	1/0/1/0/0/0/2
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Vocabulary	1/1/2/2/2/1/9
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation	0/3/0/2/0/0/5
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Knowledge of music education practices	0/1/1/0/1/1/4

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Music content knowledge	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Challenges: Academic: Higher program standard	0/0/0/#2/2/0/4
Challenges: Academic: U.S. classroom culture	1/1/1/0/0/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: American food	1/2/0/1/0/0/4
Challenges: Sociocultural: Culture shock	1/0/1/1/0/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture	2/5/0/1/5/1/14
Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Classroom culture: Enjoy the challenge	1/0/1/0/1/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Learn from/imitate the natives	1/0/0/1/1/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Correct expression takes time	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier	6/3/4/3/6/1/23
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Day-to-day English	2/1/1/1/2/1/8
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Vocabulary	1/1/2/2/2/1/9
Challenges: Sociocultural: Transportation system	0/0/1/3/0/0/4
Education System Differences (total)	13/10/5/11/8/6/53
Education System Differences: China: Large class size	0/0/0/1/0/0/1

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Education System Differences: China: Limited discussion with professors after class	2/1/1/0/0/0/4
Education System Differences: China: “No online learning experience”	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Education System Differences: China: Teacher-directed instruction	4/2/1/2/3/1/13
Education System Differences: China: Teaching to the test	1/0/0/0/0/1/2
Education System Differences: United States: Classroom size and small course enrollment	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Education System Differences: United States: Differentiated course assignments	0/2/0/0/0/1/3
Education System Differences: United States: Online learning experience	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Education System Differences: United States: Student-directed instruction	4/3/1/3/3/1/15
Education System Differences: United States: Student-directed instruction: Collaborative	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Education System Differences: United States: Student-directed instruction: Collaborative: Group discussion	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
First Class in the United States (total)	0/2/2/2/2/1/9
First Class in the United States: Exciting	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
First Class in the United States: Diversity and multicultural	0/0/0/0/1/0/1
First Class in the United States: Felt isolated	0/“1”/1/1/0/0/3
First Class in the United States: Felt lost	0/1/0/1/1/1/4
First Day in the United States (total)	2/0/1/4/0/2/9

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
First Day in the United States: Curious about the surroundings (food, transportation, architecture)	1/0/0/2/0/0/3
First Day in the United States: Felt lonely	0/0/1/1/0/1/3
First Day in the United States: Very different from China	1/0/0/1/0/1/3
Interaction (frequency total)	12/6/7/11/11/6/53
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers	1/1/0/0/2/1/5
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Respect	0/0/1/1/0/0/2
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Culture gap	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Gap with peers	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors	5/1/1/5/3/1/16
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Felt warm	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: May not understand Chinese culture	0/1/0/0/1/1/3
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Respect	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Understand	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Culture gap	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Leisure time activities (frequency total)	4/2/6/2/3/3/20
Leisure time activities: Bar	0/0/0/1/1/0/2
Leisure time activities: Concerts, shows	1/1/1/0/0/0/3
Leisure time activities: Hang out with friends	1/0/“3”/0/0/1/5
Leisure time activities: Homework	1/0/1/1/0/1/4
Leisure time activities: Relax at home	0/0/1/0/1/0/2

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Leisure time activities: Some parties	1/1/0/0/1/1/4
Motivation (frequency total)	14/7/4/10/5/6/46
Motivation: Family Influence	0/1/1/1/1/1/5
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors	3/2/0/0/0/1/6
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: K-12 music education presentation	#2/0/0/0/0/0/2
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: Piano master class	1/1/0/0/0/1/3
Motivation: Perception of goodness of fit for U.S. society	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Motivation: Perception of goodness of fit for U.S. society: Open minded	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors	0/0/1/1/0/0/2
Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors: Professors studied music education in the United States	1/0/0/1/0/0/2
Motivation: Intrinsically motivated	1/1/0/1/0/1/4
Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation	3/1/1/2/2/1/10
Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation: Conduct more music education research	3/1/1/2/2/1/10
Music education characteristics (frequency total)	24/14/11/20/28/12/109
Music education characteristics: China: Applied piano study	0/1/1/0/2/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Applied piano Study: Piano techniques	0/1/1/1/1/1/5

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Music education characteristics: China: Applied vocal study	0/2/0/0/0/2/4
Music education characteristics: China: Less focus on education, more focus on performance	6/0/0/4/5/0/15
Music education characteristics: China: Limited course choice	2/0/0/1/1/0/4
Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources	3/2/2/2/3/1/13
Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources Less attention to music as a subject	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited interactions with students	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Limited early field/ student teaching experiences	0/1/1/0/2/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Limited research in the field	1/0/0/0/1/0/2
Music education characteristics: China: Limited teaching experience with students with disabilities	0/0/0/0/3/0/3
Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited to singing classes	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Music Technology (Composition) course	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Music education characteristics: China: Positive improvement	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Music education characteristics: China: Positive improvement: Availability of different teaching methods	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Music education characteristics: United States: Composing and improvising experience	1/0/0/0/0/0/1

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Doctoral seminar course	1/0/0/1/2/0/4
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching Many music education course choices: History and psychology of music education	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Sociology and psychology of music education	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Statistics course	0/0/0/1/1/0/2
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Volunteer teaching experience	0/0/0/0/0/1/1
Music education characteristics: United States: Group projects	1/1/0/0/0/0/2
Music education characteristics: United States: Research experience	1/0/1/1/1/1/5
Professional career goal (total)	6/3/4/4/3/3/23
Professional career goal: Long term plan:	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Early childhood music teacher	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: High school music teacher	1/1/0/0/0/0/2
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Special education music teacher	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Teaching in a college	0/0/0/1/1/1/3

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Professional career goal: Short term plan	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Professional career goal: Short term plan: Gain music education teaching experience in the United States	1/0/1/1/0/0/3
Professional career goal: Short term plan: Obtain a doctoral degree	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Suggestions (frequency total)	9/14/13/9/9/7/61
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Be confident and brave	1/1/0/0/1/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Be independent	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Create unique personal statement and CV	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For Chinese students Demonstrate well-roundedness: Participate in various activities	0/0/“1”/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Learn English	1/1/1/2/3/#1/9
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Make study abroad plans earlier	0/0/1/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Gain teaching experience	0/0/0/1/2/1/4
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Seek help from career center	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Understand the U.S. classroom culture	1/1/0/1/2/1/6
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation	0/2/1/0/0/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in short term cultural exchange program	0/2/1/0/0/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in various musical activities	0/2/1/0/0/0/3

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Suggestions: For U.S. professors: Culturally responsive teaching	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For U.S. professors: Teach more world music education strategies, resources	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience	0/1/0/1/1/1/4
Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience: K-12 music classroom observations	1/1/1/0/0/1/4
Suggestions: For university and departments: Music education exchange programs	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience: K-12 music classroom observations	1/1/1/0/0/1/4
Suggestions: For university and departments: U.S. culture class or seminar	1/0/2/2/0/1/6
Suggestions: For university and departments: Workshop for job hunting	0/1/0/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For university and departments: World music learning experience	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Suggestions: For university and departments: Writing center	0/1/0/0/0/0/1
Transformation (frequency total)	4/2/1/4/5/3/19
Transformation: Before coming to the United States: Western culture as advanced culture	1/0/0/0/0/1/2
Transformation: Before coming to the United States: Cultural misunderstanding about U.S. education	0/1/0/0/1/0/2
Transformation: While in the United States: Maintained Chinese cultural identity	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Transformation: While in the United States: Enjoy freedom in classroom settings	1/0/1/0/1/0/3

Table 2: Code Key with Frequency Count (Continued)

Code	Frequency
Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: Academic: Develop a philosophy of music education	0/0/0/1/1/1/3
Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: Academic: “Prefer completing project step by step”	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: Become feminist	1/0/0/0/0/0/1
Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: Schedules (in general)	0/0/0/1/0/0/1
Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: The U.S. lifestyle	0/0/0/0/“1”/0/1

Commonalities and Themes

From multiple reviews of the full coded data set, commonalities and relationships among participants became apparent and are discussed here. A code/commonality with a frequency count greater than six was cautiously considered to be a theme; however, the classification of a commonality as a theme could also be affected by intensity of response. In other words, codes/commonalities with frequency counts lower than six could be considered to be themes if participants’ responses were shared with intensity. Differences among participants were also discovered, although these were considerably fewer in number than commonalities. In addition, several solo statements emerged. For the purposes of this study, a datum was regarded as a solo statement if it appeared only once. Differences among participants and solo statements are both discussed near the end of the chapter. However, I found that the commonalities provided the

most pertinent information about Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States.

Table 3 presents at a glance the code categories with the total frequency of codes and number of commonalities per category. It is notable that the highest numbers of commonalities were found in the categories of Challenges, Music Education Characteristics, Benefits, Suggestions, Interaction, and Motivation. These are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. The category of Challenges had 11 themes and 13 non-theme commonalities, which is the most of any code category. Six interview questions were asked in this category. This indicated that the challenges they faced stood out overall among these participants. It was perhaps the broadest and most extensive aspect of their experience in the United States.

Table 3: Code Key Categories with Theme, Non-theme Commonality, and Frequency Totals

Category	Theme Total	Non-theme Commonality Total	Frequency Total
Benefits	5	8	66
Challenges	11	13	165
Education System Differences	4	3	53
First Class in the United States	0	2	9
First Day in the United States	0	3	9
Interaction	4	5	53
Leisure Time Activities	0	6	20
Motivation	3	6	46
Music Education Characteristics	4	16	109
Professional Career Goal	2	3	23

Suggestions	3	8	61
Transformation	0	5	19

The category of Music Education Characteristics had 4 themes and 16 non-theme commonalities, which is the second-highest number of commonalities per category. There were eight questions in the interview guide related to the Music Education Characteristics category. This indicated that Music Education Characteristics was also an important aspect of participants' experience, both in China and in the United States. Categories having the fewest themes and commonalities and interview questions were First Day in the United States. (0 themes and 3 non-theme commonalities, 2 interview questions), and First Class in the United States. (0 themes and 2 non-theme commonalities, 2 interview questions). This indicated that participants' experiences on their first day and in their first class in the United States were likely only marginally similar.

The most frequently-cited themes overall were “Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier” ($n = 23$) and “Challenges: Academic: Language barrier” ($n = 19$). The frequency of occurrence of these codes clearly shows that participants faced substantial language obstacles while studying within U.S. music education graduate programs. The language problem interfered with their communication and understanding, both academically and socially. When participants arrived in the United States, they immediately found that their English ability was not developed enough for them to appropriately use the language in speaking and writing. They had to switch back-and-forth from their native language to a new language, further complicating their learning, thinking, interaction, and participation within their music education programs.

The following sections discuss emergent themes and other commonalities by code category. Passages from interviews, the online discussion forum, and research notes are included to support and further illustrate findings.

Benefits

I benefitted very much from my advisor. Her guidance was far better than what other advisors could have given me. For example, she offered me a teaching assistantship opportunity within my degree program, which was very helpful to me in terms of exploring U.S. graduate-level music education practices and developing my music education research agenda. Under her guidance, I had some opportunities to present my music education research posters and workshops at prestigious conferences. I also learned to present myself with more confidence in the workplace. On the other hand, I had benefitted tremendously from the teaching experience in a U.S. university, which increased my professional competence. In addition, I have taken different music education courses, such as Curriculum in Music Education, Introduction to Music Education Research, the Psychology and Sociology of Music education and the Philosophy of Music Education. In these courses, I learned best practices about music education in the United States. I became acquainted with a variety of music education knowledge in different fields. (Researcher Notes, February, 2018)

In this study, five themes emerged within the Benefits category. The prompt was the research question, “What benefits do Chinese music education graduate students experience while attending U.S. higher education institutions?” The theme of “Learned more about music education” (“Benefits: Learned more about music education,” $n = 12$) and closely-related themes specifically focusing on best practices (“Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices,” $n = 6$), K-12 music education experience (“Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: K-12 music education experience,” $n = 6$), and new teaching strategies (“Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: New teaching strategies,” $n = 6$) stood out sharply because they were mentioned by every participant. In addition to having the

highest frequency count of any commonality on this category, “Learned more about music education” was also emphasized with intensity by one participant, which strengthened it as a theme. “Research Experience” (“Benefits: Research experience,” $n = 8$) also emerged as a theme within the Benefits category. Related to these themes, participants believed that they had benefitted from many different types of music education learning opportunities in the United States. These learning opportunities also motivated them to continue working hard in their music education degree programs in the United States.

Table 4 lists commonalities by order of frequency of occurrence within the Benefits category. Intensity is denoted via use of a hashtag (“#”). Commonalities are on the left with the frequency count for each on the right. An asterisk (“*”) denotes a commonality considered to be a theme.

Table 4: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Benefits

Code	Frequency
Benefits: Learned more about music education*	4/2/1/1/#3/1/12
Benefits: Research experience*	2/0/2/2/1/1/8
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: K-12 music education experience*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: New teaching strategies*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Benefits: Mentorship of professors	0/0/3/0/0/1/4
Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to cook	1/1/0/0/1/0/3
Benefits: Conference experience	0/0/0/1/1/1/3
Benefits: Learned more about music education:	

Best practices: Work with disabled students	1/0/1/1/0/0/3
Benefits: Music performance experience	0/1/1/0/0/1/3
Benefits: U.S. travel experience	0/1/1/1/0/0/3
Benefits: Conference experience: Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium	0/0/0/0/1/1/2
Benefits: Grew up: Became more independent	1/1/0/0/0/0/2

Learned About More Music Education

The theme with the highest frequency count (n = 12) in the Benefits category was “Benefits: Learned more about music education.” Each participant described how their knowledge of music education had increased substantially within their U.S. degree program. Specifically, they gained knowledge of best practices in music education, including new instructional strategies. They appreciated the opportunity to complete field experience in K-12 music education classrooms, including working with differently-abled students. Coco very emphatically stated that increased knowledge of music education practice was the most important and valuable thing she learned while studying in the United States. She described how an opportunity to work with students who had disabilities, within a music camp setting, benefitted students and teacher alike:

I served as a mentor for individuals with cognitive disabilities. At the [music] studio, campers learned how to set up equipment and even got an opportunity to record their favorite songs. My passion for teaching brought out the best in the campers and their enthusiasm and love for music brought out the best in me. As a music education student in China, I had limited opportunities to engage with individuals with disabilities. (Coco, Personal statement)

Zoe's comments supported Coco's point. She described one of the classes she observed as valuable because it was the first time she had had the opportunity to observe K-12 general music classes for disabled students:

Last semester, I observed some lessons in ... a community school. The students have vision problem or they lost their vision. It is a special music school. I learned many accommodations that teachers can apply. For example, ... the teacher will count at the same time and combined with direction and rhymes, many elements happened at the same time. It is very helpful for students to understand because they have to receive so much information, so much directions. At the same time, the teacher combined so much elements and directions for students to learn. (Zoe, Interview 1)

Sherry described a music learning experience that stood out for her within a class that utilized innovative techniques:

I attend the ukulele joint section when I was a master student, which was offered by my master's degree thesis advisor. I think it is very interested. She combined many music aspects into it, like music technology. She made the all the video about how to play the ukulele. (Sherry, Interview 2)

Sherry meant to say that in the ukulele class, the professor combined technology and music to make the musical learning truly unique and fun. She would like to utilize music technology in her future music lessons.

Lucy appreciated the opportunity to watch her music education professor model effective teaching strategies in a lab setting within her early childhood music course, and learned new strategies for teaching young children:

In the musical development of young children. Young children come to our classroom. So, we observed how about professors teach them. Then, we also get the chance to teach them. We had one semester observation about how professor and other classmates' teaching and we developed our own teaching. It's very straightforward experience about how to teach music to these ages of students. It gives your direct experience about how to teach young children. It's like to dig your interests both as a student and teacher. It questions you to connect to your career and your thinking way of music education. (Lucy, Interview 2)

In Lucy's course, classroom observations and field experience were also common occurrences. Through these observation experiences, the role and practices of U.S. music teachers shaped Lucy's own role as a pre-service music teacher.

Research Experience

The second most frequently-occurring theme in the "Benefits" category was "Research experience" ($n = 8$). Five of six participants reported that they learned a great deal about how to conduct music education research in the United States. All stated that it was the first time they had studied music education research. Lucy described one of her music education classes in the first semester of her master's degree program as pivotal because it was the first time she had access to the music education research field: "I took one research course last semester; it really helps me to start to do my own research because I only have little bit knowledge about the research before" (Interview 2). Zoe also took a music education research class in the first semester of her master's degree program. She very much enjoyed discussing different research topics with her advisors and classmates within a friendly classroom environment in the United States:

And the research class is also very helpful. When talked about music education research topic, each music educators can share opinions with each other at the same time. It is a free environment, not very formal, we can share a lot and we will consider about others.

(Zoe, Interview 2)

Sherry gained much knowledge about research within her doctoral program in the United States and then had opportunities to present her research at two major music education conferences in the United States:

I presented the study at the meeting of the New York State School Music Education Association in Rochester, New York, in December 2016, and at the Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium in Tampa, Florida, in February 2017. (Sherry, Personal Statement)

Coco also believed that the research experience was an important component of her music education study in the United States. The research course in her doctoral program helped her explore new research topics and become more productive in the field (Research notes, February 2018). It appeared that interviewees shared a common belief that their graduate music education programs offered valuable music education research courses and experience for them. I agreed that one of the most important benefits was music education research experience.

Back in China, I never had the chance to learn how to conduct music education research. While in the United States I learned the importance of choosing the correct research project. I also learned that the best way to conduct research was to maintain open dialogues with advisors and peers. As for this dissertation, I discussed the topic with my advisor and the topic influenced my Ph.D. experience and career trajectory (Research notes, February, 2018).

Other Commonalities

A final group of commonalities that emerged in the Benefits category were interesting, but each had a frequency of four or lower, signifying a lower level of consensus among participants. Thus, these commonalities cannot be considered as themes. Eight commonalities emerged, each having a frequency of two to four occurrences. Three commonalities, such as “Benefits: Conference experience: Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium,” “Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to cook”; and “Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: Work with disabled students” were subsumed in the themes already discussed and served to strengthen them.

The first of the remaining commonalities was “Benefits: Mentorship of professors” ($n = 4$). Participants’ professors not only encouraged them in the classrooms, but also helped them to adjust to U.S. society outside the classroom, such as in socializing with them and inviting them to celebrate U.S. holidays together. The second commonality was “Benefits: U.S. travel experience” ($n = 3$). While studying in the United States, interviewees were also able to travel around the country on school breaks, which helped them to relax. Some participants’ parents also travelled to the United States and visited different places with them. The third commonality in this group was “Benefits: Conference experience” ($n = 3$). Three out of six interviewees had opportunities to present research papers or posters at music education conferences in the United States. These were the doctoral student participants, so the commonality “Conference experience” could be considered as a theme for these participants, but not for the entire group of participants. In a related fourth commonality, two participants mentioned presenting research posters in Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium in 2017, Tampa, FL (“Benefits: Conference experience: Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium,” $n = 2$). The fifth

commonality was “Benefits: Grew up: Became more independent” ($n = 2$). Interviewees stated the importance of becoming more independent after studying in the United States. They believed the study abroad experience was critical to their becoming more mature, especially because they learned how to take better care of themselves in daily life, such as cook for themselves (“Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to cook,” $n = 3$). This was an in vivo code and represented meanings derived from participants’ comments that were not made in standard English. The seventh commonality represented three participants’ descriptions of experiences they had in working with disabled students in K-12 music education classrooms (“Benefits: Learned more about music education: Best practices: Work with disabled students,” $n = 3$). The eighth and final commonality in this category reflected three participants’ music performance experience concurrent with their music education coursework, such as non-credit recitals and musical ensemble experiences (“Benefits: music performance experience, $n = 3$ ”).

Challenges

As a Chinese music education graduate student in the United States, my challenges and difficulties include language barrier, social and cultural adaptation, and academic achievement. In particular, writing papers with a limited English vocabulary caused the biggest problems in the early beginning. Reading course materials has not been a huge problem for me. Also, I think the lack of English proficiency affects my self-confidence, especially concerning interactions with Americans in the early beginning, including interactions with my U.S. professors and friends. In addition to language, many problems that I experienced came from cultural differences. One example is that I found that it was difficult to live in the United States if you don't have your own car. Although I have been driving since 19 in China, it still took me about 3 months to get the U.S. driving license. However, I think I need to accept these difficulties when I

choose to study in another country. There is no point in complaining. Also, I believed that all challenges and difficulties were opportunities. These challenges provided the opportunity for me to grow and develop. (Research notes, February, 2018)

Ten themes emerged within the “Challenges” category. Data within this category included interviewees’ opinions on the sociocultural and academic challenges Chinese music education graduate students face in the United States. The themes of “Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier” ($n = 23$) and “Challenges: Academic: Language barrier” ($n = 19$) were regarded as especially important because they were mentioned by every participant.

In particular, participants mentioned that limited English vocabularies prolonged their sociocultural adjustment process in the United States (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Vocabulary,” $n = 9$). Day-to-day English was another obstacle for interaction with others in daily life (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Language Barrier: Day-to-day English,” $n = 8$).

Within the academic aspect, the theme “Challenges: Academic: Academic writing” was reported by four out of six participants and also emphasized with intensity by two doctoral participants, which strengthened it further as a theme (“Challenges: Academic: Academic writing,” $n = 11$). Participants also reported that due to inadequate English skills, it took time to express themselves correctly (“Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Correct expression takes time,” $n = 6$), which limited their participation in class discussions (“Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Limited participation in class discussions,” $n = 6$). They experienced difficulties in discussing course material with their peers (“Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions,” $n = 9$). Simply put, the English language was a major academic challenge for participants.

Although participants struggled with these challenges, they had positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. society (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture,” $n = 14$). All participants believed that adaptation to the United States would get easier as their stay in the United States lengthened (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Adaptation easier as stay in the United States lengthens,” $n = 6$). Commonalities and emergent themes within “Challenges” are presented in Table 5, with emergent themes denoted with an asterisk. It is notable that of the 10 themes, eight were related in some way to struggles with the English language.

Table 5: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Challenges

Code	Frequency
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier*	4/3/6/6/3/1/23
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier*	3/1/3/8/3/1/19
Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture*	0/5/2/5/1/1/14
Challenges: Academic: Academic writing*	0/0/1/#2/7/#1/11
Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions*	1/1/1/4/2/0/9
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Vocabulary*	2/1/1/2/2/1/9
Challenges: Sociocultural: Language Barrier Day-to-day English*	1/1/2/2/1/1/8
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Correct expression takes time*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Limited participation in class discussions*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Sociocultural:	

Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Adaptation easier as stay in the United States lengthens*	1/1/1/1/1/6
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation	0/3/0/0/2/0/5
Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions: Lack of teaching experience	1/1/1/0/1/0/4
Challenges: Academic: Higher program standard	0/0/0/2/#2/0/4
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Knowledge of music education practices	1/1/0/1/0/1/4
Challenges: Sociocultural: American food	0/2/1/0/1/0/4
Challenges: Sociocultural: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Classroom culture	0/1/1/1/0/1/4
Challenges: Sociocultural: Transportation system	1/0/0/0/3/0/4
Challenges: Academic: Gap with peers	0/0/0/3/0/0/3
Challenges: Academic: U.S. classroom culture	1/1/1/0/0/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Culture shock	1/0/1/0/1/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Classroom culture: Enjoy the challenge	1/0/1/1/0/0/3
Challenges: Sociocultural: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Learn from/imitate the natives	0/0/1/1/1/0/3
Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: TOEFL	1/0/1/0/0/0/2
Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Music content knowledge	1/1/0/0/0/0/2

Language Barrier

The language barrier became apparent for participants immediately upon their arrival in the United States, and it created obstacles within both academic and sociocultural aspects of their lives. Language barrier encompasses the difficulties, feelings and struggles participants experienced due to limited English vocabulary.

Several emergent themes related to participants' challenges with the English language. Though these themes were closely related, some appeared to be more align with sociocultural aspects: (a) "Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier," ($n = 23$); (b) "Challenges: Sociocultural: Day-to-day English" ($n = 8$), and (c) "Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Vocabulary" ($n = 9$). Others appeared to more closely align with academic aspects: (a) "Challenges: Academic: Language barrier" ($n = 19$), (b) "Challenges: Academic: Academic writing" ($n = 12$), (c) "Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions" ($n = 9$), (d) "Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Correct expression takes time" ($n = 6$), and (e) "Challenges: Academic: Language barrier: Limited participation in class discussions" ($n = 6$). Some themes, particularly those related to vocabulary and conversing with others, seemed to relate to both sociocultural and academic aspects.

Sociocultural Aspects

Limited English language abilities prolonged participants' sociocultural adjustment process in the United States. Within the Challenges category, language barrier had the highest frequency count and was considered the most important challenge because it affected every sociocultural aspect of participants' lives in the United States ("Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier" ($n = 23$)). More specifically, "Day-to-day English" emerged as a theme ("Challenges: Sociocultural: Language barrier: Day-to-day English" ($n = 8$)), denoting obstacles

surrounding the basic English skills necessary for daily interactions with others. Participants mentioned that in comprehending English jokes, slang was always very difficult for them to understand. Coco said, “Sometimes ... native students would share jokes, comments, or stories they thought were funny or interesting. However, I did not always understand why the comment or story was funny or why others were laughing” (Interview 2). Lucy explained that it was too embarrassing to ask her native friends for an explanation of the meaning of the joke, comment, or story:

When people gather together, the topics when they are talking about, you just have no idea about what they are talking about. Maybe it is only about the TV show or public event in the city, it is just hard for you to participate in the conversation. Or maybe it is a joke. They are all feeling funny. But you don't get the point. Also, in the class, when they are talking about some song from the 60s, they shared the feeling with each other. But you didn't get it. Why they laugh like that. So, it is very hard. (Lucy, Interview 1)

Sherry also experienced the difficulty of not understanding something funny that her classmates shared. She usually kept quiet and did not interrupt, or talked with her Chinese classmates (Research notes, February, 2018). Furthermore, Zoe stated that she even did not know how to reply to others when they asked her “What's up?” and “How are you?” “When some friends said, ‘What's up?’ to me, at that moment, I don't know how to reply. I never learned how to answer it” (Zoe, Interview 1). These examples illustrate that underdeveloped English skills were related to a number of negative outcomes in participants' social interactions with native U.S. peers. Not only did they have more difficulty communicating with native U.S. peers; but they also lacked cultural insights that come about through deep understanding of the vernacular language.

A closely-related challenge in sociocultural situations was that of limited English vocabulary. For example, Lucy had a hard time paying for her merchandise in grocery stores:

I went to the grocery store with my friends. I don't the difference between credit and debit. I know credit, but I don't know about debit. I was panic at that time. What she asked and what should I answer. It is kind of stupid when you look at yourself now. But at that time, very little problem can be very hard for me. (Lucy, Interview 1)

Taking the conversation in a slightly different direction, Zoe added that due to her limited vocabulary, she did not know conversational words and phrases, but that this type of vocabulary was easy to pick up (Research notes, February, 2018).

Academic Aspects

Similar to sociocultural aspects, the language barrier was omnipresent for participants in academic environments as well. All participants reported difficulties comprehending questions and conversations in class. Coco reported that, in her first class, she was unable to understand the questions teachers raised. She made notes about the required readings before the lectures, but still had trouble understanding professors' lectures:

I think the first day, I was less confident and I was a little bit shy, because as I said, I was disappointed about my English ability Most of time, I can't understand the topics and I cannot answer instructors' questions. Sometimes, I think I can ask the question, after I raise my hand, I have no word, I only use some simple words to describe my feelings. Sometimes, I was nervous about how to organize a complete sentence. (Coco, Interview 1)

Coco mentioned that she generally felt uncomfortable communicating with others in English. Even simple English words such as *different*, *future*, *last*, etc., caused problems for her.

Lucy mentioned difficulties related to difficulty in understanding spoken English. During her first class in the United States, she was continually lost because she could not process the English related to music education concepts or knowledge quickly enough: “I thought I would be confused in the classroom. In fact, I feel confused and feel lost in the classroom. I don’t understand couple concepts in the class” (Lucy, Online discussion forum). Zoe corroborated Lucy’s comment by describing a similar experience: “I cannot follow...the professors’ speed and my English listening is not good. Many big vocabulary I did not learned before, so I miss some good points and concepts in the class” (Zoe, Interview 1). She also shared that: “During the first class in the U.S. sometimes I was lost in the classroom because of the professor’s fast pace and big English vocabulary” (Zoe, Online discussion forum).

A related theme concerned the time it took for participants to express themselves correctly. Each participant reported that when they spoke to others, finding the correct expression took some time, especially when they communicated with their professors and peers in the classroom. During her interview, Lucy stated:

I should organize in Chinese first and then translate into English, which makes it slow. Especially in a classroom, whenever the professor has a question. Everybody will use pen to write their answers. For me, I have to transfer it. So, it makes me so nervous. I was silent in the class sometimes during the most of my first year. (Lucy, Interview 1).

Zoe also shared that she could not accurately express her feelings in the class:

Sometimes, I just grab some words, but I can’t really express myself in English with others...The language is always a challenge for me to understand everything in the class and express myself ... in the class. (Zoe, Interview 1)

Nancy shared similar feelings, that language barrier largely undermined accurate expression of her personality in communicating with native students in the class (Research notes, February, 2018). Coco stated that “Something I want to say . . . in my brain or in my mind but I need extra time to organize my language and to find a certain word to describe something I want to say” (Coco, Interview 1). She was also frustrated by her poor English in the beginning, which prohibited her from sharing her personality in the classroom, as a very engaging Chinese girl with an abundance of creative ideas and a great sense of humor (Research notes, February, 2018).

Positive Perception of Adaptation to U.S. Culture

The third most frequently-cited theme in the Challenges category concerned participants’ perception of their adaptation to U.S. culture. Most agreed that adaptation became easier over time. After staying in the U.S for a while, participants could see how their skills and experiences had impacted their adjustment. Coco believed that having an open mind or positive personality helped her to adapt:

After you have been in the U.S. for a while, you may not have the culture challenge . . . I think maybe the reason is the life become common. You are in the society. You know the role. I don’t think I have culture shock because I have been in the U.S. for about four years. I think it is quite good enough for me to understand the U.S. culture and adapt to the U.S. society. (Coco, Interview 2)

Nancy supported Coco’s comments. She believed once you had stayed in the United States for a long enough time, you would better understand the life in the United States:

It only needs some time. We will learn to be independent and we will learn how to arrange our schedule and learn well....In the very beginning, it is very difficult for me,

but after two months or three months, I adjusted to this classroom environment” (Nancy, Interview 1).

Lucy completely agreed with these two participants’ statements. She explained that over time, it became more natural; much more so than when she first entered the United States.

The difficulties I think as the time goes by, I feel more familiar with them. I become better. I got more culture here. I can get the humors. Sometime I can participant in their conservations as well. Also, I kind of adjust myself in this new culture because in the beginning, I was very upset, being isolated in the classroom. Now I kind of get used to it and I think it is okay about not familiar about thing that they knew. (Lucy, Interview 1)

The comments indicated that Lucy believed that both her open attitude and sufficient time in the United States helped her better adapt to the United States.

Academic Writing

The fourth most frequently-cited theme in the “Challenges” category was the challenge of academic writing. Every participant experienced problems in writing academic papers. For example, I had challenges with English grammar and word choice. Other participants also reported challenges with English usage. As a result, their professors felt that their academic papers were very awkwardly written. Two doctoral participants (Sherry and myself) very emphatically described that academic writing was one of the most significant challenges for them in their study of music education in the United States. Sherry raised the point that she encountered academic writing problems specifically related to American Psychological Association (APA) style requirements:

When I first did the APA style, I don’t think it is very important . . . During my first semester in the U.S., I got 70% for my first scholarly paper. It is a small article. I was so

shocked. What mistakes I made! I found that my mistakes are all about APA style. I didn't know professors care about the APA style. (Sherry, Interview 1)

The language barrier probably caused Sherry to misunderstand the information provided in class about writing in APA style. Lucy agreed that, "Writing paper is very hard. The language and the format . . . it might take me twice longer than my U.S. peers to write a paper. I need time to think and organize my language for every sentence" (Interview 2). Coco believed that the English language was a major stumbling block that created a lot of difficulty, challenges, and frustration in academic writing:

The English that we learned in China is different in the U.S. Lots of words you never heard when you are in China. . . English is not our mother language . . . the way how to write a paper is very different between China and U.S. (Coco, Interview 1)

Thus, it was evident that interviewees strongly believed academic writing was a major challenge while studying in the United States. All participants remarked that they could not choose accurate words to express their ideas, nor arrange those words into clearly-written sentences and paragraphs. One participant often spoke about misunderstanding APA writing style in academic papers. It appeared that APA style was perhaps a formidable challenge for this participant to navigate.

Difficulty Contributing to Class Discussions

In the Challenges category, the fourth most interesting theme was "Challenges: Difficulty contributing to the class discussions" (frequency = 9). All participants mentioned having difficulty in contributing to class discussions because of differences in their previous educational experiences. Native peers would often share their past or current music education teaching and learning experiences in class; however, participants did not always have similar music education

experiences to share. Thus, they felt that they did not have anything to contribute. For example, when Lucy and her U.S. classmates discussed their in-service teaching experience, she noted that:

I will say the classroom discussion is very hard. I knew many of my peers had lots of teaching experience and some of them are current teaching. Every day they can share with the class about their teaching and their children. They can apply what they learn every day . . . I am lacking of teaching experience. (Lucy, Interview 2)

Lucy stated that her classmates always brought their in-service teaching experience and related experience in educational settings into class discussions. She did not have similar experiences, thus sometimes had difficulties in contributing to the classroom discussions. Similarly, Coco regularly experienced embarrassment when she felt that she had nothing to contribute in class:

I rarely raise my hand or to provide comments, my suggestions for my other colleagues. Maybe most of my classmates are all older than me, they are all very professional, they are all experienced . . . Sometimes, I don't know what I can say. (Coco, Interview 1)

Additionally, Sherry had no K-12 teaching experience, unlike her native peers in class, thus did not really participate in class discussions about K-12 music education:

I had some study abroad experience before I came to the U.S. I still had some culture shock during my first class. The music education in the U.S. is totally different as I learned before. The course structure combined student presentation and discussion based on the reading materials and your teaching experience. I just got in the U.S. for few days, I don't know about their marching band. I don't know what happened on their K-12 music classroom. I am a brand new people in the states. (Sherry, Online discussion forum)

Other Commonalities

Fourteen other commonalities were not regarded as themes but nevertheless related to participants' challenges in the United States. As with the themes in the Challenges category, these can be categorized as academic or sociocultural.

Concerning academic aspects, five of six interviewees reported that they had received a limited Western music foundation in China; thus, knew little about Western music education practices to apply to their music education studies in the United States. ("Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation," $n = 5$; "Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Knowledge of music education practices," $n = 4$; "Challenges: Academic: Limited Western music foundation: Music content knowledge," $n = 2$). Additionally, two doctoral interviewees believed that their music education degree program had higher standards for research and academic papers than the previous degree programs they had completed, which was challenging ("Challenges: Academic: Higher program standard," $n = 4$). Coco very emphatically related that her current music education doctoral program was very difficult for her because her doctoral advisor had higher expectations than her master's program advisor had had for her. She also pointed out gaps between herself and native peers three times during the interviews ("Challenges: Academic: Gap with peers," $n = 3$), such as the cultural gap with native peers and lack of knowledge/conversational ability on academic topics. Four participants stated that due to a lack of teaching experience, they had difficulty contributing to classroom discussions ("Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussion," $n = 4$). Three interviewees cited difficulties with higher education systems ("Challenges: Academic: U.S. classroom culture," $n = 3$) between United States and China, which caused them problems in adapting to study music education in the United States. TOEFL exams also related to participants' language

barriers in some respects (“Challenges: Academic: Language Barrier: TOEFL,” $n = 2$). Two of six participants found they were underprepared in the English language when they first arrived, even though they had achieved high scores on the TOEFL. They learned that the TOEFL in China was not a good measure of the level of English skills required for academic demands and social interactions in the United States. The language barrier became a significant block, which created substantial difficulty, challenges, and frustration for participants. Lucy commented:

I do pass the TOEFL exam. I did start English for a long time. When I first get there, when I speak English. I feel that you really need to think about it and organize all the words. There are something that not written in the textbook. Just like a simple question. Like U.S. people say, “Hey, what’s up?” The answer is never written in the textbook. You will feel panic because you don’t know how to answer that. (Lucy, Interview 1)

Zoe further commented that neither the TOEFL-oriented English language classes nor high scores on the TOEFL itself could guarantee that she could communicate effectively during the early stages of her study abroad in the United States:

I prepared the TOEFL test before I came to the U.S., before I applied for the schools... when I come to the U.S., I found that what I learned is still not enough. There is many local expression, it is not we learned in the textbook. (Zoe, Interview 2)

Although these participants passed the TOEFL for admission to higher education institutions, it did not guarantee that they were competent to perform academically in English on a level with native English-speaking peers. Also, their ability to pass the TOEFL only signified a limited degree of competency in English, and not academic language proficiency or proficiency in English commonly used in daily life.

Concerning sociocultural challenges, four out of six participants cited that the U.S. classroom culture positively influenced them to adapt to the U.S. culture (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Classroom culture,” $n = 4$). Three of six participants stated they disliked American food during the first few months (“Challenges: Sociocultural: American food,” $n = 4$). Three out of six participants also believed that although they had difficulty adapting to the U.S. culture, they enjoyed the adaptation process (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Classroom culture: Enjoy the challenge,” $n = 3$). Three participants mentioned that they adapted to U.S. culture through learning from or imitating natives (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Difficulties: Positive perceptions of adaptation to the U.S. culture: Learn from/imitate the natives,” $n = 3$). Three also mentioned the culture shock when they first arrived in the United States (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Culture shock,” $n = 3$). In a final commonality, two participants cited difficulties with transportation systems (“Challenges: Sociocultural: Transportation systems,” $n = 2$), because their universities were located in rural areas with limited bus service and they did not own cars during their first semester in the United States.

Education System Differences

When I was in China, I was unable to imagine the difficulties I would eventually encounter within the U.S. education system. I was shocked by the unexpected nature of the difficulties. For example, I never did a presentation in class in China. Most music or music education undergraduate courses I had in China were teacher-centered. Although we had the student teaching course in the senior year in China, these courses lacked guidance and feedback from the professors. However, in the U.S. higher education system, students usually dominated the class. After studying in the United States for a while, I was able to present my comments and

discuss with my peers in the classroom. I became more collaborative with other students in a group. (Research notes, February, 2018)

During the interviews, participants compared the education systems they experienced in China and United States and explained how they adapted to the new academic environment in the United States. Four themes emerged from responses to the questions: (a) What were your educational experiences in China?, and (b) How do these compare to your educational experiences in the United States? One theme relates to Chinese education and concerns the prevalence of teacher-directed instruction (“Education System differences: China: Teacher-directed instruction,” $n = 13$). The remaining three commonalities relate to U.S. education and describe student-directed instructional practices (“Education System differences: United States.: Student-directed instruction,” $n = 15$), collaborative learning experiences (“Education System Differences: United States.: Student-directed instruction: Collaborative,” $n = 6$), and the use of group discussion (“Education System Differences: United States.: Student-directed instruction: Collaborative: Group discussion,” $n = 6$).

Table 6 lists commonalities by order of frequency of occurrence within the Education System Differences category. Themes are denoted with an asterisk (“*”). Note that most of these commonalities have to do with the structure and style of learning experiences within courses.

Table 6: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Education System Differences

Code	Frequency
Education System Differences: United States: Student-centered instruction*	4/3/1/3/3/1/15
Education System Differences: United States: Student-centered instruction: Collaborative*	1/1/1/1/1/6
Education System Differences: United States: Student-centered instruction: Collaborative: Group discussion*	1/1/1/1/1/6

Education System Differences: China: Teacher-directed instruction*	4/2/1/2/3/1/13
Education System Differences: China: Limited discussion with professors after class	2/1/1/0/0/0/4
Education System Differences: United States: Differentiated course assignments	0/2/0/0/0/1/3
Education System Differences: China: Teaching to the test	1/0/0/0/0/1/2

Student-Centered Instruction

Participants expressed the opinion that U.S. classes were student-centered in providing more freedom for students to explore (“Education System Differences: United States: Student-directed instruction,” $n = 15$). Sherry stated, “The music class in the States, students will have more freedom and autonomy in the classroom. The classroom is student-centered, which is quite different from China. The strategy in China is more teacher-centered” (Interview 1).

In addition, in U.S. classes students are asked to explore ideas, ask questions, and discuss course material in groups (Education System Differences: United States: Student-centered instruction: Collaborative,” $n = 6$; “Education System Differences: United States: Student-centered instruction: Collaborative: Group discussion,” $n = 6$). Five of six participants observed that U.S. classes incorporate group discussions and conversations between professors and students. Zoe expressed the difficulty of participating in group discussions in the United States, describing how she listened to what was being discussed but remained silent most of the time:

We should sit into a circle and the teacher sits in the core of the circle and ask questions.

He may not talk too much. He gives chances to students. So, students will talk more than the teacher. In a research class, the students will share their insights and share their

problems after reading the assignments. . . I am a little nervous. I am not [accustomed] to their teaching. Sometimes I don't know what to say. (Zoe, Interview 1)

Furthermore, in U.S. classes students are encouraged to express opinions that are different from those of their professors; in fact, some students even challenge the professor. This was quite opposite to what participants had experienced in China. Lucy pointed out this contradiction between China and United States:

There is a story from my friends. She said that she had a question and she asked a professor here. The professor said that I don't know about this area, I am going to find some resources for you. I will talk with you later. She was surprised because when she was doing her undergraduate in China, she had the similar situation, so she asked the professor. The professor just said that it is not important. This is not an area you should care about it. She was rejected by the professors when she asked that question. I think it is very interesting because I think the professors here are willing to take the risk and to know something they don't know. (Lucy, Interview 1)

Lucy believed that in the United States, students were encouraged to challenge professors. Students and professors were both engaged in a great deal of conversation, whereas in China, professors were considered as the authority of knowledge and students learned by paying attention to their lectures.

I also believe that the U.S. professors would like to promote student engagement. The learning is more cooperative, collaborative and community-oriented. Student are encouraged to direct their own learning interests and work with other students in groups. Students become self-confident and self-motivated (Research notes, February, 2018).

All participants had experienced a similar education structure in China. In their undergraduate programs, they usually worked alone and did not often collaborate with other students. They were used to working in a less collaborative environment. Perhaps this explains why this theme occurred so frequently in this study. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Teacher-Directed Instruction

All participants had been used to learning via teacher-directed instruction in China (“Education System Differences: China: Teacher-directed instruction,” $n = 13$). In China, content knowledge is commonly delivered in lecture format, and teachers and students have limited interaction. Zoe stated: “In China, in a class we have many students and often teach[er] talks and asks. Students answer afterward . . . not much interaction between teacher and student”

(Interview 1). Zoe’s opinion was shared by Nancy:

In China, I feel that 80% of your class, you just sit there, take some notes and listen to the lecture. That’s all you have to do in the class. Here in the U.S., 80% of the class, you discuss with your classmates and express your opinion in the classroom. (Nancy, Interview 1)

In addition, participants pointed out that U.S. education aimed to equip students with the ability to generate ideas, while Chinese education emphasized teaching students to imitate teachers and memorize information. Lucy stated, “In China, the teachers are the authority and they hold the right answer. We only have to find that same answer” (Interview 2). After listening to their comments, I made the following note: “For example, Coco posited that in the United States, professors were required not only to have an idea, but also to show how and where they got the idea. She had never experienced this in China” (Research notes, February, 2018). Thus,

the U.S. teaching style came up as one of the biggest challenges for participants. Not surprisingly, they were unfamiliar and even uncomfortable in the U.S. learning environment in the beginning stages of their graduate programs.

Other Commonalities

Within the category of Education System Differences, three other commonalities occurred with less frequency, and these were not considered to be themes. The first commonality, “Education System differences: China: Teaching to the test” ($n = 2$), related to Chinese classes having many exam-based assignments. The second commonality, “Education System differences: China: Limited discussion with Chinese professors out of the classroom ($n = 4$)” highlighted the limited opportunities for discussion that Chinese students had with their Chinese professors outside the classroom. For example, there were no office hours open for students to make appointments with professors in China. Thus, students usually talked with professors during class breaks or after classes. The third and final commonality in this category, “Education System differences: United States: Differentiated course assignments” ($n = 3$) alluded to U.S. courses having multiple types of course assignments. Several solo themes also emerged in response to the interview questions listed earlier in this section, and these are discussed later in the chapter.

Interaction

In my experience, interactions with professors included making appointments with professors during office hours and talking with them in and out of class. I remember feeling nervous and stressed about working with my professors in the beginning. Thankfully, after being in the United States for a while, I regard them as friends. (Research notes, February, 2018)

Four themes emerged within the category of Interaction. As stated in Chapter 2, some studies acknowledge the importance of Chinese graduate students' interactions with faculty and peers. This section provides participants' views on the difficulties and rewards of interactions with their U.S. professors and peers. Table 7 presents four themes and eight additional commonalities within the Interaction category. As in the previous tables, an asterisk denotes a theme.

Table 7: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Interaction

Code	Frequency
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors *	5/1/1/5/3/1/16
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Felt warm*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Respect*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Understand*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers	1/1/0/0/2/1/5
Interaction: Similarities as a student in China and United States	1/1/0/0/2/1/5
Interaction: Similarities as a student in China and United States Independent	1/1/0/0/2/1/5
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Culture gap	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Gap with peers	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Interaction: Similarities as a student in China and United States: Pressure from academic load	0/1/0/1/1/1/4
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: May not understand Chinese culture	0/1/0/1/0/1/3
Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Respect	0/0/1/0/1/0/2

The theme of “Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors” (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors,” $n = 16$) and closely-related themes such as “felt warm” (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Felt warm,” $n = 6$), “felt respect” (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Respect,” $n = 6$), and “felt understood” (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: Understand,” $n = 6$) were noted as important because they were mentioned by every participant. Interaction with professors was a significant factor for participants success in U.S. academic fields.

Interaction with U.S. Professors

All participants believed that close relationships with their advisors and other faculty members, scaffolded on respect and understanding, were critical to their academic success and made for a welcoming classroom environment.

Respect

Coco felt that her professors respected her feelings of shyness yet gently encouraged her to share her opinions, and this helped her to become more involved in class discussions:

I participated the social and psychology of music education course, I rare participated or raise my hand in my class because I feel shy and nervous. Some things I don't know what I can say. I told to my instructor that I preferred to listened to their opinions and sit in the classroom quietly. But my professor hope that I can be more passion about this course, she encourages me and even push me to raise my hand in the class. (Coco, Interview 2)

Lucy also appreciated the respect shown by her professors:

I think most of the interaction was great. I think professors show respect and appreciation to my thoughts and I think they really enough students to speak in the classroom. No matter what you said, they try to understand you and try to give you the positive feedback

and try to keep the conversation going . . . I think their eye contact is very important, when you feel, especially in the beginning when you are not feel comfortable to speak in the classroom, when you look their eyes, you can feel that you are doing great, keep talking which is very important for me. (Lucy, Interview 2)

Warm, Comfortable Feelings

Nancy felt that her professors were very welcoming and accepting, allowing her to feel comfortable when she communicated with them:

In the U.S., professors are very careful about giving you the comfortable feelings. For example, when I did some presentation and discussion. Sometimes we will feel uncomfortable during these learning experience and how to express about our feelings to others, but U.S. professors will encourage you to do it . . . I think they protect our confidence. They are very friendly, they just like your friends. (Nancy, Interview 2)

Understanding

Sherry believed that her professors listened well, made an effort to understand their students, and encouraged them to take risks as learners:

I think the professors in the classroom, they are really listening no matter what your questions are, they will not think you question is stupid. They are really listening and sympathy. None of my professors said, “Don’t do that, that is wrong.” (Sherry, Interview 2)

From participants’ comments, their positive interactions with their professors in the United States became clear. All six seemed to be comfortable communicating with their professors inside or outside the classroom. They also described the sense of respect they felt when interacting with their professors and enjoyed their senses of humor.

Other commonalities

Eight other commonalities occurred with less frequency and were not considered to be themes. The first of these concerned interaction with U.S. peers (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers,” $n = 5$). Chinese music education graduate students in this study maintained a close network with their peers. Four of six participants’ interactions with peers were mostly about coursework. Also, four participants cited that there was a culture gap when they interacted with U.S. peers (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Culture gap,” $n = 4$). I felt that I lacked cultural insights when I communicated with my non-Chinese peers. I also felt that language barrier limited my social interactions with Americans outside the classroom. Four other participants also explained that due to the age gap with their peers, they had difficulties interacting with them (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Gap with peers,” $n = 5$). One example of this was mentioned by Coco, who felt that both the culture and age gap with her peers led to less interaction with them outside class (Research notes, February, 2018). Three participants mentioned that when they talked with their professors about Chinese music, education and culture, they perceived that their professors may not have understood their Chinese culture (“Interaction: Interaction with U.S. professors: May not understand Chinese culture,” $n = 3$). The last commonality was “Interaction: Interaction with U.S. peers: Respect” ($n = 2$). Two participants felt respect when they interacted with their U.S. peers and professors, because although these persons did not understand participants’ Chinese culture, they conveyed that they would like to know about Chinese culture and the music participants mentioned in the conversation.

Motivation

The U.S. visiting professors and their music education programs further captivated me to apply for graduate school in the United States. The U.S. music education curriculum provides the scholarly music community with a select group of creative and artistic people. For example, I would like to participate in many music education K-12 field experiences, observations, and conferences in the United States, so I can maintain a professional connection with professors and colleagues in the field. My goal is to teach music education in a college, thus I have to obtain a doctoral degree in music education. (Research notes, February, 2018)

It was interesting to learn about participants’ different motivations for pursuing a graduate music education degree in the United States. Data collected via participants’ personal statements and in response to the question, “What are Chinese music education graduate students’ motivations for pursuing a music education degree in the United States?” were valuable in illuminating these motivations.

Table 8 presents commonalities for the Motivation category in order of frequency of occurrence. Note that three themes emerged within this category: (a) “Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation” ($n = 9$), (b) “Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation: Conduct more music education research” ($n = 9$), and (c) “Motivation: Influences of U.S. professor visiting China as guest professors” ($n = 6$). Themes are denoted by asterisks.

Table 8: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Motivation

Code	Frequency
Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation*	3/1/1/2/2/1/10
Motivation: Wish to grow professional reputation: Conduct more music education research*	3/1/1/2/2/1/10
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors*	3/2/0/0/0/1/6

Motivation: Family Influence	0/1/1/1/1/5
Motivation: Intrinsically motivated	1/1/0/1/0/1/4
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: Piano master class	1/1/0/0/0/1/3
Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: K-12 music education presentation	#2/0/0/0/0/0/2
Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors	0/0/1/1/0/0/2
Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors: Professors studied music education in the United States	1/0/0/1/0/0/2

Wish to Grow Professional Reputation

For study participants, the desire to grow a professional reputation in music education was one of the most important motivations for studying music education at the graduate level in the United States. Participants wanted to become known professionally in the music education field and obtaining a graduate degree in the United States would help them reach this career goal. As Sherry succinctly said:

I come to the States for a degree. The degree is very important for the professional career. Before I came to the States, I have a job in the college. The experience is not that happy... If you have a higher degree, you will have a better life in the college” (Sherry, Interview 1).

Nancy hoped to grow her professional reputation by learning more about effective, innovative teaching methods: “I think to learn music education in the U.S....could help me to be a comprehensive music teacher. If I want to be a music teacher in the future, I can teach my students many different things, not just Chinese things” (Interview 1). Zoe shared similar views:

In the third year, I started to apply the grad school in the U.S. because I think if I want to be a more well-rounded music teacher, I should reserve more education and professional training in this field. I started to prepare study abroad after that. I learn the music in different system and I have learned a lot. (Zoe, Interview 1)

As for me, although I did not have college teaching experience, I realized the importance of the doctoral degree for music education faculty at the collegiate level. I also appreciated the significance of my research experience during my doctoral program in the United States.

Research Experience

In order to grow a professional reputation, participants realized the importance of conducting research in the field. This was another significant motivation for Chinese students to pursue music education graduate degrees in the United States. Research experience allowed them to better understand published works, learn to balance collaborative and individual work, determine an area of interest, and begin their careers as music education researchers. Through exposure to research as graduate students, in particular, the doctoral participants discovered a passion for research that they could carry with them to faculty positions in higher education. Coco shared that one motivation for studying in the United States was to research the music education differences between China and United States:

I plan to conduct a more thorough comparative analysis of music education in China with music education in the U.S. Some areas I hope to explore include: music education in inclusive classrooms, and multicultural music education . . . to develop a more nuanced understanding of the distinctive features of both the U.S. and Chinese educational systems. (Coco, Personal statement)

In her previous college teaching experience, Sherry found there were shortages of music education researchers in China. Most Chinese music education students did not know how to conduct research suitable for the profession. In the United States, Sherry had published an article in a peer-reviewed music education journal during her master's degree program. Through this experience, she learned more about how to conduct the research and submit it for publication. One of her goals was to explore this further:

The research I finished during my master's degree is qualitative research. I got lots of helps from my professor. I think it is super helpful for my career. About the doctoral program, I think it is also focused on research. That is what I want to learn in the State. Before I came to the State, I was a faculty member in China. I wrote a lot of papers because one of my job is to evaluate people's academic articles. There are only few Chinese people in the music education field know how to conduct research. Most of their research is not real research. They just summarize their idea and they didn't get any data. You know. They are just saying something. There is no evident to support their research. (Sherry, Interview 1)

Exposure to a specific area of research undoubtedly also helps music education graduate students prepare for their professional careers. This experience was invaluable to the doctoral participants who were considering research as a career path. On the other hand, the master's participants were more motivated to learn new pedagogical methods and skills to bring into their future music education classrooms. However, all participants believed that their music education graduate study in the United States was purposeful and provided them with the strong background to teach students at different levels in China after graduation.

Influences of U.S. Professors Visiting China as Guest Professors

Interviewees related that the U.S. music education professors who visited China stimulated their interest in studying music education in the United States (“Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors,” $n = 6$). A frequency count of six placed the influences of visiting U.S. professors as the third most important motivation for their graduate study. Nancy described one visit by U.S. professors:

The U.S. professors went to my university. I knew that this is a good university because the professors gave few concerts and lectures in my school, and then they talk more about the profession music and good things about this school. (Nancy, Interview 1)

Nancy explained to me further that one U.S. piano professor had travelled to her college to perform a recital. Nancy was attracted by this professor’s piano performance abilities and she began to research the music education graduate program in that professor’s university. Similarly, Lucy’s undergraduate music education program was also visited by a U.S. music education professor who creatively incorporated composition, improvisation, and “found sounds” into his presentation:

Last July Dr. A. came to visit our college and delivered a lecture for us. Until now I am still impressive by his activity—he invited several students to improvise a short rhythm with any tools they can find in the classroom and finally he conducted dozens of students’ melodies. At that moment, I was greatly amazed when those participants became a band in an instant just using the common things available in the classroom as their musical instrument. In the short twenty minutes, they completed a simple music composition, not only performing by themselves but with others. (Lucy, Personal Statement essay)

Other Commonalities

Six other commonalities emerged relevant to participants' motivation to study music education in the United States. Although these had frequency counts lower than six, they were still considered as factors for motivating participants to study in the United States. Two interviewees believed they had received a high level of support from parents ("Motivation: Family influence," $n = 5$). Their parents wished for them to have study abroad experience in the United States, because they valued the higher education system in the United States. Two interviewees reported that studying abroad had been their dream ("Motivation: Intrinsically motivated," $n = 4$). These interviewees' motivation was to travel internationally and explore the world. Three of six interviewees related that their Chinese professors recommended that they study abroad in the United States ("Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors," $n = 2$). During the interviews, these participants shared that some of their Chinese professors were also educated in the United States and then become professors in Chinese universities ("Motivation: Recommended by Chinese professors: Professors studied music education in the United States," $n = 2$). As stated previously, participants mentioned that U.S. music education professors who visited China stimulated their interest in studying in the United States. Three participants had piano masterclass experience with visiting U.S. professors ("Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: Piano master class," $n = 3$), and one participant (Lucy) emphasized that she had attended K-12 music education lectures and presentations from U.S. professors ("Motivation: Influences of U.S. professors visiting China as guest professors: K-12 music education presentation," $n = 2$).

Music Education Characteristics

Chinese music teachers expect to be responsible for broadening students' musical knowledge and cultivating students' musical values. Such a sharing of knowledge could generate meaningful musical experiences for students. However, during my undergraduate music education studies, I always spent lots of time on playing the piano solo pieces. Although I was in the music education program, I had limited choices of courses, especially in the first and second years. As I stated in the previous section, I took different music education courses in the United States. I think the Chinese music education programs need to broaden music teacher education programs and add different types of music education courses, such as community music education and K-12 general music education methods. (Research notes, February, 2018)

Participants often compared music education in China and United States, sharing various perspectives about their previous learning experiences in China, as well as where they felt challenged by U.S. music education practices. They commented that they had more freedom in the United States to learn things that they were interested in, instead of being pushed to learn things that teachers chose for them, as was the case in China. Participants summarized that music education in the United States was more about motivating students, and shared that they had more field experience and teaching opportunities within U.S. classes.

Four themes emerged within the Music Education Characteristics category. Three identified drawbacks of Chinese music education. The first theme concerned music education degree programs, and the remaining three themes related to K-12 music education: (a) less focus on education and more focus on performance (“Music Education characteristics: China: Less focus on education, more focus on performance,” $n = 15$), (b) limited availability of music education resources for K–12 schools (“Music Education characteristics: China: Limited music

education resource for K-12,” $n = 13$), and (c) less attention to music as a subject (“Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources: Less attention to music as a subject,” $n = 6$). In contrast, the fourth identified U.S. music teacher preparation programs as focused on both music performance and music education (“Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching,” $n = 12$). Themes and commonalities within this category illuminate some of the substantial differences between music education in China and United States, and they are presented in Table 9 in order of frequency of occurrence. As in previous tables, an asterisk denotes a theme.

Table 9: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Music Education Characteristics

Code	Frequency
Music education characteristics: China: Less focus on education, more focus on performance*	6/0/0/4/5/0/15
Music Education Characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources*	3/2/2/2/3/1/13
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching*	4/1/1/3/#2/1/12
Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources Less attention to music as a subject*	1/1/1/1/1/1/6
Music education characteristics: China: Applied piano study	0/1/1/0/2/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Applied piano Study: Piano techniques	0/1/1/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited interactions with students	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited to singing classes	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Limited early field/student teaching experience	0/1/1/0/2/1/5

Music education characteristics: United States: Research experience	1/0/1/1/1/5
Music education characteristics: China: Applied vocal study	0/2/0/0/0/2/4
Music education characteristics: China: Limited course choice	2/0/0/1/1/0/4
Music education characteristics: China: Music Technology (Composition) course	1/0/1/1/1/0/4
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Doctoral seminar course	1/0/0/1/2/0/4
Music education characteristics: China: Limited teaching experience with students with disabilities	0/0/0/0/3/0/3
Music education characteristics: China: Limited research in the field	1/0/0/0/1/0/2
Music education characteristics: China: Positive improvement	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Music education characteristics: China: Positive improvement: Availability of different teaching methods	0/1/1/0/0/0/2
Music education characteristics: China: Limited research in the field	1/0/0/0/1/0/2
Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Statistics course	0/0/0/1/1/0/2
Music education characteristics: United States.: Group projects	1/1/0/0/0/0/2

China: Limited K-12 Music Education Resources

Chinese music is composed of many regional traditions that differ in form, style, and qualities. However, Chinese K-12 music classrooms are lacking in materials and resources to teach these diverse musics to students. Music classes in K-12 public schools in China emphasize singing- and listening-based music instruction. In my own experience as a student in K-12 music classrooms, the piano was the only instrument in the classroom and teachers usually taught songs

based on required (Western) standard music textbooks. As a result, I was not surprised to see that the theme “Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources” was cited by each participant for the highest frequency count in this category ($n = 13$).

In the interviews, participants described their previous general music classroom experience in China. Zoe mentioned that in rural areas, K-12 primary schools sometimes did not have music classes due to the limited availability of music teachers. She also described how Chinese school administrators did not value music as a subject:

Music teachers not paid enough attentions by parents, students, and administers, because it especially when I was in high school or middle school. Our music classes are cancelled. The music class [re]placed by other main subjects, such as math, English, and so on.

(Zoe, Interview 1)

Coco expressed the same opinion: “In China, music class in elementary school or high school . . . maybe they only have few times to focus in music area because they have pressure from other subjects” (Interview 1). These comments also illustrate the theme “Music education characteristics: China: Limited K-12 music education resources: Less attention to music as a subject” ($n = 6$).

Furthermore, Nancy pointed out that most music classes focused on singing songs, that Chinese K–12 music classes followed the textbook, and that music teachers did not use Kodály, Orff Schulwerk, and/or Dalcroze approaches or their resources in their classroom: “For most of the general music classes, we were simply learning to sing some children’s song” (Interview 1). Sherry explained that what she learned in music lessons was often determined by the abilities of music teachers. As a result, she viewed her K–12 general music classes as “very boring” because they usually had limited activities (Sherry, Interview 1).

In addition to differences in K-12 music teacher availability and quality, I interject from my own experience that some of the current primary schools in major cities or provinces, such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangdong Province have well-qualified music teachers and highly-equipped music facilities with a great variety of musical instruments; however, Chinese students in rural areas do not enjoy the same learning opportunities and music resources. It was apparent that although these participants grew up in major cities in China, they still received limited music education with limited resources in their K-12 music classrooms at that time.

China: Less Focus on Education, More Focus on Performance

Participants were in agreement that before they enrolled in music education graduate programs in the United States, they thought that studying was not fun. They were directed as to what to learn by their professors and followed the instructional activities provided in the chosen textbooks. A preponderance of time was spent on improvement of musical performance skills rather than music education content, such as helping students to develop pedagogical knowledge and skills. Each participant mentioned this (“Music education characteristics: China: Less focus on education, more focus on performance,” $n = 12$), which was noteworthy. Additionally, all participants believed that they were underprepared for their music education studies in the United States because of this. One viewpoint came from Coco, who was disappointed to discover that her Chinese music education program placed a heavy focus on music performance. She was not given as many field experience opportunities in China as in U.S. music education programs:

Music education is equivalent to music performance They are focused on piano performance, singing quality, or learning other instruments. I think we are music education major students, we are not students in music performance major. For us, the

major courses are not private lessons. We should have music education courses. In these courses, professors should teach students how to teach music. (Coco, Interview 1)

Coco's undergraduate music education program had limited music education courses focusing on pedagogy. This unconsciously influenced students that their learning objective was to improve their music performance skills instead of improving their pedagogical skills. A similar opinion came from Lucy, who also felt that her previous undergraduate music education program had focused on cultivating musicians instead of educating future music teachers:

Back in China, most of my peers and I learned a lot in music performance. Both us and our teachers always valued our skills on performance rather than our ability on teach. They didn't really pay attention in education part. They teach you to be a good musician instead of being a good teacher. . . . The most of the course I took are most about harmony, music theory, piano, singing, and music history. Of course, these courses are something that music teachers should learn The course really touch to the music education, hum, maybe only three to four courses, really teach you how to teach.

(Lucy, Interview 1)

Additionally, Sherry observed that most Chinese music education students focused on piano or voice, because these were most popular in China. However, in the United States, music education students have more opportunities to learn other instruments:

One more thing is the choices of music instruments Most of Chinese students who are majoring in music education, their instrument is piano. But in the States, there are lots of students have opportunities to learn, they prefer to learn the instrument like oboe, clarinet, or some brass. I think it is another difference. (Sherry, Interview 1)

To summarize briefly, Chinese music education degree programs always provide multiple applied piano and vocal courses for music education students. The music education curriculum does not emphasize teaching practices and pedagogical skills; thus, most of the courses left participants ill-equipped to become music educators.

United States: Focus on Music and Teaching

Noticing the shortcomings of music education in China, every participant showed appreciation for U.S. music education and its focus on both music and teaching (“Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching,” $n = 12$). Participants enjoyed the autonomy in learning and felt happy in the United States. All agreed that U.S. music education degree programs focused on both music making and teaching aspects within coursework. U.S. music professors were teaching not just performance skills, but also pedagogical skills. During their field experience in U.S. schools, students learned appropriate methods and approaches for teaching both ensemble and general music courses. During my own field experience, I visited a local high school and observed advanced-placement music theory and composition classes.

Coco spoke about the many types of music education courses available in the United States:

In my master’s degree of music education program in the U.S., students have to take music instrument classes, choir classes, ensemble classes. But we also take some music education courses, such as music psychology, sociology, pedagogy, general music education courses and some education and culture courses. (Coco, Interview 2)

Coco also said that when choosing courses, she usually checked on the pedagogical topics the professors would cover and whether they appeared to care about students’ opinions, before

making a decision on whether to take the course. She seemed to enjoy her courses and admired the professors who taught them.

Lucy was satisfied that her music education classes in the United States included many observational experiences:

We had one semester observation about how professor and other classmate teaching and we developed our own teaching. It's very straight forward experience about how to teach music to these ages of students. It gives your direct experience about how to teach young children. It's like to dig your interests both as a student and teacher. It questions you to connect to your career and your thinking way of music education. (Lucy, Interview 2)

It appeared that Lucy benefitted from her professor's modelling of instructional strategies and she learned much by observing. One goal of this approach was to help students to visualize themselves as teachers by exploring the pedagogical strategies the professor presented.

Other Commonalities

Seventeen other commonalities emerged within the Music Education Characteristics category; however, none occurred frequently enough to be considered themes. In the interviews, participants compared the music education characteristics of China and United States. Thus, these seventeen commonalities are divided into two subcategories: music education characteristics in China (15 commonalities), and music education characteristics in the United States (2 commonalities). In particular, every participant pointed out the shortcomings of Chinese music education, such as limited music education courses choices and limited K-12 music education methods in the curriculum. However, they found that U.S. music education degree programs covered these aspects. U.S. professors not only taught various pedagogical strategies to students, but also offered opportunities for music education research experience.

Chinese Music Education Characteristics

Music education students in China usually take applied piano and voice lessons, and thus spend much of their time practicing (“Music Education Characteristics: China: Applied piano study,” $n = 5$; “Music Education Characteristics: China: Applied vocal study,” $n = 4$). In piano lessons, professors focused on technique, such as efficient body motion for playing fast passages (Music education characteristics: China: Applied piano study: Piano techniques,” $n = 5$).

Participants agreed that Chinese music education students had limited course choices within undergraduate programs (“Music Education Characteristics: China: Limited course choice,” $n = 4$), especially courses on music education, such as philosophy of music education and music education methods courses. Also, participants mentioned there were limited interactions between professors and students because professors usually lectured for entire class periods (“Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited interactions with students,” $n = 5$). Another issue reported by some participants was that Chinese music education students had limited research experience within degree programs (“Music Education Characteristics: China: Limited research in the field,” $n = 2$), thus most of them did not have a chance to conduct or present research at conferences before coming to the United States. Furthermore, Chinese music education students had limited student teaching experiences, which also meant limited experience in teaching students with disabilities (“Music Education Characteristics: China: Limited early field experience and student teaching experience,” $n = 5$; “Music Education Characteristics: China: limited teaching experience with students with disabilities,” $n = 3$).

Five participants reported that their K-12 general music education courses focused solely on singing songs, such as Chinese folk songs and children’s songs, thus they lost interest in K-12

general music classes (“Music education characteristics: China: Course structure: Limited to singing classes,” $n = 5$). However, two participants believed that current Chinese music education has shown positive improvement in recent years. Current Chinese music education degree programs do offer some music technology or composition courses (“Music Education Characteristics: China: Music technology (composition) course,” $n = 4$). Chinese K-12 music teachers have also recently started to incorporate many different teaching approaches in the classroom (“Music education characteristics: China: Positive improvement,” $n = 2$; Music education characteristics: China: “Positive improvement: Availability of different teaching methods,” $n = 2$).

U.S. Music Education Characteristics

In contrast, only two non-theme commonalities occurred relative to the U.S. music education aspect. First, two doctoral participants mentioned the significance of conducting music education research within coursework (“Music Education Characteristics: United States: Research experience,” $n = 4$). They believed that the U.S. music education degree program with research courses led to opportunities to participate in music education conferences. Second, two participants mentioned that the U.S. music education courses had many group projects instead of individual assignments (“Music Education Characteristics: United States: Group project,” $n = 2$). For example, Lucy was required to make group presentations and complete final group projects with her peers. Most of her projects in China had been individual assignments or solo performance experiences. These findings made great sense to me because music education research and pedagogy were not required in all Chinese music education degree programs (Research notes, February, 2018). It was evident that participants did not feel equipped to study music education at the graduate level in the United States.

Professional Career Goal

My long-term goal is to work in a college. Recently, Chinese music education programs have demonstrated a need for some exchange training in preparation for study-abroad programs with U.S. music departments. I would like to be a bridge between the United States and China in the music education field and bring more U.S. music education materials, K-12 curriculum to Chinese music education programs. (Research notes, February, 2018)

Five non-theme commonalities emerged within the professional career goal category. Each participant shared both long-term and short-term goals. Themes and commonalities are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Professional Career Goal

Code	Frequency
Professional career goal: Long term plan*	1/1/1/1/1/6
Professional career goal: Short term plan*	1/1/1/1/1/6
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Teaching in a college	0/0/0/1/1/1/3
Professional career goal: Short term plan: Gain music education teaching experience in the United States	1/0/1/1/0/0/3
Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: High school music teacher	1/1/0/0/0/0/2

In response to the question: “How do you plan to move forward or move on after this experience,” all participants responded that they wanted to work in the field of music education; none were thinking of switching to a different field (“Professional career goal: Long term plan,” $n = 6$; “Professional career goal: Short term plan,” $n = 6$). Doctoral participants Sherry, Coco and I all wanted to teach music education in higher education institutions in China (“Professional

career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Teaching in a college,” $n = 3$). As was stated earlier, Sherry had a few years teaching experience in a Chinese university. She was planning to publish as many articles as possible during her studies in the United States and then return to work at the same university in China:

It is the most important thing to me for my future, because you know that I was a faculty member back in China, I knew the importance about publishing paper and conducting research. If I can finish my degree, I can achieve my degree in the States, I will go back to my country because I was a teacher in a Chinese college. My position is keeping frozen for me for several years. I would like to back to my previous position (Sherry, Interview 2).

Coco had always wanted to become a music education professor in a Chinese university after she graduated. Additionally, she wished to accumulate one or two years of teaching experience in U.S. K–12 schools (“Professional career goal: Short term plan: Gain music education teaching experience in the United States”):

I think almost the same. [My goal] never changed After I graduate, I want to gain some teaching experience in the U.S., maybe one year or two years here. I mean if I can find a good job after I graduate, I’d like to have one or two years teaching experience here. After that, I plan to go back to China and find a position in a college, which is my final goal (Coco, interview 2).

As for me, before I came to the United States. I had already decided to pursue a music education doctoral degree in the United States and then find a faculty position in a college. Similar to Coco and Sherry, I never changed my professional career goals.

In contrast, master's participants Nancy and Lucy both reported that they had changed their career goals while in the United States. Both had learned many strategies in the United States for the effective teaching of general music, which inspired them to want to teach general music in K–12 schools (“Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: High school music teacher,” $n = 2$). This contrasted sharply with the career goals they had upon arrival in the United States. At that time, both had expressed the desire to teach music at the collegiate level once they graduated. Lucy arrived in the United States with the same expectation to eventually teach at the collegiate level, but had more recently considered teaching music at the elementary level:

When I arrived, I expected to be a teacher in the higher education. I lack of the teaching experience and my current plan is try to get as much as teaching experience as I can. The learning experience here make me feel that I don't really understand children. I don't know enough about children and classroom. I am thinking about really immerse myself in teaching [children] after graduation. (Interview 2)

Lucy's revised career goal was to become an early childhood music teacher. After studying in the United States, she believed that there were many aspects of teaching music to children that she needed to learn. In order to become an early childhood music teacher, she desired to accumulate as much teaching experience as possible in the United States. Nancy explained that before she came to the United States, she would like to teach music in a college. However, after her studying in the United States for a while, she would prefer to teach voice to high school students, because she had learned many useful vocal techniques and skills for advanced vocal students:

I am studying in music education and I am also majoring in vocal performance track. Also, I learned voice for many years. I want to be a senior high school music teacher. I think it is easy for me to communicate with older students From this year, I learned lots of teaching methods and pedagogies about how to teach high level students. I am good at these things. So, I want to be a senior high school teacher (Nancy, Interview 2).

Zoe was in the second year of her degree program during the time of this research, and was preparing for applying to a music education doctoral program in the United States:

Before I came to the U.S., I think that after I graduated from the Master's degree program in the U.S., I will back to China and start teaching in a high school or middle school. But now, I am thinking about continue the doctoral program. (Zoe, Interview 2)

To summarize, the comments of interviewees illustrated that master's participants Lucy and Nancy perceived different career goals from those they had on arriving in the United States. They now wanted to teach music in K–12 schools instead of becoming music education professors. They had learned about best practices in general music education in the K–12 schools, which affected their career choice. Zoe was preparing to apply for music education doctoral program in the United States. She would like to teach music in the college if she got the doctoral degree. In contrast, the doctoral participants Coco, Sherry, and I held to our original plans to become music education professors.

Suggestions

Most of my recommendations for future Chinese music education graduate students were from my personal experience. First, future Chinese music education students should try to observe and imitate your U.S. peers such as finding and asking questions in the classroom. Be courageous to face the problems and challenges. You should always raise your opinions in the

classroom. Second, it is important to find your areas of strength and weakness in music education, such as K-12 general music education, choir and/or band. Most Chinese music education degree programs did not emphasize these fields. Students just considered learning new pieces and practicing their music skills. But you have more choices in the United States. (Research notes, February, 2018)

The 10 commonalities within the suggestions category represented participants' recommendations for Chinese music education graduate students' growth and support from their music education professors and music department. Three themes emerged on the following topics: (a) future students should spend more time in learning English ("Suggestion: For Chinese students: Learn English," $n = 9$); (b) future students should understand the U.S. classroom culture prior to arriving in the United States ("Suggestion: For Chinese students: Understand the U.S. classroom culture," $n = 6$); and (c) music departments should provide more U.S. culture classes or seminars ("Suggestion: For university and departments: U.S. culture class or seminar," $n = 6$). Emergent themes and other commonalities are discussed by topic in the following paragraphs. Table 11 presents at a glance the themes and commonalities within this category in order of frequency of occurrence. Emergent themes are marked with an asterisk.

Table 11: Emergent Themes and Commonalities: Suggestions

Code	Frequency
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Learn English*	1/1/1/2/3/#1/9
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Understand the U.S. classroom culture*	1/1/0/1/2/1/6
Suggestions: For university and departments: U.S. culture class or seminar*	1/0/2/2/0/1/6
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Gain teaching experience	0/0/0/1/2/1/4
Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience	0/1/0/1/1/1/4

Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience: K-12 music classroom observations	1/1/1/0/0/1/4
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Be confident and brave	1/1/0/0/1/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation	0/2/1/0/0/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in short term cultural exchange program	0/2/1/0/0/0/3
Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in various musical activities	0/2/1/0/0/0/3

For Chinese Students: Learn English

Each interviewee believed that learning English (“Suggestion: For Chinese students: Learn English,” $n = 9$) was one of the most significant preparations for future Chinese music education graduate students who wish to study in the United States. Participants suggested that students should spend much more time than they might think necessary in the study of English. Coco advocated spending more time practicing English with others, outside the classroom:

I think for the future students, if you come to U.S., after their class, they still need to spend some time on their English listening, reading, writing, and speaking. I think if we only listen to the professors’ lectures in the class and do our homework, it is not enough. I think we need more practice, I think it is why many students misunderstanding in the class in the U.S. Why they cannot improve their English proficiency. I think they need more time to practice. (Coco, Interview 2)

Lucy supported Coco’s point, suggesting that university writing centers and English departments could be resources for Chinese music education graduate students who need to improve their English:

The things we learned in the English learning center [in China] is very easy, it is only about how to live in America. In the academic part, I think it is not good enough. After we graduate from the English learning center, we still cannot understand what is the professor's talking about. I think the first thing is if the English department could help international students about academic writing and reading. (Lucy, Interview 2)

Sherry agreed that the English she learned in class or via a textbook was not enough. She spent additional time learning English through watching English language movies and dramas during her leisure time:

Before I came to the States, I watched lots of English movies, the drama shows and TVs something like that . . . You can learn lots of academic words in that show, besides that you can also learn about the U.S. life. I also downloaded TV show first and watched it with English subtitles, sometimes it also has the Chinese subtitles. However, it also has the Chinese subtitle, after I finished each episode, I will go back to watch each episode again and I will use the sheet of paper to cover the subtitle and listen to it again . . . I listened to lots of English songs. That is another strategy to improve my English. (Sherry, Interview, 2)

I also noted the following:

I emphatically believe that transitioning to a new culture can be difficult for all students and that English language proficiency is a critical factor in predicting Chinese music education graduate students' academic achievement. Additionally, I believe that if Chinese music education graduate students wish to have any teaching experience in their current music education degree programs, they should learn some practical music

teaching terms in English. They should also spend some time in reading music education articles in English before they come to the U.S. (Research notes, February, 2018)

For Chinese Students: Understand U.S. Classroom Culture

Differences between the Chinese and U.S. education systems cause difficulties for Chinese students who are trying to adapt to U.S. expectations for learning, including class participation. Chinese graduate students find it difficult to assume U.S. academic behaviors, such as speaking up in class (Li, 2003). Thus, five of six participants recommended learning about U.S. classroom culture prior to arrival in the United States. (“Suggestion: For Chinese students: U.S. classroom culture,” $n = 6$). Nancy believed that teamwork is the core of the U.S. classroom culture and that future students should always be open to doing group projects:

The professors would like students to do the group discuss[ion] in the classroom. Many classmates can give me fresh and new opinions during this discussion I think if I can do more teamwork, I can better understand the U.S. culture as well as the U.S. music education. (Nancy, Interview 2)

Sherry advocated for future students’ clear understanding of instructional processes in U.S. music education courses, which are more student-centered than Chinese courses of this kind:

. . . for all the course, most of the class are students talking about their thoughts instead of the professor, or the instructor talks about what is right and what is wrong. It’s like a discussion for the class, it is not a lecture.” (Sherry, Interview 2)

Lucy suggested that understanding the U.S. classroom culture prior to arrive in the United States could relieve student anxiety around participating in class activities.

In summary, study participants suggested that future Chinese music education graduate students should practice their English as much as possible before coming to the United States.,

because English proficiency is essential to their success in U.S. music education degree programs. Future students should obtain as much advance knowledge as possible of U.S. classroom culture and music education terminology before coming to the United States. This would be very helpful in shortening their cross-cultural and academic adjustment time in the United States.

For university and Departments: U.S. Culture Class or Seminar

As stated in Chapter two, Chinese graduate students encounter a different educational system in the United States, which requires mastery of different study skills, classroom behaviors, and overall expectations. They must adjust to a U.S. education system that is defined by very different customs and traditions. Participants believed the substantially different culture in China made it difficult to understand U.S. culture; thus, understanding U.S. culture would help future students to develop greater knowledge before and during graduate study in the United States. Interviewees suggested that U.S. higher education institutions could provide more U.S. culture classes or seminars for students (“For university and departments: U.S. culture class or seminar,” $n = 6$), as is evidenced in the comments of Zoe:

For music education students, we will feel lots of challenges and differences in Chinese music education and U.S. music education. I think if our department can have some preparation programs to talk about the system, the music education system in the U.S., the situation of music education in the U.S. For example, the classroom arrangements . . . what instruments or teaching methods they will use in the classroom or how many students in a class in a primary school . . . Such things, if we can get these information, we can learn more about the U.S. music education and will help our understanding in the U.S. (Zoe, Interview 2)

Lucy provided the similar suggestion that it was necessary for Chinese music education graduate students to receive more information about university services for international students:

I think I took a class that specific for international students and it helps me understand some very important aspects in the U.S. classroom and U.S university systems. I think if professors can give more helps for international students. That will be great because the content can be harder for international students than natives. (Lucy, Interview 2)

In other words, it would be helpful if universities or music departments could offer more services, including U.S. culture classes to incoming Chinese music education graduate students. Music departments could provide workshops and seminars which specifically focus on the differences between American and Chinese academic cultures. This would provide Chinese students with a context to understand the dissimilar academic and social cultures of China and United States and learn the necessary skills to successfully function in the U.S. academic learning environment.

Other Commonalities

The other seven commonalities in the Suggestions category were not considered to be themes because these codes occurred less frequently, with frequency counts between three and five: (a) “For Chinese students: Be confident and brave” ($n = 3$), (b) “For Chinese students: Gain teaching experience” ($n = 4$), (c) “For Chinese students: Western music foundation” ($n = 3$), (d) “Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in short term cultural exchange program” ($n = 3$), (e) “Suggestion: For Chinese students: For university and departments: Field experience” ($n = 4$), (f) “Suggestions: For Chinese students: Western music foundation: Participate in various musical activities” $n = 3$; and (g) “Suggestions: For university and departments: Field experience: K-12 music classroom observations” ($n = 4$).

Even though some of the interviewees felt nervous when they participated in U.S. music education classes, they suggested that future students should be confident and brave in participating in any group activities, in or outside the classroom. Interviewees also believed that preparation for future graduate students could be greatly improved by gaining more field experience in Chinese K–12 schools before coming to the United States. In order to have a broader Western music foundation, future Chinese music education graduate students could participate in various musical activities or participate in short-term cultural exchange programs before coming to the United States.

First Class in the United States

I still remember that I was very quiet in my first music education class in the United States. Although I did some reading preparations, I still did not understand the whole lecture session and got lost in the class. I was also very worried about my first group presentation with my U.S. peers because of the language barrier and culture shock. (Research notes, February, 2018)

The limited data within this category comprised interviewees’ perceptions of their first academic class in the United States. Only two commonalities emerged with frequency counts of 4 and 3 and had to do with (a) feeling lost in the new environment (“First Class in the United States: Felt lost,” $n = 4$), and (b) feeling isolated (“First Class in the United States: Felt isolated,” $n = 4$). The limited number of commonalities suggest that individuals perceived their first class in the United States differently from each other, perhaps due in part to the different experiences they had had prior to arriving in the United States. Table 12 presents these commonalities.

Table 12: Commonalities: First Class in the United States

Code	Frequency
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First Class in the United States: Felt lost

0/1/0/1/1/1/4

First Class in the United States.: Felt isolated

0/“1”/1/1/0/0/3

In the online discussion forum, Lucy stated that she felt confused in her first music education class in the United States. She noted that every classroom discussion activity was a challenge for her and that the classroom climate felt unfamiliar: “I feel very lonely at that time. In addition, the music education courses are based on students’ discussion. I was kind of not familiar about this education mood” (Lucy, Online discussion forum). A few other participants shared similar feelings. For example, Sherry reported that when she began her first class in the United States, she completely lost her sense of confidence and felt shocked: “I just got in the U.S. for few days, I don’t know about their marching band. I don’t know what happened on their K-12 music classroom” (Sherry, Online discussion forum). Overall, participants seemed to have negative feelings about their first class in the United States, mainly due to the language barrier and culture shock.

First Day in the United States

I was very excited about the surroundings on my first day in the United States. I checked out the music department, graduate school, and the international program office. But, I also felt that the public transportation system was totally different from the one in China. It was better to have my own car to reach different places. (Research notes, February, 2018)

This category represents interviewees’ perceptions of the most difficult adjustments and experiences on their first day in the United States. No themes emerged in this category, which again signifies that each individual’s experience was different. The three emergent commonalities are presented in Table 13 and represent participants’ curiosity about (a) their new

surroundings (“First Day in the United States: Curious about the surrounding (food, transportation, architecture),” $n = 3$), (b) their awareness of the obvious differences from their homeland (“First Day in the United States: Very different from China,” $n = 3$), and (c) their feelings of isolation (“First Day in the United States: Felt lonely,” $n = 3$).

Table 13: Commonalities: First Day in the United States

Code	Frequency
First Day in the United States: Curious about the surroundings (food, transportation, architecture)	1/0/0/0/2/0/3
First Day in the United States: Very different from China	1/0/0/1/0/1/3
First Day in the United States: Felt lonely	0/0/1/1/0/1/3

Two participants were curious about their new surroundings, including American food, modes of transportation, and the design and structure of buildings. Zoe initially felt positive about her first day in the United States: “I looked around the university, everything seems fresh to me. I went to my department building and image the new life here. It’s all about new life and new days. The feeling is great” (Interview 1). Sherry mentioned the difficulty to go out without a car; however, I noted that it was easy to secure rides from friends who had cars (Research notes, February, 2018). Nancy mentioned three times during the interviews that she felt lonely: “At that time, I feel very lonely and I don’t know how to figure it out because you know that in China, there are lots of people and life is very easy over there (Nancy, Interview 1).

Though data in this category was limited, it provides a further step towards understanding the difficulties participants encountered in the initial stage of adjustment to the United States.

Although academic achievement was important for participants, cross-cultural adaptation was equally important as it was a natural part of their life in the United States.

Leisure Time Activities

My leisure time was very colorful. For example, during the summer or winter break, I always hung out with my U.S. peers or Chinese peers to do some road trips. During weekends and some holidays, I usually completed my homework first and then listened to some music concert or relaxed at home. (Research notes, February, 2018)

In this category, a few commonalities became apparent in response to the question about interviewees’ leisure time activities in the United States. Table 14 presents commonalities within the category of Leisure Time Activities. Note that no themes and six commonalities emerged in this category. Further investigation is warranted; however, these findings could indicate that leisure time activities were specific to each individual and not to the group of participants as a whole. It is also possible that leisure activities were not perceived to be a major component of participants’ experience in the United States.

Table 14: Commonalities: Leisure Time Activities

Code	Frequency
Leisure time activities: Hang out with friends	1/0/“3”/0/0/1/5
Leisure time activities: Some parties	1/1/0/0/1/1/4
Leisure time activities: Homework	1/0/1/1/0/1/4
Leisure time activities: Concerts, shows	1/1/1/0/0/0/3
Leisure time activities: Relax at home	0/0/1/0/1/0/2
Leisure time activities: Bar	0/0/0/1/1/0/2

Though participants’ transnational status resulted in a variety of constraints (language barriers, cultural differences, and feelings of loneliness) on their leisure time experience,

participants valued leisure activities in the United States, such as spending unstructured time “hanging out” with friends (“Leisure time activities: Hang out with friends,” $n = 5$), attending parties (“Leisure time activities: Some parties,” $n = 4$), doing homework (“Leisure time activities: Homework,” $n = 4$), attending concerts or shows (“Leisure time activities: Concerts, shows,” $n = 3$), and relaxing at home (“Leisure time activities: Relaxing at home,” $n = 2$). In addition, two participants mentioned that on a few occasions they had spent leisure time in bars (“Leisure time activities: “Bars,” $n = 2$). Even though some of the interviewees felt unfamiliar with U.S. culture, all explained that these leisure time activities helped them adapt to U.S. culture.

Transformation

At the time of writing this study, I am still in the degree program, thus I cannot see any changes or transformations in myself yet. Maybe in five years. (Research notes, February, 2018)

This category included interviewees’ views about how they had or had not transformed as a result of interaction with U.S. culture. Five commonalities became appeared, but none were strong enough to be identified as themes. It is worth considering, however, that because participants were still in the midst of their degree programs, it might have been difficult for them to perceive transformation at this point. Table 15 presents the limited number of commonalities in the Transformation category.

Table 15: Commonalities: Transformation

Code	Frequency
Transformation: While in the United States: Maintained Chinese cultural identity	1/1/0/1/1/1/5
Transformation: While in the United States: Enjoy freedom in classroom settings	1/0/1/0/1/0/3
Transformation: While in the United States:	

Thinking and Behaving Changes: Academic: Develop a philosophy of music education	0/0/0/1/1/1/3
Transformation: Before coming to the United States: Western culture as advanced culture	1/0/0/0/0/1/2
Transformation: Before coming to the United States.: Cultural misunderstanding about U.S. education	0/1/0/0/1/0/2

Five participants transformed in that they maintained their Chinese identity but also embraced the changes necessary for cross-cultural adaptation (“Transformation: Maintained Chinese cultural identity,” $n = 5$). Nancy insisted that she made some necessary changes so that she could achieve her academic goals. For example, she now liked like to complete group projects with native peers. This gave her more opportunities to practice English. At the same time, she felt strongly about her Chinese identity and maintained a Chinese lifestyle:

I don’t want to be an American student. I just want to engaged in or participant in another culture and explore the new culture...I think I adjust the life in the America, but I don’t want to forget my culture” (Nancy, Interview 2).

In the process of adaptation, participants tried to resolve the tension between maintaining their Chinese music identity and culture and adjusting to U.S. society. It was clear that cultural assimilation was not participants’ final goal; however, they wanted to be involved and function successfully in both U.S. and Chinese cultures and society.

The expectations of doctoral participants Sherry and Coco transformed concerning effective music education for K–12 students (“Thinking and Behaving Changes: Academic: Develop a philosophy of music education,” $n = 3$). They came to believe that music should be taught via differentiated instruction in order to reach all learners. As they mentioned their previous K-12 music education experience, singing was often the only activity in their general

music classes. After studying in the United States for a period of time, they came to believe that the goal of music education is to help students develop a passion and interest for learning music. Sherry advocated that the main objectives of music class should be for all students to make and learn about music, instead of focusing on the grading of students' work:

Before I came to the states, I think students should have a good grade in their examination, it is the target for students. But after I came to the States, I feel that the goal is to encourage student in doing music education and make them feel comfortable in making music After I came here, I feel that everyone can make music. There is no high-quality music-making and low music-making. (Sherry, Online discussion forum)

Coco also had broadened her beliefs about connections between music and other areas of study:

The philosophy of Chinese music education seems that people regarded music as a single subject. It's only involving making music, to teach kids how to play the instruments and how to sing a song in the classroom But here, I think music education is not a simple subject . . . it is combined the knowledge from different areas, you should know knowledge from different areas, not only about music or education, but also global, economic, language, different topics. (Coco, Online discussion forum)

Three participants additionally appreciated the transformation they experienced through the academic freedom and independence they found in the United States ("Transformation: While in the United States: Enjoy freedom in classroom settings," $n = 3$). For example, Zoe acknowledged the benefit of this newfound academic freedom and talked about how she developed as an independent thinker and learner in the music education classroom: "I think the freedom, the freedom to express your thoughts are very available in the class." (Interview 2) These participants valued the independent learning process as well as the guidance and mentorship of

academic advisors and other faculty members. Furthermore, participants' comfort in sharing their ways of thinking and behaving changed somewhat as a result of interaction with U.S. culture. Even before coming to the United States, some participants' families regarded Western culture as advanced, and this was one of the reasons they began piano study at a young age and later came to the United States for further study in music education ("Transformation: Before coming to the United States: Western culture as advanced culture," $n = 2$). Also, two participants, Nancy and Sherry, transformed their beliefs about education in the United States. They mistakenly had initially believed that they would experience a low level of academic pressure in U.S. graduate schools. ("Transformation: Before coming to the United States: Cultural misunderstanding about U.S. education," $n = 2$). However, they later reported being overloaded with coursework and felt compelled to conduct academic research in the United States. Sherry described that the major pressure for her was to pass her comprehensive exam at the completion of her coursework.

Differences Among Participants

Although commonalities among participants were the main focus of this study, the differences among them were also notable for other reasons. These differences helped to identify topics for future research, as well as potential implications for future Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. Through the process of data analysis, two major differences among participants became apparent. These had to do with professional connections and career goals.

Professional Connections

One of the primary differences among participants had to do with participation in professional development activities in the United States. Master's students Nancy and Lucy

mentioned never having attended music education conferences. Additionally, neither had been involved in any professional association in the United States. Zoe (also a master's student) had also not participated in professional development activities, but was aware of some of the professional associations related to the different approaches to general music education: "I think the Kodaly, Orff, and Dalcroze approaches in the music education . . . I want to learn about these associations" (Interview 1). However, no other participants mentioned these.

In contrast to the master's students, the doctoral students Coco, Sherry, and I had presented research posters and papers at conferences. Sherry, under her previous professors' guidance, had presented her research at conferences and made professional connections before enrolling in her doctoral program. During the course of this research study, Coco presented her research at two U.S music education conferences. She always paid close attention to the professional music education conference information: "This year, our state has FMEA [Florida Music Educators Association In-service Conference]. In the next month, we have the National Music Education conference. I think we learned from these experiences" (Interview 2). I, on the other hand, gave workshops and presented my research regionally, nationally, and internationally during my doctoral study, for conferences such as the Massachusetts Music Educators Association All-State Conference, the Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium, the Asia-Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research, and the International Society for Music Education World Conference.

The difference observed between master's and doctoral students regarding professional development is noteworthy. Professional connections were obviously more important to those who were preparing for careers in higher education. The objectives of the doctoral participants were to be professors in higher education institutions. They expressed more clearly-articulated

career goals than the master's participants. Doctoral-level participants realized that in order to become a professor, they must conduct independent research, present their research at conferences, and publish in scholarly journals and books. During the conferences they attended, doctoral participants began networking to learn about potential opportunities in the field. They also sought to connect with other music education scholars for the purpose of discussing current topics in music education and collaborating on research.

Professional Career Goals

A second major difference among participants in this study was they had different professional career goals. As I stated in the previous section, the interview comments illustrated that master's participants Lucy and Nancy perceived different career goals from those they had on arriving in the United States. They now wanted to teach music in K–12 schools instead of becoming music education professors. They had learned about best practices in general music education in the K–12 schools, which affected their career choice. In contrast, doctoral participants Sherry, Coco, and I held to our original plans to become music education professors.

Solo Statements

In this study, a statement was considered “solo” if it was mentioned by only one participant. Solo statements were noted but omitted from the analysis because they represented individual participants' points of view, not commonalities among participants. However, I viewed these solo statements as insightful, even though shared by only one person, because they represented the unique experience of each participant. I present them in their entirety here.

Lucy

Eight solo statements were particular to Lucy, and are as follows:

(a) “Interactions: U.S. professors: Culture gap”: “I think there is still a culture gap”; (b)

“Music education characteristics: United States: Composing and improvising experience,”: “We have two weeks to compose a piece to performance. That kind of experience is very valuable for me”; (c) “Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Early childhood music teacher,”: “Also, I am very interested in early education right now”; (d) “Professional career goal: Long term plan: Music teacher: Special education music teacher”: “I am interested in special education. I think I am planning to working with special education as well”; (e) “Suggestions: For U.S. professors: Culturally responsive teaching”: “I shared my experience as a music student and teacher in China. I think it is also important that they can provide the classroom with different perspectives”; (f) “Suggestions: For U.S. professors: Teach more world music education strategies, resources”: “I hope that when the professor talks about the music education, they would talk about what . . . happens in the world, to talk about the music education in the world”; (g) “Suggestions: For university and departments: World music learning experience”: “I hope that the focus on the classroom discussion can be expand on music education in the world instead of the U.S. music education”; and (h) “Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: Become feminist”: “I became feminist last year, I currently experience the pressure form people surrounding me, concerning the marriage of my age because people around me push me get married”. Based on these solo statements, it was clear that she would like to become a general music education teacher in the early childhood level or became a music teacher for students with special needs. Thus, she suggested that the U.S. professors or music education program add more general music education strategies and resources for future students preparing teaching in K-12 schools, including strategies for the teaching of world music. The last solo statement of Lucy was unique among all participants in its connection to gender stereotyping.

Nancy

Nancy made only two solo statements: (a) “Suggestions: For university and department: Workshop for job hunting”: “I think the university can offer some workshops and invited some experienced professors and teacher to introduce the working situation here, that maybe helpful for us to find a job here”; and (b) “Suggestions: For university and departments: Writing center”: “The things we learned in the English learning center are very easy, it is only about how to live in the America. In the academic part, I think it is not good enough”.

Nancy’s two solo statements were both suggestions for university and departments. It was clear that she was concerned with improving the U.S. graduate school experience for international students.

Zoe

Eight solo statements were specific to Zoe and are as follows: (a) “Benefits: Good library system”: “We have very good library system in our university because we have many resources. We have first-hand materials”; (b) “Benefits: Grew up: Learned how to furnish an apartment”: “For example, cooking and build the furniture and purchase furniture online”; (c) “First Class in the United States: Felt exciting”: “When I first get here I was very excited because in China, I was surrounded by my parents, they are much more careful about me. But I want to be independent, now my dream is come true”; (d) “Professional Goal: Short term plan: Obtain a doctoral degree”: “I am thinking about continuing the doctoral program”; (e) “Suggestions: For Chinese students: Be independent”: “We should start to learn some basic living skills”; (f) “Suggestions: For Chinese students: Create personal statement and CV for application”: “About the preparation for the personal statement and CV, it is also difficult and tough and time-consuming, because I have to revise every personal statement for every university. It should be

appropriate for each university's conditions"; (g) "Suggestions: For Chinese students: Demonstrate well-roundedness: Participate in various activities": "Start to join in some groups in the university as soon as possible because in this way they can get some advice about how to get their financial aid and credit card"; (h) "Suggestions: For Chinese students: "Make the study abroad plan earlier": "So I suggested that we should prepare earlier and make the plan very prior to the application period." Many of Zoe's solo statements provided many details about how to apply for the U.S. music education graduate programs. Her suggestions could be very valuable for potential Chinese music education graduate students who are preparing graduate school materials for application.

Coco

Coco's viewpoints comprised fourteen solo statements, including the following:

(a) "Benefits: Conference experience: State music educator conference": "I participated the State music educator conference this year"; (b) "Challenges: Academic: Difficulty contributing to class discussions: Lack of teaching experience: Work issue of limited access to education employment opportunity (visa-employment issue)": "Because of the visa issue, I can't do any teaching off campus during the first year"; (c) "Education System Differences: China: Large class size": "In China, each class has more than 30-40 students. Basically, large classes in China"; (d) "Education Systems Differences: China: No online learning experience": "When I was in China, I never took online class"; (e) "Education System Differences: United States: Classroom size and small course enrollment": "But in the U.S., the maximum of students, the classroom I attended was 15 students"; (f) "Education System Differences: United States: Online learning experience": "I think the online class is very new learning style for me"; (g) "Motivation: Perception of goodness of fit for U.S. society": "I feel that United States is a good

place and my personal and characters are very suit this society”; (h) “Motivation: Perception of goodness of fit for U.S. society: Open minded”: “I am very talkative and open minded”; (i) “Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: Sociology and psychology of music education,”: “The third one is social and psychology of music education.”; (j) “Music education characteristics: United States: Focus on music and teaching: Many music education course choices: History and psychology of music education”;; “the second one is historical and philosophical perspectives of music education”; (k) “Suggestions: For future students: Seeking help: Career center”: “I went to career center to get some help about graduate school application and I did mock interview with them”; (l) “Suggestions: For university and department: Music education exchange program”: “The native students can understand the music in China or maybe they can cooperate to do something in the music education field in the future”; (m) “Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: Academic: Prefer completing project step by step”:

Learning in the U.S. is a progress process. Every step you should follow the rule, which means that you should be very careful. . . I am very respect this process, which means that music education is a rewarded thing, which means it need them to take time to consider more about this project;

and (n) “Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: Schedules (in general)”: “Maybe in China, I don’t have this schedule. I just wake up and just do what I have to do on that time. After I came here, I have the schedule. Followed this schedule, I think I can live regularly.” Of the study participants, Coco made the most solo statements. She made more comments than others did about the education system differences between United

States and China, and also about searching for jobs in the United States. She seemed to have a broader picture of her experience in the United States than did the other participants.

Sherry

Three solo themes were specific to Sherry, and included the following:

(a) “Benefits: Music performance experience: Marching band”: “I don’t [know] what marching band looks like. K-12 students have lots of choir, marching band experience in the United States”; (b) “First Class in the United States: Diversity and multicultural”: “I found there are lots of different people in the campus. Some of my classmates are . . . older than me, they are the same age like my parents. It is very different. Students have different backgrounds”; and (c) “Transformation: While in the United States: Thinking and Behaving Changes: In life: The U.S. lifestyle”:

Some of the acculturation like lifestyle . . . when I speak with some of my friends, I will use some English word to my friend. I don’t know how to translate that vocabulary into Chinese. . . . I will talk to my mom more like a friend instead of like a Chinese mom.

When I come back to China, when I cross the road, I will not look around and I will just go ahead. In China, you still need to look around in case. (Interview 2)

Sherry’s solo statements focused on academic and sociocultural aspects. She eventually learned what a marching band was, and she also noted the diversity and multiculturalism in her classes in the United States. She appeared to explore several different music education experiences during her studying in the United States. In the sociocultural aspect, she enjoyed the U.S. lifestyle and through her experiences became more open-minded when she communicated with her friends and families.

Kailimi Li

Two solo statements were specific to me. These were as follows:

(a) “Benefits: Conference experience: ISME”. In 2016, “I had the opportunity to present two posters in the ISME conference in Glasgow, Scotland, UK”; and (b) “Music education characteristics: United States: Volunteer teaching experience”: “I introduced music to preschool children at a Campus & Community Children’s Center.” It is a university-based preschool for children who are living in that community. As a volunteer teacher, I taught music to these children three times a week during my master’s degree program and I gained valuable teaching experience in this U.S. K-12 school setting. I only made two solo statements, which was the same number made by Nancy and fewer than other participants. My experience at the International Society for Music Education World Conference in Scotland stood out as unique among participants. Also, I was the only participant who had volunteer teaching experience in the United States.

Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed, categorized, and discussed all data collected in this research study. Thirty-six themes, 78 commonalities, and 37 solo statements emerged via the analysis within the 12 categories of Benefits, Challenges, Education System Differences, Interaction, Motivation, Music Education Characteristics, Professional Career Goal, Suggestions, First Class in the United States, First Day in the United States, Leisure time Activities, Professional Career Goal, and Transformation. Table 2 presented the code key, including categories, sub-categories, a frequency count for each code, with distinctions among the three types of coding utilized (descriptive, in vivo, magnitude). I also discussed emergent themes and commonalities, as well as differences among participants. Finally, I identified and listed solo statements.

Relationships among identified themes are discussed further in Chapter 5, which also presents conclusions and implications for future Chinese music education graduate students, U.S. faculty, and U.S. collegiate music education programs. Recommendations for additional research are also given.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICARIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I summarize the major findings of this study, make comparisons with previous findings and perspectives presented in scholarly literature, and interpret the findings in relationship to the research questions. Meta-themes are shared and discussed, with a model presented for Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States. A second model is also presented that illustrates the cross-cultural adaptation process of native Chinese students who study music education at the graduate level in the United States, with suggestions given for supporting this adaptation process. In addition, I discuss the implications of the study, make suggestions for future research, and share final conclusions.

Summary and Interpretation of Significant Findings

In the data analysis process, I discovered most findings were as I had anticipated. For the purposes of this study, expected findings are those that are congruent with previous research. In this study, expected findings are considered important because of the context from whence they came: first-hand testimonies of six native Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. These findings are also important because they serve to expand the limited body of research on this topic and to illuminate paths for future research. Some findings were unexpected, however, meaning that they had not appeared previously in research or other scholarly literature. These unexpected findings are also important because they point to new research questions and directions.

Seven research questions guided this study. In the next section, I discuss findings related to each research question, including both expected and unexpected findings.

Research Question One

What are the current and prior educational experiences of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education masters and doctoral degree programs in the United States? Related to this question, study participants first shared their previous musical performance and music education experiences in China. These occurred both inside and outside of school, and at the elementary, secondary (K-12), and post-secondary (collegiate) levels. Participants next discussed their experiences within music education graduate degree programs in the United States and made comparisons between music and music education learning environments in China and United States. Many of their comments also related to the challenges they encountered and benefits they experienced during their studies (which are addressed in this section via subsequent research questions).

Expected Findings

The largest group of expected findings related to characteristics of music education degree programs in China. Findings from this study and scholarly literature are in agreement that Western music has become an integral part of the music education curriculum in China (Gong, 2010; Lin, 2002; Huang, 2011; Titan, 2002; Ward 2014). Research has shown that Chinese music education degree programs tend to strongly emphasize musical performance and place less emphasis on music teacher preparation (Xu & Sun, 2011). This point was strongly supported in the responses of participants. All stated that they spent a great deal of time within their music education degree program studying applied piano or voice, and not enough time on music education pedagogical skills and knowledge. Additionally, the finding that Western music professors are frequently invited to visit and present lectures, masterclasses, workshops, or teach courses in Chinese higher education institutions was congruent with the findings of Ward (2014).

Another group of findings concerned differences in classroom teaching and learning formats in China and United States. The Chinese education system emphasizes study as preparation for examinations and classes are teacher-centered. In contrast, U.S. education environments include student-centered classes with professors using a variety of teaching approaches to encourage students to participate in class activities. These findings are widely supported in scholarly literature (Feng, 1991; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Huang, 2006; K. Li, 2013; Z. Li, 2016; Tsai, 2002; Washington, 2010; Zhou, 2010). Participants reported that in their current U.S. classes, students are frequently asked to explore ideas, ask questions, and discuss course material in groups. However, in their previous Chinese classes, professors emphasized imitation and memorization of information. Participants mentioned they enjoyed the freedom in U.S. classrooms to direct their own learning and pursue topics that interested them. Additionally, participants reported that U.S. music education courses focused on music teacher preparation and pedagogical skills, but Chinese music education was more focused on performance and many exam-based assignments, all of which was attested to in the scholarly work of Heller (2015) and Ho (2010).

A smaller group of expected findings related to curricula and lesson structure within K-12 school music education in China. Participants felt that their K-12 music classes were not engaging because singing was frequently the only activity. This corroborates the research findings of Brahmstedt and Brahmstedt (1997), which show that Chinese general music education emphasizes singing and some rhythm activities, to the exclusion of other types of musical activities. Additionally, participants mentioned learning songs by rote. Research shows that similar to other primary and secondary school subjects in China, the process of music learning focuses on repetitive rote memorization of songs (Brahmstedt & Brahmstedt, 1997).

A few miscellaneous findings were also classified as expected findings relative to this research question. According to Huang and Tatiana (2016), United States is a top destination for graduate study for Chinese students. Choi's (2012) research showed that the reasons Chinese music students come to the United States include professor and program reputation and professors' areas of expertise. In this study, music education professor and program reputation were major reasons participants chose to study music education at the graduate level in the United States. An additional finding, supported in research from the fields of education (Hurny, 2014; Jiang, 2010; Kuo, 2011; Rawlings & Sue, 2013; Zhou, 2010) and music education (Huang, 2006), showed that Chinese graduate students devoted much attention to improving their English proficiency prior to arrival in the U.S. via TOEFL preparation. Study participants also mentioned that in order to pass the TOEFL exam, they spend approximately a year preparing for the test.

Unexpected Findings

Two unexpected findings emerged relative to the first research question. One had to do with study participants' willingness to become involved in U.S. society and ultimately adopt its lifestyle. From the beginning of their experience in the United States, they enjoyed involving themselves in the variety of social and cultural activities common to the United States, such as "hanging out" with American friends and going to different music concerts and festivals. This finding contradicted research by Leung and Stahura (2010), Li and Stodolska (2006), and Jiang (2010), who found that Chinese graduate students focused so heavily on their academic studies that they had little real-life experience in the United States. It was surprising to discover that study participants knew how to balance their academic studies with leisure time.

The other unexpected finding concerned participants' lack of knowledge of career center services within U.S. higher education institutions. Although some participants were considering

seeking a job in the United States, most were unaware of or had never sought assistance from college and university career centers. Most noted that they had, however, received assistance from professors and peers, international programs, or other collegiate groups across campus. One participant, Coco, did receive help from the career center on campus and expressed positive feelings about it. During the interviews, she noted that the career center helped her with graduate school applications and mock interviews. During the time of this research, I was also a graduate intern at a career center in a nearby higher education institution. However, my experience there led me to conclude that some career centers might not serve as strong, guiding forces for international students, due to staff members' limited knowledge of international students' needs.

Research Question Two

What are Chinese music education graduate students' motivations for pursuing a music education degree in the United States? When asked what led them to study in the United States, participants shared both long- and short-term motivations for enrolling in graduate school in the United States. They also mentioned the people who influenced their decision to come to the United States.

Expected Findings

Findings related to this research question were mainly expected and congruent with those of extant research. All participants believed the knowledge and skills they gained in the United States provided them with a strong music education background and the qualifications to teach students of different levels in China after graduation. Doctoral participants' motivation for studying in the United States was to gain knowledge of, and conduct, music education research, which would help them secure faculty positions at the collegiate level after they graduated. Master's participants' motivation was to gain knowledge of U.S. music education pedagogical

methods and develop their teaching skills, in order to become effective, innovative K-12 general music educators. This is congruent with the research of Jian (2012), who found that Chinese graduate students' motivation to pursue degrees in the United States was to receive a better education than they could in China, leading to better jobs and greater prosperity. Additionally, a few participants mentioned being influenced to study abroad by their parents. This was congruent with the research of (Ramos, 2013), which found that Chinese students had highly-educated parents whose intentions were to send their children to study abroad.

Unexpected Finding

One unexpected finding emerged for this research question. As described above, participants' motivations to study abroad were influenced by their parents. However, master's participants Lucy and Nancy stated that one of the most important influences on their decisions to study music education at the graduate level in the United States were the Chinese music education professors who had studied in the United States and who visited their undergraduate institutions in China to offer piano masterclasses, music education lectures, and workshops.

Research Question Three

What are the challenges experienced by Chinese music education graduate students attending U.S. higher education institutions? In response to this question, participants discussed the academic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties they experienced at different stages of their study in the United States. All findings are congruent with the large body of extant research on cross-cultural adaptation.

Expected Findings

A large group of expected findings for this question relate to the concept and theory of cross-cultural adaptation. Kim's integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural

adaptation explains how and why people, on relocating from a familiar home culture to a new culture, adapt to continuous experiences of interacting with the host environment (Kim, 1988, 2001, 2005, 2012). Other scholars have illuminated factors specific to Chinese graduate students' cross-cultural adaptation experience in the United States. These include insufficient English competency, unfamiliarity with U.S. culture, high levels of stress caused by high expectations for academic success, as well as disconnection with local people and society (Sun & Chen, 1999; Wan, 2001; Zhang, 2013; Zhang & Xu, 2007). Many studies have also focused on cross-cultural challenges, and general differences between the two different cultures and educational systems (Sun & Chen, 1999; Wan, 2001; Yan & Berliner, 2009; Zhang & Xu, 2007). This study's results for this research question accord with these findings.

Within the topic of cross-cultural adaptation, the biggest group of findings comprised the challenges reported by study participants that clearly related to language barrier. Inadequate English language skills caused them substantial difficulty with their academic work, for example, in comprehending lectures, participating in class discussions, and writing academic papers. Although participants had passed the TOEFL exam, they still faced considerable difficulty in meeting the English language expectations of graduate music education programs in the United States.

A final expected finding for this research question was that cultural factors caused difficulties for participants in sociocultural settings. All reported difficulties in interacting with native peers outside the classroom. For example, Nancy felt that her interactions with native peers were always limited to social greetings and discussions of coursework. This is congruent with previous research showing that Chinese graduate students, upon arrival in the United States, lacked understanding of U.S. culture and found it difficult to interact socially (Huang, 1998; Jian,

2012; Li, 2016; Lin, 2002; Sun & Chen, 1999; Yuan, 2011; Zhang, 2016). No unexpected findings emerged in relationship to this research question.

Research Question Four

What benefits do Chinese music education graduate students experience while attending U.S. higher education institutions? Participants listed many ways in which they benefitted personally and professionally from their experiences within graduate level music education degree programs in the United States. Some findings were congruent with research on international students and were expected findings; however, findings that were specific to music education were mainly unexpected, since very little research has been conducted on the population of Chinese music education graduate students.

Expected Findings

A small group of expected findings related to the achievement of autonomy and independence in a new environment. Participants believed that the longer they were in the United States, the more independence they achieved within U.S. society. For example, participants made friends, developed their cooking skills, participated in dance clubs, joined collegiate musical performance groups and ultimately found their own direction while living in the United States. Related research shows that in the U.S. higher education system, independent and creative thinking is highly encouraged (Hammerschmidt, 2016). Participants expressed that they are growing up and becoming more mature and independent through their journey abroad. Participants also mentioned that they benefitted and achieved independence through opportunities for travel. Some participants' parents travelled to the United States and visited different places with them, a phenomenon which was similarly described in the scholarly work of Hurny (2014), Washington (2010), and Zhou (2010).

Unexpected Findings

As a participant-observer with similar experiences to other participants, I anticipated some of the findings presented in this section. However, for the purposes of this study, these findings are considered to be unexpected because they do not appear in the extremely limited body of research on Chinese music education graduate students. Related to the fourth research question, study participants reported several benefits that were specific to their music education experience. Participants strongly believed that they learned a great deal about music education within their degree programs, including best practices and effective teaching strategies for K-12 schools. They also learned more about music education through degree program-related field experience, including opportunities to work with students who had disabilities. Some participants also mentioned that they benefitted from learning how to conduct music education research, and doctoral participants took advantage of opportunities to present research papers or posters at music education conferences. A final unexpected finding is that throughout their degree programs, all participants believed that they benefitted from the quality mentorship of their professors.

Research Question Five

Do Chinese music education graduate students' ways of thinking and behaving change as a result of interaction with U.S. culture? Interview and online forum questions related to this research question explored participants' perceived values and behavior changes over time in response to their experience in the United States. Though no themes emerged in direct response to these questions, as participant-observer I was able to discern changes in participants over time as they described their responses to the challenges they faced.

Expected Finding

As I reflected on participants' responses over the entire study, I concluded that, interestingly, after being in the United States for a period of time, participants were able to adopt to some extent the American lifestyle. In other words, their thinking and behavior changed somewhat as they adjusted to U.S. culture and society. This was congruent with the research of Ma and Wang (2012) and Jian (2012), which showed that Chinese students were willing to adapt in the United States, and that they experienced real acculturative growth over time. In this study, Nancy, Coco, and Sherry experienced United States as a country of freedom. At the same time, they continuously strove to mitigate the tension that arose from trying to maintain their Chinese identity and culture while adjusting to U.S. society. It was clear that cultural assimilation was not these participants' final goal; however, they wanted to be involved and function successfully in both United States and Chinese cultures and society.

Unexpected Finding

As stated previously, no themes emerged directly from the questions I asked participants about thinking, behavioral, and values changes. This of itself was an unexpected finding. As stated in Chapter 4, participants were still in the midst of their degree programs at the time of data collection. It may have been difficult for them to figuratively "step back" from their situation enough to perceive transformation at this point. It could be valuable to revisit the concept of transformation with these participants at a later date, after they have completed their degree programs and some time has passed.

Research Question Six

From the perspectives of Chinese music education graduate students, how should future students be effectively prepared to study music education at the graduate level in the United

States.? When participants were asked for their suggestions as to effective preparation for graduate study in the United States, they responded with recommendations for students, colleges and universities; music and music education schools, departments, or programs; and professors. Both expected and unexpected findings emerged.

Expected Findings

Participants strongly recommended that Chinese music education students become more proficient in spoken and written English. Previous research identified language barrier as a major hurdle for Chinese graduate students in the United States. (Cheng & Erben, 2011; Dempsey, 2012; Huang, 1998; Huang, 2006; Kuo, 2011; Lee, 2015) and supports this suggestion.

Participants also suggested participation in short cultural exchange programs prior to coming to the United States. This is logical in light of research identifying culture as a major barrier to Chinese graduate students' adjustment to the United States (Cheng & Erben, 2011; Huang, 1998, 2006; Kuo, 2011; Lee, 2015). Another suggestion from participants was to learn to be brave and confident, which is congruent with Yuan's (2011) findings that Chinese graduate students in the United States must find ways to reduce their uncertainty. Participants also recommended that U.S. universities and music departments offer more U.S. culture and/or university orientation workshops, as was also suggested in the work of Hammerschmidt (2013), K. Li (2013), Z. Li (2016), Rawlings & Sue (2013), Sun & Chen (1999), Xue (2013), and Zhou (2010).

Unexpected Finding

Though scholarly literature shows that Chinese music education degree programs have been criticized for utilizing a conservatory model, with heavy emphasis on music performance and a lack of attention to educator preparation (Xu & Sun, 2011; Yeh, 2001; Yip, Leung & Lau, 2003), field experience has not been specifically identified in the literature as a missing element

of Chinese music education degree programs. An unexpected finding was participants' recommendation that future graduate students gain teaching experience via field experience opportunities in China before coming to the United States. They also recommended that U.S. colleges and universities provide increased opportunities for field experience for Chinese students within graduate-level music education degree programs.

Research Question Seven

How do participants plan to move forward or move on after this experience? Questions related to this research question explored participants' professional goals for immediately after completion of their degree programs as well as goals for the long term. As far as can be determined, no research has been conducted on future professional career goals of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States, so findings related to this research question are considered to be unexpected.

Unexpected Findings

The short- and long-term goal of every participant was to stay in the music education profession. At the time of this writing, master's participants Lucy and Nancy wanted to teach music in K-12 schools in China. Zoe was considering applying for a music education doctoral degree program in the United States. Upon completion of a doctoral program, she would then seek a job at the college or university level. All three doctoral participants (Coco, Sherry, and I) desired to teach music education in a college or university. In particular, Sherry taught in a college in China before she came to the United States and would like to return to the same college in China after graduation.

Emergent Meta-Themes

Three meta-themes emerged across the themes and other commonalities in this study. I identified these as (a) communication, (b) culture, and (c) music education systems. Each meta-theme encompasses a group of related themes and is discussed individually in detail in this section.

Communication

The meta-theme of communication represents the different forms and types of contact, connection, and/or interaction Chinese music education students encounter relative to their experience in the United States. This includes spoken communication, such as conversing with peers, discussing course material in an academic setting, or the speaking required to take care of day-to-day of purchasing groceries, etc. Also encompassed is written communication, in the form of academic writing, email communication with peers and professors, blog and forum posts, etc. To a lesser degree, non-verbal communication also falls under this meta-theme, including the interpretation of gestures and body language. The meta-theme of communication interacts with the meta-themes of culture and music education systems in that communication is cultural, and for study participants, communication also aligns with the music education systems of which they are or have been a part.

Themes related to communication composed a substantial portion of this study's findings. A majority of these revolved around the enormous challenge of language barrier. Language barrier encompassed the sociocultural and academic difficulties participants experienced due to limited English proficiency, as well as their struggles and efforts to improve their English and overall communication skills. Language barrier also surrounded the academic problems participants experienced, such as misunderstanding lectures and classroom discussions, poor

academic writing, and limited interactions with peers and professors due to limited class participation. All participants reported difficulties in understanding questions and conversations in class in the very beginning of their degree programs. The common experience of language difficulties led to feelings of incompetence and isolation in the classroom.

In addition to the academic aspect, results from this study showed that language barrier is related to negative outcomes for participants in social interactions with students who were U.S. natives. All participants claimed that language problems and communication barriers made it difficult for them to engage in meaningful conversations with their U.S. peers. The inability to engage in meaningful conversation also meant that they missed out on the U.S. cultural insights that come about through deep understanding of conversation. For example, participants described their interactions with peers and professors as limited to coursework-related communications. Lack of cultural insight also meant that participants did not know how to initiate interaction with their native peers, such as finding a common interest topic or starting a conversation. Despite the improvements participants made in English, communicating their thoughts and feelings to others in an effective way remained a constant struggle even after being in the United States for some time.

Communication clearly stood out as an integral element of participants' experience in the United States, and also as an enormous challenge. However, participants developed many strategies to improve their English skills, such as watching English-language movies and reading magazines, journal articles, and scholarly books in English. They also improved their language skills by participating in various social activities with their non-Chinese peers. Once their English language skills improved, participants believed that academic adjustment became less of a problem and cultural adjustment became easier. For example, they began to understand more

details in class and gained knowledge more quickly of relevant topics in music education and music education research. Overall, all participants noted that their study abroad experience in the United States was worthwhile considering the degree to which their English communication skills improved.

Culture

The meta-theme of culture encompasses participants' connection to, interaction with, and engagement in the societal and philosophical thinking and beliefs, attitudes, customs and behaviors of both the United States and China. This connection/interaction/engagement occurs in both sociocultural and academic settings. The meta-theme of culture also interacts with the meta-themes of communication and music education systems in that cultural norms determine communication modes and styles, and culture extends to music education systems through the structure and design of learning experiences, as well as expectations for interactions among students and professors.

Themes related to culture were threaded throughout this study's findings. As presented in Chapter 2, many researchers focused their attention on Chinese graduate students' academic and cultural adjustment problems and challenges in the United States (Huang, 2012; Wan, 2001; Wang, 2009; Zhou, 2012). Findings from this study align with this body of research in that participants also encountered cultural conflicts in academic settings. Results point to the Confucian philosophy, which supports instruction and assessment via a focus on textbook learning, as a contributor to the difficulties that participants experienced in their academic work in the United States. The Confucian perspective on education additionally emphasizes teacher-directed instruction, rote learning over critical thinking, and form over substance. When participants entered the U.S. higher education system, it was especially difficult for them to

criticize or argue about course material or generate and speak their own opinions. For participants, using another author's words was a natural way of showing respect, and it was hard for them to change this cultural practice. For example, participants found it difficult to assume expected academic classroom behaviors, such as direct discussion with professors during and outside class. At the same time, participants made efforts to adapt to the new academic culture, of the U.S. forming a new cultural identity. A potential consequence is that participants' new and old cultural beliefs could co-exist, integrate, or even conflict (Zhou, 2010) making participants appear to be obedient to authority and lack critical thinking.

Socioculturally, participants encountered culture shock upon arrival in the United States, which permeated all aspects of their daily lives. Participants had, as Oberg (1960, p.17) stated earlier, lost the "familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse." They continued to navigate this for some time, balancing and reconciling the cultural differences between China and the United States. Over their time in the United States, participants continuously negotiated their adaptation to the new environment while striving to maintain a strong sense of their Chinese culture and traditions. They followed the learning and recovery process described in Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity, moving from existing solely in Chinese culture, to recognizing and accepting different cultural values, and finally evolving a new view of both Chinese and U.S. cultures.

The transformation of these individuals from monocultural to bi-cultural broadened and enhanced their cultural identities and gave them a newfound and expanded sense of belonging and self-esteem. Overall, culture formed a complex framework for participants, at times complicating and obfuscating self-identity, while at the same time enriching it.

Music Education Systems

For this research study, the meta-theme of music education systems represents the structure and elements of the profession of music education at all levels of instruction, in both United States and China. It additionally represents music learning experiences within and outside of schools. The meta-theme of music education systems interacts with the meta-themes of communication and music education systems in that communication takes place within music education system norms, and culture determines in part the structure and practice of music education systems. Since participants came to the United States for the purpose of studying music education, it is logical that themes related to music education systems compose the third and final meta-theme.

The considerable differences in the music education systems of the United States and China necessitated adaptation for study participants immediately upon matriculation into their U.S. degree programs. Emergent themes related to this topic showed that participants primarily encountered adjustment difficulties within two aspects: (a) teaching style and curriculum, and (b) course assessment methods.

Teaching Style and Curriculum

Participants' experiences were congruent with scholarly literature regarding differences in teaching styles between Chinese and American music education professors, as found in the scholarly work of Li (2016), Sun & Chen (1999), Wan (2001), Yan & Berliner (2009), and Zhang & Xu (2007). Participants reported that their Chinese professors displayed a *laissez-faire* attitude toward music teacher preparation, whereas U.S. professors were much more engaged with the process of teaching the elements and pedagogical processes of music education. Study participants described Chinese professors as delivering lectures and presentations on music

education, but not providing students with opportunities for field experience. They reported that their Chinese music teacher preparation programs emphasized rote memorization for the specific purpose of passing exams, whereas U.S. curricula emphasized active learning via group discussion and field experience, for the purpose of improving pedagogical knowledge and skills. At the graduate level, U.S. programs also offered opportunities for students to conduct research. U.S. faculty also engaged more directly with students than faculty in China, through low-pressure class discussions, classroom observations, and open office hours. These differences were a source of initial discomfort for participants upon arrival at their U.S. university; however, as time passed, participants grew more and more to appreciate and became better able to function within the U.S. classroom environment and climate.

Assessment Methods

Participants noticed stark differences between the United States and China in music education assessment methods. Since their high school years, participants had been socialized to expect an exam-centric approach stemming from the primary Chinese education objective: to help students pass the national higher education entrance examination (or “Gaokao”; Sun & Chen, 1999). Study participants had followed this model and received course grades based almost entirely on mid-term and final exams. In their Chinese music education courses, some short essays were required, but often not for grades. These provided an opportunity for students to receive informal, ungraded feedback and to prepare for the final graded exam. Subsequently, participants described feeling overwhelmed upon arrival in the United States; they were shocked by the number of graded assignments, including homework, papers, teaching reflections, projects, group work, and online discussion posts. However, after the first semester many participants expressed appreciation for the small, frequently graded assignments in their music

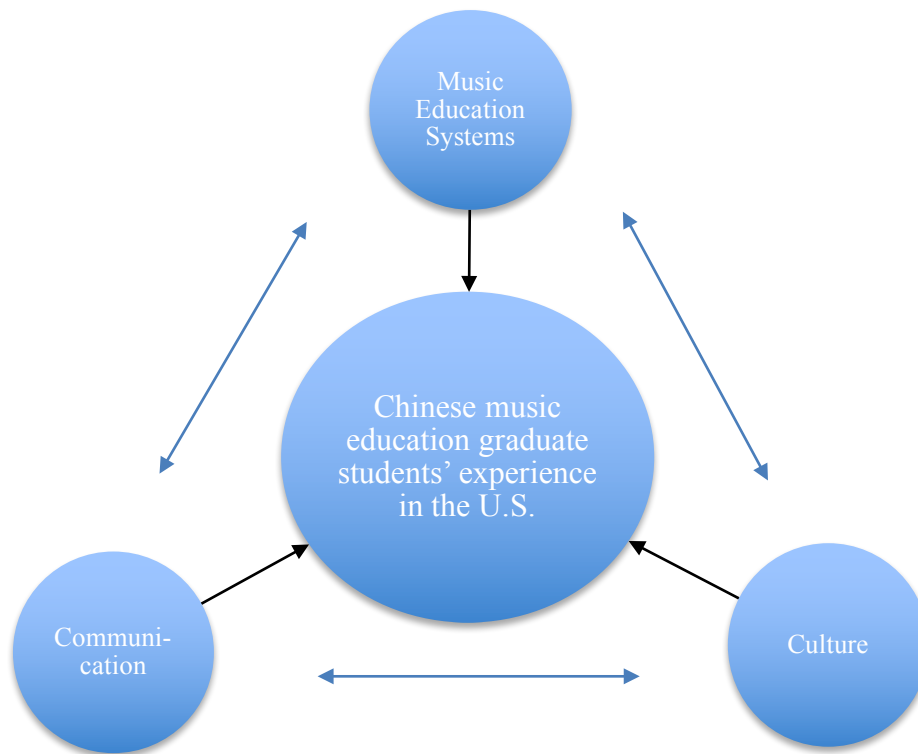
education courses. This format made it easier for them to track their progress throughout a course and make changes as necessary in their strategies for satisfying course expectations. Overall, the differences in the music education systems of China and the United States caused major challenges for participants within their graduate degree programs and emerged as another key factor of participants' overall experience in the United States.

Toward New Models

In response to the findings from this research, I generated two new models relative to the experience of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. The first model is presented in Figure 1, which shows the three meta-themes of communication, culture, and music education systems as critical elements of Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States. At the center is the U.S. experience of Chinese music education graduate students. The inner group of arrows indicate that this experience is composed of the meta-themes of communication, culture, and music education systems. The outer group of arrows indicate the interaction of the three meta-themes with each other. Appropriately, this model aligns with Kim's (2005) theory of cross-cultural adaptation, which framed this study. In order to adapt and succeed in their educational experience, native Chinese music education graduate students must develop the ability to communicate in accordance with U.S. education system norms and practices, effectively navigate the U.S. culture, and actively engage in U.S. social and academic communication processes. Though results of this study are not expected to be generalizable, this model could be broadly representative of the experience of other Chinese music education graduate students enrolled in similar music education programs and higher education institutions in the United States.

As the three meta-themes became clear during the process of data analysis, it also became apparent that not only did they function as individual, interactive components of study participants' experience in the United States, but also were in evidence *across* participants' cross-cultural adaptation process. It appeared that participants' cross-cultural adaptation process occurred in three distinct stages, which I have labeled as follows: Stage 1: Moving In, Stage 2: Moving Through, and Stage 3: Moving Out. It also appeared that these three stages differed in length and focus.

Figure 1: Model for Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States



Stage 1: Moving In, took place in China, before study participants traveled to the United States. It included the process of familiarization with the English language, U.S. culture, U.S. higher education institutions, and music education degree programs in preparation for graduate

study in the United States. It took participants approximately two years to complete their plans and preparations, which included studying English in preparation for the TOEFL or Graduate Record examinations, searching for a graduate level music education degree program, completing application materials, obtaining a visa, and making housing and travel arrangements.

In *Stage 2: Moving Through*, participants began to traverse their new lives in the United States, navigating the sociocultural and academic challenges and difficulties they encountered. This stage encompasses Kim's (1988) "stress-adaptation-growth" model of cross-cultural adaptation, in that participants experienced initial culture shock, learned to adapt to a new culture, and experienced personal growth. Language proficiency, cultural awareness, and academic achievement were the main areas of focus within this stage. The length of this stage ranged from two to six years depending on the length of time necessary for completion of participants' degree programs. Master's participants were expected to complete this stage in two years, and doctoral participants would complete the stage over a range of three to six years. At the time of data collection, all participants were in this stage because they were still in the midst of their degree programs.

In *Stage 3: Moving Out*, participants complete their degree programs and begin to move into their future lives. The timeframe of this stage cannot yet be clearly determined because at the time of this writing, Stage 3 has not yet begun for any participant. Additionally, as far as can be determined, no research has been completed to shed further light on this topic. Further research is recommended to fully explore the characteristics and significance of this stage.

Figure 2 presents the three-stage model of study participants' cross-cultural adaptation process. Note that the rectangle representing Stage 2 is the longest. This signifies that the Stage 2 process may be lengthier than the other two stages, depending on the length of time from

beginning to completion of the music education degree program. Though results of this study are not expected to be generalizable, this model could be broadly representative of the adaptation process of other Chinese music education graduate students enrolled in similar music education programs and higher education institutions in the United States.

Figure 2: Three-stage cross-cultural adaptation process of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States



Implications: Supporting the Adaptation Process

This study aimed to explore native Chinese music education graduate students' perceptions of their experience in the United States, through the lens of cross-cultural adaptation. The findings of the study offer insights into participants' perspectives, which might open new possibilities for further research and support future students of this kind.

The meta-themes of communication, culture, and music education systems emerged as three critical components of the experience of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. These components were then juxtaposed across a three-stage process for cross-cultural adaptation. In considering these components and the cross-cultural adaptation process within the framework of music education graduate programs in the United States, some questions come to mind. How can Chinese students better prepare themselves for music education graduation study prior to arrival in the United States? How can music education professors and music schools/departments better support the cross-cultural adaptation process and academic achievement of Chinese music education graduate students? And finally, how can support be provided for Chinese music education graduate students as they complete their degree programs

and take their place in the profession of music education? In the remainder of this section, I present implications of this study and suggest strategies for the future. I also provide models for the support of Chinese music education graduate students within the meta-themes of communication, culture, and music education systems, and across each stage of the cross-cultural adaptation process.

Communication

Results from this study suggest that proficiency in spoken and written communication in the English language is critical for the cross-cultural adaptation and academic success of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States. Results also show that this is one of the biggest challenges for Chinese music education graduate students to overcome, and that they generally feel ill-prepared to communicate in spoken and written English, both inside and outside the classroom. Though communication improved over time, it remained a struggle for all study participants. Responsively, I suggest the following strategies to more fully prepare and support Chinese music education graduate students in the area of communication:

For Students

As discussed in chapter 4, participants believed that a high TOEFL score does not guarantee that Chinese students are fully competent to learn and perform academically in English at the same level as their native U.S. peers. Most participants found academic writing assignments to be especially difficult. Thus, I recommend that future students spend extra time and efforts on learning academic English. For example, future Chinese music education graduate students could take intensive English language courses, read as many U.S. music education academic articles in English as possible, acquire basic knowledge of music education research before coming to the United States, and enhance English communication skills via field

experience wherever possible in K–12 Chinese and English bilingual schools. Also, future students could start to learn music terms in English before they come to the United States, which would make it easier for them to understand course material and topics. I also recommend that future students complete a brief study-abroad experience in an English-speaking country to get used to communicating with people from another culture within an immersion setting.

For Music Education Professors

Both this study and extant research show that Chinese graduate students are likely to feel confused or frustrated initially in the U.S. classroom. I recommend that U.S. music education professors consider providing opportunities for prospective students to attend a few graduate-level music education classes via video conference prior to or during the application process. This could help Chinese students to learn more about communication practices within these courses. Additionally, I recommend that professors focus on facilitating a culturally responsive classroom environment, so all students feel safe to share their insights. It could also be valuable to ensure that Chinese students have opportunities to meet with professors individually, during office hours. It is important that Chinese students gain experience in spoken communication, but to gain confidence it is sometimes better to start one-on-one, then move toward speaking in class. Additionally, writing prompts can also work well as preparation for class discussions. When students are allowed time to write down their thoughts about a question in advance, they are more likely to verbally share what they have written. Finally, as students move from their degree programs into their careers, music education professors could provide guidance on creating resumes and cover letters for students' job application process.

For Music Schools or Department

I recommend that music departments in U.S higher education institutions provide subject-based writing courses, tutoring and editing services, or other forms of academic writing support for Chinese graduate students each semester, to help them improve their English skills and meet expectations for academic writing.

Figure 3 presents suggested strategies to strengthen communication skills for prospective and already-matriculated Chinese music education graduate students. Within each of the three stages of cross-cultural adaptation, strategies for Chinese students are represented in blue font, strategies for music education professors are represented in red font, and strategies for music schools or departments are represented in green font.

Culture

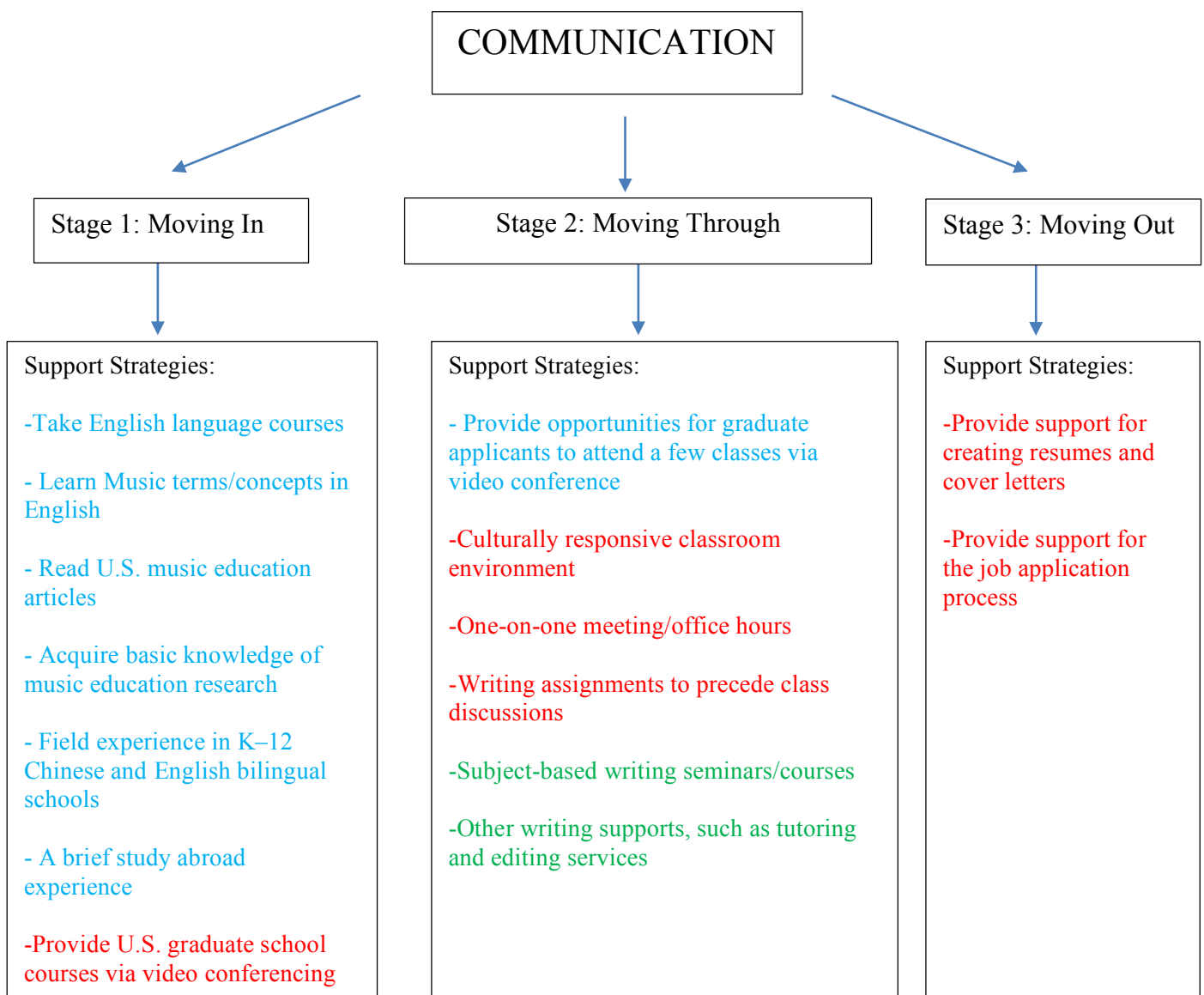
Chinese students face a substantial cultural adjustment process when they commit to the study of music education at the graduate level in the United States. Results from this study show that this process is difficult and permeates nearly every facet of students' lives. Having a basic understanding of U.S. culture can do much to facilitate this process. In response to the findings of this study, I recommend the following strategies to support Chinese music education graduate students in the area of cross-cultural adaptation.

For Students

Chinese music education graduate students' prior knowledge of U.S. culture could help reduce the magnitude of the inevitable culture shock that occurs after relocation to the United States. To learn more about U.S. culture and society, Chinese music education graduate students could access U.S. national news websites, as well as local news websites from their university's geographical area before coming to the United States. They could also watch U.S. television

shows and listen to U.S. music. After arrival on campus, new students could join campus student associations and clubs. These programs would help them to connect with U.S. students, and provide an environment within which to gain understanding of the U.S. culture. These experiences could also provide new students with necessary knowledge for success in U.S. society. Thus, they might cultivate positive attitudes toward these cultural value changes, which would in turn enhance their experience in the United States.

Figure 3: Strategies to support Chinese music education graduate students in the United States:
Communication



For Music Education Professors

Although it is impossible to require all professors to travel abroad to gain personal insights into the cross-cultural adaptation experience, those with Chinese backgrounds or who understand Chinese culture and music could collaborate with non-Chinese professors on campus to share their knowledge and experiences. I also recommend that professors who have Chinese graduate students in their programs and courses familiarize themselves with scholarly literature on cross-cultural adaptation, especially relative to international students. Additionally, music education professors could attend meetings of culturally diverse student and faculty organizations to better understand the issues members of these groups encounter in the United States.

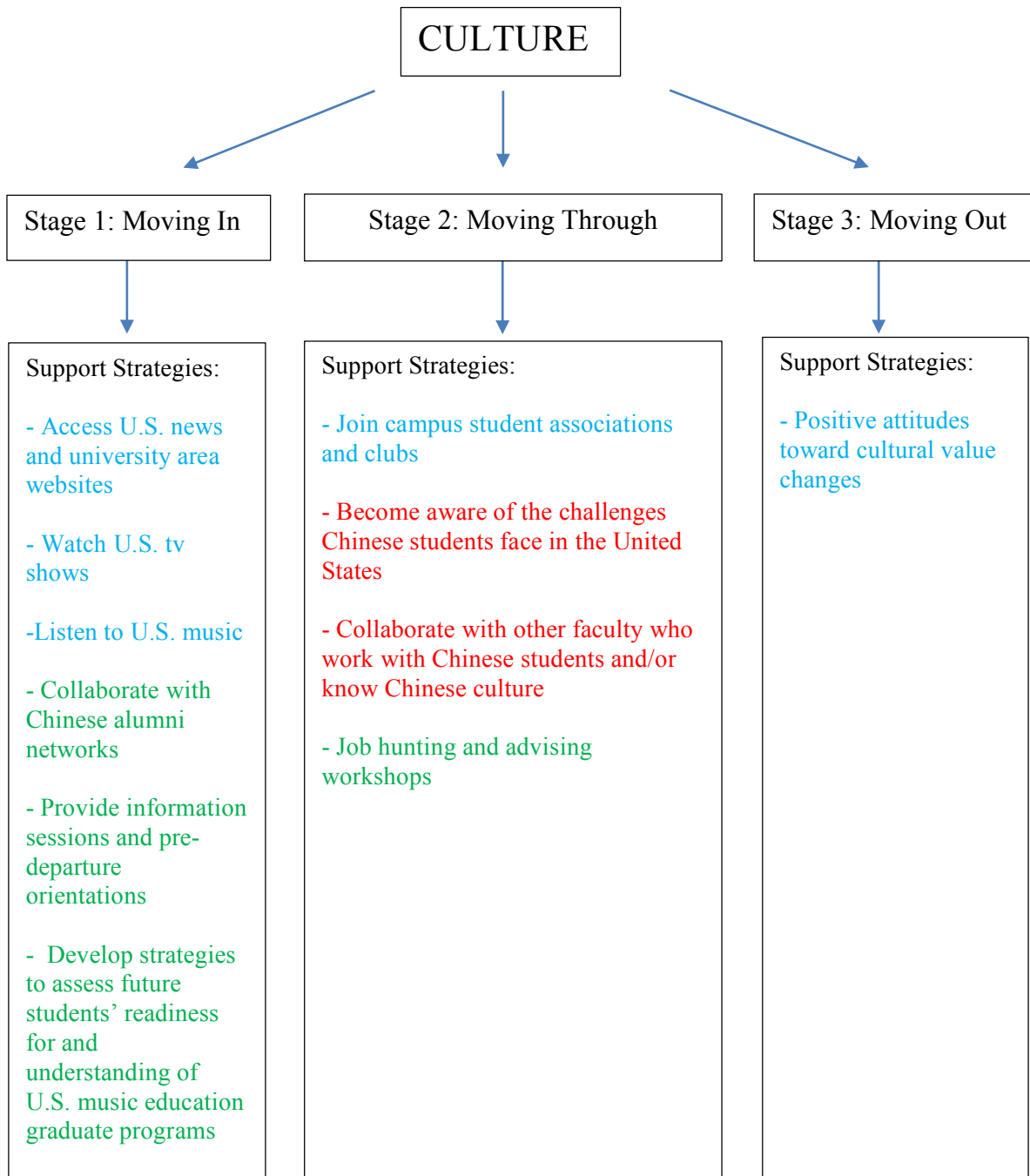
For Music Schools or Departments

Chinese music education graduate students may have limited understanding of the graduate school culture in the United States. The contrast between their expectations and the reality of campus life can contribute to their academic and sociocultural challenges. Therefore, I recommend that music schools and departments develop recruitment strategies that better assess future students' readiness for, and understanding of, the structure and expectations of music education graduate programs. Music departments could consider providing information sessions and pre-departure orientations via their Chinese alumni networks abroad to help new Chinese music education graduate students with the transition to the United States.

Figure 4 presents suggested strategies to support the cross-cultural adaptation process for Chinese music education graduate students. As in the previous figure, strategies for Chinese students are represented in blue font, strategies for music education professors are represented in

red font, and strategies for music departments are represented in green font within each of the three stages of cross-cultural adaptation.

Figure 4: Strategies to support Chinese music education graduate students in the United States:
Culture



Music Education Systems

Results from this study show that Chinese music education graduate students not only have the challenge of navigating music education graduate-level courses in a second language, but also of adjusting to an unfamiliar higher education system and culture. Though the challenges related to differences in music education systems are substantial, results from this study suggest that they may also be easier for Chinese music education graduate students to overcome than challenges of communication and culture. Responsively, I suggest several strategies for facilitating this type of adjustment.

For Students

Both extant research and the results from this study suggest a positive relationship between English language ability and academic achievement. Additionally, results from this study suggest that a relatively high level of English proficiency is required to conduct and report on research in English. I recommend that both current and future Chinese music education graduate students read scholarly English language music education journal articles carefully and as often as possible, to expand their knowledge of music education research and to improve their abilities to read reports of research in English. Current graduate students could also achieve greater familiarity with U.S. music education systems by participating in early field experiences in K–12 schools. In addition, those who plan to apply to a U.S. music education graduate program could consider participating in short-term study abroad programs and exchange programs in the United States. before applying to U.S. music education degree programs. This would also help in their adjustment to the differences between Chinese and U.S. music education systems and would help them to become more flexible learners in the United States. My final recommendation in this section is for Chinese music education graduate students who teach

music in Chinese K-12 schools or colleges after they graduate, especially for the moving out period. I suggest that they incorporate the U.S. music education practices and course materials they studied into at least a portion of the curriculum for each class they teach. For example, in K-12 general music education classroom, they could introduce singing, movement, instrumental, composition, and/or improvisation activities that utilize U.S. folk songs or musical styles. At the collegiate level, they could include a selection of U.S. music education research or practice articles for their students to discuss in class.

For Music Education Professors

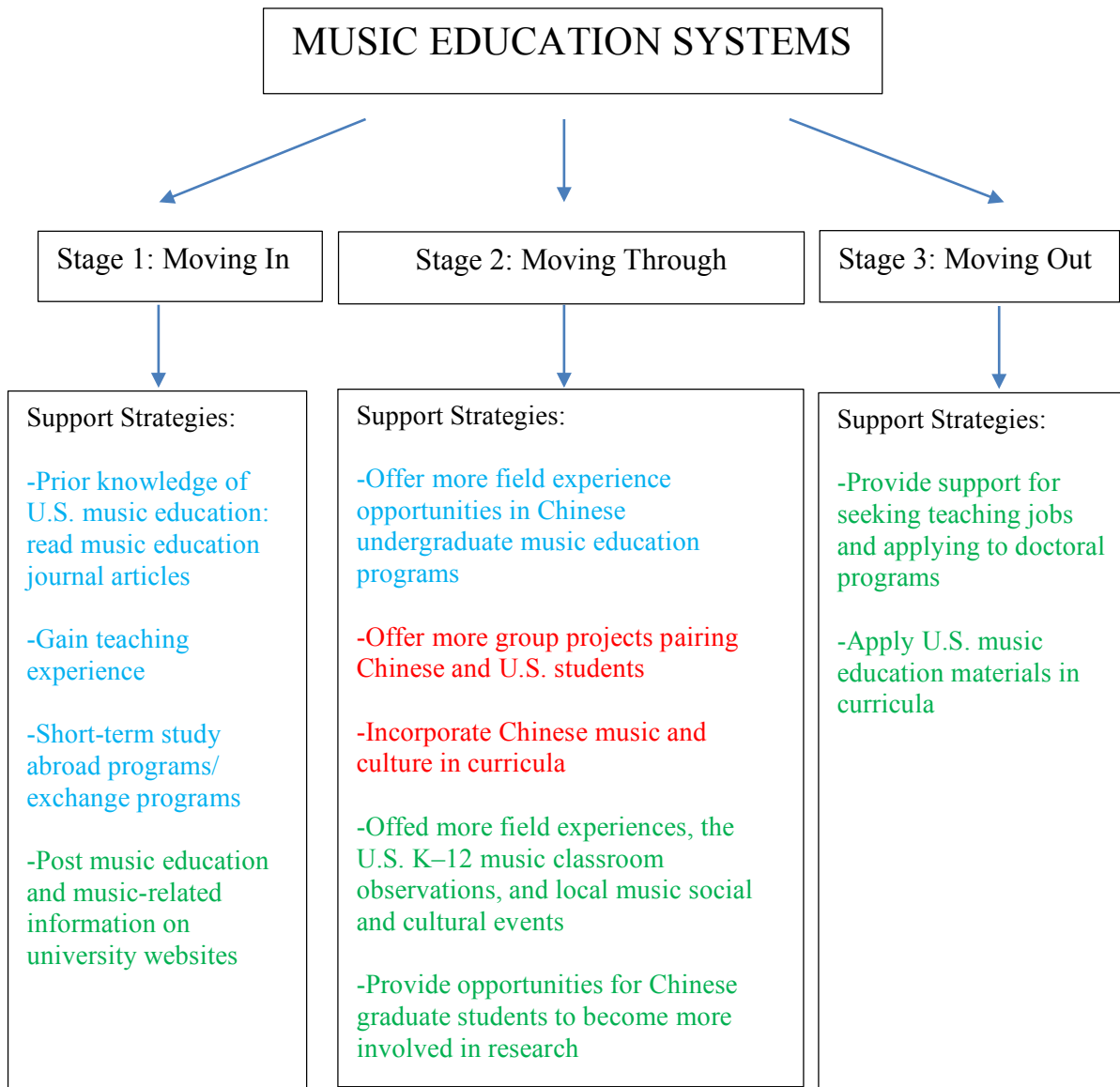
Peer interaction is one of the most significant factors for Chinese music education graduate students adapting to the U.S. classroom. Chinese students in this study shared a desire to interact with native U.S. students. At the same time, participants felt that they sometimes could not contribute to class discussions of pedagogy because they had limited teaching experience. I recommend that Chinese music education professors consider ways to provide more teaching opportunities within undergraduate music education degree programs, so that students who do attend graduate school in the United States feel more equipped to contribute to discussions of pedagogical approaches. Another suggestion for facilitation of peer interaction among Chinese and U.S. students is for music education professors to incorporate group projects in which Chinese students are paired with U.S. students. Additionally, music education professors could incorporate Chinese music or education within curricula. In this way, Chinese students' unique cultural strengths would be identified and included to show that they are valued members of the class and promote an overall sense of well-being and inclusivity in the classroom.

For Music Schools or Departments

Music schools and departments can help Chinese prospective graduate students prepare for U.S. music education systems by posting music education program information on websites for these students, as well as contact information for local music stores, groups, and music-related social and cultural events. It would also be helpful to provide a list of K–12 schools that are willing to provide observation and field experience opportunities in the local community. Furthermore, when participants in this study talked about their future plans, they expressed an interest in teaching U.S. K-12 schools for a short time, or in applying for doctoral level music education degree programs in the United States. However, many participants seemed uncertain of the process for applying for teaching jobs or doctoral programs. Specialized job search and advising workshops or sessions for Chinese music education graduate students would fill a crucial void, as would special advising on obtaining doctoral degrees. Finally, music schools and departments could consider the facilitation of Chinese students' adjustment to U.S. music education systems by involving Chinese music education graduate students more in research through assigning mentors, providing open workshops, and establishing collaborative research communities.

Figure 5 presents strategies to support Chinese music education graduate students' adjustment to U.S. music education systems. As in previous figures, strategies for Chinese students are represented in blue font, strategies for music education professors are represented in red font, and strategies for music departments are represented in green font within each of the three stages of cross-cultural adaptation.

Figure 5: Strategies to support Chinese music education graduate students in the United States:
Music education systems



Recommendations for Further Research

After conducting an extensive analysis of data gathered in this study and identifying themes and meta-themes, I identified three potential new research areas related to this topic. First, to further address this study’s problem statement, future studies might investigate U.S.

music education professors' perspectives on their interactions with the Chinese music education graduate students they teach, as the perceptions of these professors may demonstrate different perspectives from the student perspectives examined in this research. Results from this type of study could illuminate new strategies and processes for working effectively with future Chinese music education students within graduate degree programs. Second, in helping Chinese music education graduate students adapt to the U.S. music learning environment, the music department of two participants offered learning groups and seminars during every week of each semester. During these meetings, students had the opportunity to discuss assignments, papers, teaching experiences, graduate school application issues, and future plans. Therefore, future studies might collect and analyze feedback from Chinese music education students to find better ways of improving the programs for these students. Finally, in order to close the communication gap between Chinese and native U.S. music education graduate students, it is necessary to study how they interact with each other. Future research could explore the perspectives of U.S. music education graduate students regarding their interactions with Chinese students. Topics to explore might include identifying music education cultural barriers between Chinese music education graduate students and natives, as well as finding effective teaching approaches that help Chinese students improve more quickly. It could also be valuable to revisit the concept of transformation with these participants at a later date, perhaps five to 10 years after this study when some time has passed and their perspectives on this experience may have broadened.

Conclusions

The goal of this research was to learn more about Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States. Seven questions guided this research: (a) What are the current and prior educational experiences of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music

education master's and doctoral degree programs in the United States?, (b) What are Chinese music education graduate students' motivations for pursuing a music education degree in the United States?, (c) What are the challenges experienced by Chinese music education graduate students attending U.S. higher education institutions?, (d) What benefits do Chinese music education graduate students experience while attending U.S. higher education institutions?, (e) Do Chinese music education graduate students' ways of thinking and behaving change as a result of interaction with U.S. culture?, (f) From the perspectives of Chinese music education graduate students, how should future students be effectively prepared to study music education at the graduate level in the United States?, and (g) How do participants plan to move forward or move on after this experience?. In the analysis of this data, emergent themes merged into meta-themes, forming the basis for models of (a) Chinese music education graduate students' experience in the United States, composed of the elements of communication, culture, and music education systems, and (b) the three-stage cross-cultural adaptation process Chinese music education graduate students navigate in the United States, across the elements of communication, culture, and music education systems. From this data I formulated recommendations for future research, which could add to the body of knowledge of Chinese music education graduate students in the United States and determine whether the models proposed in this study might be valuable as frameworks for future research on this topic.

As the researcher for this study, I was both an insider and an outsider. I was an insider because I had spent the past five and a half years studying music education in two different graduate programs as a native Chinese student in the United States. In this study, I interviewed five native Chinese music education graduate students and shared my experience with them as a member of the same group. At the same time, I was an outsider, because I was not enrolled in the

same music education graduate programs as them; thus, my experience may not have resembled their experience in the United States. Through the process and completion of this study, I realized that these participants viewed U.S. music education graduate programs not simply as a means to obtaining a higher music education degree. They also saw their involvement as a means of gaining knowledge of the music education discipline within the process of adapting to a new cultural and educational environment.

I hope that this study will provide a path to ideas, strategies, and knowledge to support the success and wellbeing of both native Chinese graduate students in music education degree programs in the United States and those who work with them and facilitate their growth within educational settings.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Music Education Students,

My name is Kailimi Li. As a part of my doctoral dissertation in music education at University of Massachusetts Amherst, I have developed a study to explore The Experience of Chinese Students Enrolled in Graduate Music Education Degree Programs in the United States. I invite you to consider participating in this study. The study involves two online interviews and in which data will be collected. Also, I will ask you to post to an online discussion forum. Your total time involvement should be no more than 150 minutes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of Chinese graduate students enrolled in music education masters and doctoral degree programs in the United States. I hope that results of the study will help U.S. educators and music educators to better understand Chinese music education graduate students' experiences at different stages. It will also provide college and university music education faculty with ideas concerning effective strategies for working with Chinese music education graduate students. I plan to interview native Chinese students who are enrolled in graduate music education degree programs in the United States.

If you are willing to participate in the study, I will begin by interviewing you twice for approximately 60 minutes. I'll ask questions about your past and present musical experiences, the benefits and challenges you face, strategies for success, the benefits your experience as international graduate students in the United States, the effect of this experience on your thinking, self-perception, and behavior, and how you plan to move forward or move on following this experience. We can complete the interview via online meeting interface such as Zoom, on a date and time that is convenient for you. I will record each interview and ask the professional transcription company to transcribe these interviews, and I will also ask you to do the online discussion forum briefly at a later date. I will provide you with a transcription of your interview, and you'll then have the opportunity to edit your interview comments if you so choose.

Of course, you can choose to drop out of the study at any time, and there will be no penalty or hard feelings. Through the whole process, I will take the utmost care to protect your privacy, by storing all files associated with the study in secure locations, the only people who can access the audio files are my professor Dr. Lisa Lehmborg, the transcription company and myself. I hope you will decide to participate in the study! I would love to learn more about your experience. I hope that you might find it fun to talk about these things as well – especially if it might benefit the profession of music education or those who work with Chinese music education graduate students in various settings.

If you would like to participate in this study, please respond to this email and let me know. I will then send you an informed consent form via email. Once I have received your completed consent form, I will contact you again via email to set up a date and time for your interviews. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please be sure to let me know and I will do my best to

answer them. Thank you so much for your time and your consideration of this request. Have a great day!

Sincerely,

Kailimi (Shelley) Li
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Music & Dance
University of Massachusetts
Phone: 716-410-6700
Email: kailimili@umass.edu

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview 1

Demographic Information

1. What is your name?
2. What part of China are you from?
3. What is the name of your university and where is it located?
4. In what degree program are you currently enrolled?
5. How long have you been in the United States?
6. Have you earned another degree in the United States?

Overall Experiences During Study in the United States

1. What are some of the *differences* between being a Chinese student in the United States and a Chinese student in China?
2. What are some of the *similarities* between being a Chinese student in the United States and a Chinese student in China?
3. How did you feel about being in the United States when you first arrived? How do you feel now?
4. What do you think overall about your degree program in the United States?
What courses have you taken? Which ones were difficult? Which ones were easy?
5. What do you think are the main differences in course structure between the United States and China?
6. What do you think about your professors in the United States?
7. Have you participated in professional associations while in the United States?

8. Have you participated in musical performance groups in the United States? What types of groups? If you are planning to perform on a concert, how do you select repertoire? How do you learn the repertoire? (i.e. find a score online; copy a recording by ear, etc.?)
9. Have you participated in creative musical activities, such as improvisation, or composition while in the United States?
10. Do you prefer formal learning (i.e. private studio, music class in school) or informal learning (self-taught, peer-taught)? What is your opinion about learning music on your own?
11. Have you participated in music production in the United States?
12. Overall, what do you think about your musical experiences in the United States?
13. How do you feel when you talk with others in English?
14. Do you feel that your classmates and your professors understand your culture? Can you provide some examples of this?
15. What do you do in your leisure time? How often do you join in the U.S. social activities (such as going to bars, attending birthday parties, attending church service)?
16. What are the similarities and differences in how music education is defined in the United States and in China?

Prior Educational Experiences in China

1. How many years have you spent studying music?

What were your musical experiences prior to coming to the United States? In school? Outside school?

2. What musical instruments did you study? Why did you choose to study these particular musical instruments? How did you learn musical instruments/voice within private classes before coming to the United States? Did you study musical instruments/voice on your own?
3. Did you participate in musical performance groups in China? If you were going to perform at a concert (or a showcase), how did you select repertoire? How did you learn repertoire? (i.e. find a score online; or copy recording by ear?)
4. Did you participate in creative musical activities, such as improvisation, or composition?
5. Did you participate in music production in China?
6. Did you participate in professional associations in China?
7. What do you think overall about your musical experiences in China?

Interview 2

Motivation

1. What motivated your decision to learn music in China?
2. What motivated you to come to the United States? Family influences, peer influences, significant others, society influences, etc.?
3. What motivates you to keep going in in your study of music and music education?
4. Has your motivation changed over time? If yes, why? How?
5. Why did you choose music education as your major?
6. Why did you choose to study music education in the United States?

Challenges

1. What major difficulties do you perceive as a student in the United States?

2. Have these difficulties changed over time? If so, how have they changed?
3. In my study, I defined culture shock as “the difficulty people experience when adjusting to a new culture that differs significantly from their own.” According to this definition, did you experience culture shock when you arrived in the United States? Do you still experience it?
4. If you experiences culture shock, how long did it take you to overcome it, and how did you solve the problem (regarding things such as transposition, food, housing, education, communication, holiday celebrations, money, diet)?
5. What difficulties have you faced in your study of music education in the United States (regarding elements such as teaching experience, scholarly papers, classroom discussion, interaction with professors, university services, conducting research, depression, stress, pressure, employment issues)?
6. Do you think other Chinese music education graduate students have similar problems? Why or why not?

Preparation/strategies for success

1. Before you came to the United States, did you have specific plans for adjustment to the new country? What were your strategies for improving your English skills before you came to the United States?
2. Do you feel that you have improved your English proficiency? What has helped the most in this regard? If you do not feel that your English has improved, what might be the reasons?
3. As your understanding of the U.S. culture grows, does this help you in your study of music education? If yes, how?

4. When you have problems or questions, do you prefer talking to your Chinese friends or your American friends? Why?
5. How did you adjust to U.S. culture?
6. How did you fit into the classroom when you first arrived here? How do you fit into the classroom culture now? Has anything changed? What are your strategies for success?
7. What music education learning experiences would you like to have during your study in the United States (within your degree program or in the community)?
8. How did you learn course materials in the class? (individual or groups)
9. Have you made any cultural adjustments within the classroom after you came to the United States? If yes, what are your specific adjustments? Why did you make these cultural adjustments?
10. How do you feel when your American professors interact to you?
11. How are the professors' interactions different between China and United States?

Benefits

1. What benefits do Chinese music education graduate students experience while attending U.S. higher education institutions?
2. How have you benefitted from this experience (including social and psychological benefits, and other benefits related to knowledge of western music education pedagogy and practice, connections with people, respect as a scholar, prestige, travel experience)

Transformation

1. What was your perception of the U.S. culture before you came to the United States? How did you develop this perception? Has your perception of the U.S. culture changed since your arrival in the United States?
2. What are your current perceptions of U.S. culture? Are they the same as you expected before you came to the United States? If not, what are the differences?
3. In my study, I define acculturation as...Have you gotten used to U.S. culture? If yes, can you describe your acculturation?
4. What are your personal thoughts on your cultural adjustments?
5. Do you feel your values changed after you studied music education in the United States? If so, how?

Moving forward/moving on after this experience

1. What are your plans after you finish your study in the United States? Are these the same as when you arrived in the United States?
2. What suggestions do you have for incoming Chinese music education students?
3. What contributions do you think you made to your degree program and university?
4. Did you help your U.S. peers or professors understand Chinese music education?
5. What do you think the universities and music education programs or departments could do to help Chinese music education graduate students succeed in the United States?

APPENDIX C

ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM QUESTIONS

Question 1: What was your biggest challenge on your first day of the class in the United States?

Question 2: What do you think are the biggest differences between China and the United States in music education philosophy?

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