Narrative Inquiry into Understanding Chinese Teachers' Lived Experiences: Interculturalism, Intercultural Education, and Teacher Identity Development

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NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO UNDERSTANDING CHINESE TEACHERS’ LIVED EXPERIENCES: INTERCULTURALISM, INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, AND TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

by

Qing Wang

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Dedicated to my parents for all their love and support. I appreciate their sacrifices and putting me through the best education possible. Without them I wouldn’t get to this stage.

To my dear Yunxuan for her unending support, care, and love.

献给我的父母。他们给予我最大的支持和关爱，感谢他们让我有机会享受最好的教育。没有他们我将不会有这一时刻。

献给我挚爱的大兔宝，谢谢你的支持、关怀、和爱。
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Globalization brings the trend that intercultural teacher recruitment and migration become more prominent, and teaching internationally is a worldwide phenomenon. My research is aimed at examining Chinese intercultural teachers’ lived experiences and identity development from a theoretical perspective of interculturalism. I employed narrative inquiry as the research methodology to explore the experiences of five Chinese teachers who have teaching experiences in China and in the U.S. To understand the Chinese teachers’ lived experiences and to explore their identity development, I examined the personal disposition and social contexts in which these teachers lived and worked, teaching practices in different cultures, and relationships they developed with their students, parents, and colleagues.

Interviews with my five teacher participants were conducted over a period of one year. Other forms of data included autobiographies, artifacts, art work, field-notes, research journal reflections, and theoretical memos. Data were transcribed and filed into an archival system. I used Polkinghorne’s (1995) narrative analysis and Barone’s (2007) narrative construction for my data analysis.

Through detailed examination of the Chinese teachers’ narratives, lived experiences, and stories, I concluded that my Chinese teachers’ behaviors and intercultural experiences were embodied with the tenets of interculturalism theory; narrative inquiry functioned as a tool to improve intercultural teachers’ teaching practices and pedagogy; and the Chinese teachers’
identity closely adhered to their culture root or the landscape in which they grew or received education. This study suggests that intercultural teacher’s preparation and development program should be highlighted, intercultural teachers’ own cultures and lived experiences need to be valued, and narrative inquiry as an action-oriented method to reflect teachers’ teaching practices and improve their pedagogy is to be promoted.
PRELUDE: NAMES AND IDENTITIES

In this dissertation, I present the lived experiences of five Chinese intercultural teachers—Shi Kun, Ling, Mei, Feng, and Fang Fang—who have teaching experiences in both China and the U.S. in order to explore my puzzles in thinking about teacher identity from the theoretical lens of interculturalism. I examine how these Chinese teachers think about their teaching experiences in different cultures and intercultural contexts, the motivations and trajectories behind their intercultural teaching, and how they negotiate a variety of teaching and professional identities. I particularly focus on their experiences, more specifically their early life experiences, including family education and early life environment; the landscapes of their respective institutional and national policies, as well as school environments; their intercultural experiences and negotiation of cultural differences; and their professional experiences, including interactions with students and relationships with colleagues.

In this prelude, I address the names of my participants. The reasons for why I begin my research in this way are both academic and cultural. First of all, names are significant to every person in Chinese culture, and knowing the stories behind people’s names provides a meaningful exploration of their experiences and identities (Li, 2012). Deeply influenced by the tenet of Confucianism in which names serve in the legislation of the citizenry, Chinese people regard naming as a cardinal task. When naming a baby, parents (and even grandparents) designate their hopes and expectations. Each Chinese name is unique, composed of one to three Chinese characters connected to special meanings, memories, places, or aspirations. Some parents search dictionaries and classical texts to decide upon their children’s names. Others highly regard Feng Shui and Wuxing (the five elements that are metal, wood, water, fire and earth, held by the ancients to compose the physical universe
and later used to explain various physiological and pathological phenomena) to select the best name. Chinese parents often prefer names that sound rhythmic and moral, so that their children have similarly happy and promising lives. Chinese names convey family values and indicate one’s identity.

During interactions and communication with my participants, I found that they often emphasized how their families influenced their own intercultural teaching pedagogy. Participants frequently mentioned their own names as proof of their family’s expectations. Four of my five participants shared extended anecdotes with me about their names. Accordingly, I followed up on this elaboration of how their names were given and why they were crucial. Names became an inevitable topic in my exploration of these Chinese teachers’ experiences.

However, in order to conduct ethical research and protect the anonymity of my participants, I do not include their last names and change some characters of their first names. For example, I maintain the Chinese characters in their names that, in my opinion, convey cultural significance and indicate special meanings. I also omit or rearrange the characters in their first names. By doing this, I comply with the principle of anonymity and ensure that all my participants’ information is not identifiable.

Shi Kun

After eight years in the U.S., Shi Kun is now a Ph.D. student at a university in the south and will graduate in May 2017. Her name, Shi Kun, has beautiful sonic and linguistic significance. Shi, given by her mother, literally means poem, because Shi Kun’s mother thinks her daughter’s life should be elegant and decent, just like a poem. Kun, which translates as pretty girl, is not a commonly used word in Chinese; few people even know how
to read it. The first time I heard her name, I assumed she was from an intellectual family and her parents were well educated. Shi Kun shared that there is a Chinese character “方 (Fang)” in her father’s name, and her father wanted Shi Kun inherit it, so he named her “堃 (Kun)”, a Chinese character with two “方”. The two Chinese characters in her name, each endowed with particular quality, gave me a glimpse into her personal identity and family values.

When I began to search for participants for my dissertation research in December 2016, a friend recommended that I contact Shi Kun. Soon after we had a number of conversations related to my research. She was quite enthusiastic during our conversations and enjoyed talking with me about her teaching and U.S. academic studies. Over the course of several conversations, I learned a great deal about Shi Kun. She served as a substitute teacher in a local junior high school for one year in central China during her senior year at Normal University (a type of university for training teachers). Then she went to the U.S. to pursue her Master’s degree. During graduate school, she also worked as a Chinese language teacher. Shi Kun is now a teacher educator and her students include college students majoring in a bilingual teacher education program. In the summers, she returns to China for in-service professional development. Our conversations confirmed my previous speculation that her parents have a significant influence on her life trajectory. Our interviews were the basis for my consideration of the importance of names within Chinese culture.

Ling

In southern China, some regions are surrounded by rivers, which provide beautiful scenery for the nearby towns. Chinese people call these places “water towns” or “Eastern Venice.” Their residents are skilled at planting water-caltrop, also called Ling in Chinese. Ling is a flavorful red fruit that grows in shallow water and silt. When husking ling’s muddy
shell you can see its flesh, which is as white as polished jade. Ling’s parents named her “Ling（菱）” because “Ling lives in the silt but never gets imbrued” (field notes, 2017). They wanted their daughter to be as beautiful as the red Ling and possess the qualities of purity and nobility, even in a messy environment. Based on our interactions, it seems to me that Ling has lived up to her name and familial expectations. Upon graduating from an art-related master’s program, Ling became a university lecturer in Shanghai, China. She taught art courses and completed administrative work. She then chose to work for two years in a Confucius Institute primary school in the U.S. as a Chinese drawing and language teacher. The Confucius Institute is a language and culture institution, of which I will give a more detailed introduction in my later chapters. Ling enjoyed sharing Chinese traditional art work with her American students. She considered art as another language she used to build community with her students. Her artistic background is complemented by her grace and kindness. Her voice is soft, her speech is slow, and her smile is kind. I agree that Ling is the most suitable name for her.

Mei

Mei (梅) means plum blossom in Chinese. Mei does not care for her name given to her by her grandfather and parents. She was born on a snowy winter day. Despite the weather, her family’s plum blossoms were blooming at the time. Mei’s grandfather thought that was a fortunate omen and suggested mei as her name. Her parents agreed, because plum blossom implies a variety of meanings in Chinese culture. Plum blossoms bloom in winter, when most other flowers wither away. Therefore, the name represents tenacity and unyielding resilience. The colder the weather is, the more the plum blossom flourishes. During the Chinese Revolution, mei was a symbol of progressivists; in fact, this is the reason Mei
dislikes her namesake. Mei thought this name was “old school,” and more commonly used by her parent’s generation. In many old movies, a number of protagonists have Mei in their names.

While Mei does not like her name, she does seem to possess a firm tenacity not unlike the plum blossom. During a conversation about how she was treated unjustly by an American school principal, I was impressed by her determination and optimism. After teaching in an international school in Shanghai for a year, Mei applied to teach at the Confucius Institute and went to Thailand to teach Chinese language. Two years later, she renewed her employment contract and relocated to the U.S. Her teaching journey, as she shared with me, became very difficult during her second year at a primary school in the U.S. Mei, like the floral symbol of her name, was staunch and strong when facing this adversity.

Feng

I have known Feng for years. He was in the same teacher preparation program in Beijing as my wife. Upon completing his two years of service as a Chinese language teacher in a university in the U.S., he consulted me regarding several questions he had about applying to a PhD program in the U.S. He is now a first-year doctoral student.

Feng’s name has also a cultural importance. In traditional Chinese culture, each person’s name includes one word inherited from the family ancestors. The word chosen for each generation can be different, but all family members in one generation share the same word in their names. This naming rule is to honor one’s ancestors, and to pass on family values. For Feng’s generation, the word is “Hou (厚),” meaning generous and tolerant. Although like many young Chinese who abandon their family inherited words for various reasons in the names, Feng quite like the naming tradition. He said that being generous and
tolerant is necessary in today’s diverse society, especially when teaching in an intercultural context. His own name, Feng, also has an interesting naming story. Based on Fengshui and Wuxing, Feng’s parents thought their son lacked the element of metal in his fortune; accordingly, they felt his name should have a character that signifies metal. They finally decided on “锋 Feng” for their child. “锋 Feng” translates to blade or sharpness. When Feng’s parents went to the local police station to register his name, however, the police officer accidently typed in another character “峰 Feng” as the name. The two characters “锋” and “峰” look similar and have the same pronunciation, but their meanings are completely different. The former stands for sharpness and blade, and the latter means mountain peak. Feng’s parent did not revise the mistake; they thought it was good fortune, too, and changing the registered name would be a cumbersome process. Feng considers his parents to be superstitious. I consider their choice to be very representative of traditional Chinese culture.

“I really like my name because it reminds me to tramp over mountains, just like overcoming difficulties”, Feng said during one of our conversations. I believe this name provides him with emotional support. Every time he is faced with dilemmas he has the courage and will to persevere.

Fang Fang

Unlike Feng, Fang Fang kept the inherited word from her family name. The word is “志 Zhi,” meaning ambition or aspiration. This name appropriately reflects Fang Fang’s father’s expectations of her. His expectations relate to the Chinese saying, “A man should be ambitious and travel around the world 男儿志在四方”. Her father always wanted a boy, so when he knew his second child was a girl, he was somewhat disappointed. Fang Fang’s grandmother, however, was quite liberal and said a daughter should still be valued and
treated equally as a son. Accordingly, her grandmother gave her the name “方 Fang,” or “world.” Her grandmother slightly modified the name from “方” to “芳”. The latter Chinese character has the same pronunciation, but it is more often used as a girl’s name. Fang Fang’s name conveys the will of the two generations: to be ambitious and competitive as a man and travel around the world.

Fang Fang is, in fact, ambitious and competitive, and she has taught Chinese in China, South Korea, and the U.S. She has had richer experiences than many of her male peers. In each country, her teaching was highly regarded by her principal and colleagues. Fang Fang and I were in the same Master’s program, and she has always impressed me with her caring, communicative, and kind-hearted nature. From her stories, it is clear that she takes the initiative to communicate and understand the intercultural contexts in which she thrives.

After learning the histories behind my participants’ names, I reflected upon my name, its stories, and my life experiences in the U.S. My own reflection imparted in me a sense of “resonance” (Conle, 1996, p.297) and affinity with my research participants. We all grew up and were educated in mainland China’s educational system. We served or have been serving as teachers in both Chinese and American schools, and have encountered intercultural challenges and dilemmas. At the same time, however, I also felt a sense of “taken-for-grantedness” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78) during my interactions with these Chinese teachers, because I feel that my identity as a Chinese teacher is misunderstood or disregarded by my students/principals/superiors/colleagues. I gradually realized that all our identities and experiences are as unique as the names of our Chinese people.
These reflections, feelings, and puzzles guided my further analysis. In the following chapter, I give a detailed introduction to how this exploration transitioned into dissertation research as well as provide the background of this research.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Starting from Stories

One night, after a class that had finished ten minutes late, I rushed to the bus stop to catch the last shuttle to my apartment. After getting seated and taking out my smartphone, I overheard two students discuss their Chinese professor: “My professor is boring, and he was just lecturing and asking questions. I can hardly understand his English.” “Is he international?” “Yes, he is from China.” Their words transported me to when I was in Beijing, a Chinese teacher teaching international students myself. I was confident and stood in front of the students; each time I headed to the classroom, my passion and ardor supported me. Since last year, I have been once again a course instructor at a university, this time in the U.S. The confidence I once had is now anxiety and worry. I cannot help but dwell on how my American students judge my teaching. Do they talk about me like the students I overheard on the bus? Can they understand my English? I empathize with that Chinese professor, and all Chinese teachers who have similar teaching experiences in the U.S. I can relate to him, not only because English is my second language, but also simply because we teach in the U.S.

Phillion (2002) argues that narrative inquiries always have strong autobiographical roots and there is a link between one’s past and one’s inquiry. My inquiry originates from my intercultural study and professional experiences. The vignette I included at the beginning is just a small story reflecting my concerns and puzzles of my intercultural experiences. My father is from southern China and my mother is from the north. In China, this type of family is uncommon; most of my peers’ parents are from the same area. Given China’s long history and vast territory, a variety of cultures are found in the country’s many regions. While growing up, I used different addresses for the relatives on my father and mother’s sides of the
family. I enjoyed food from both the south and north, and I travelled back and forth from Yichang to Qingdao for several years. Yichang is in the south, where I received my entire K-12 education, and Qingdao is a northern city where I was born and grew up. I also often visited my grandparents in Wuhan, another large city in southern China. I went to Beijing for college and lived there for six years. After that, I lived and studied in the U.S. for another three and a half years. During all of these intercultural journeys, I learned how to negotiate with my peers in different parts of China. I learned how to be a southerner, a norther, a Beijinger, and a Chinese. Over time, I have come to recognize how these experiences constructed the multiplicity of my identity (Gu, 2007; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010).

My research focuses on teaching as a profession in different cultural contexts, as I used to teach Chinese language classes to students from countries other than China, and now I am teaching pre-service teachers at Purdue University. During my doctoral studies, I refined my theoretical approach based on the existing research on the intercultural context of teachers’ professional identities. Then I integrated my own experiences and queries with this theoretical lens, and expanded the inquiry to include other Chinese intercultural teachers. As a result, I finally decided to explore five Chinese intercultural teachers’ stories and experiences for my dissertation research. Yu (2014) argues that “they [intercultural teachers] are drawing upon different educational and professional experiences. They are (re)telling stories in different discourses to express their different and sometimes even conflicting personal and professional concerns and interests. In other words, they story the stories from different dimensions” (p. 688). Hence, in this research, I focus on Chinese intercultural teachers’ lived experiences, narratives, and stories from a variety of dimensions.
Literature Review

In order to research intercultural teachers’ experiences, I began a literature review on teacher migration, globalization, and the broader context of teaching in different societies and cultures. Subsequently, I shifted my focus to Chinese teachers who have intercultural teaching experiences and how cultural differences influence their teaching and living.

Teacher Migration, Super Diversity, and Globalization

As globalization ushers in a new era of transnational relationships and pervasive international communications (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000), Chinese teachers are far more common at U.S. universities. Brown (2008) argues that a major impact of globalization has been the emergence of not only the internationalization of education programs, but also migrant teachers who seek new knowledge or professions outside of their home environment. Intercultural teacher recruitment and migration have become more prominent, and teaching internationally has become a worldwide phenomenon (Appleton, Morgan & Sives, 2006; Baraldi, 2006; Inda & Rosaldo, 2006; UNESCO, 2014). In other words, as Coulby (2006) illustrates, “demographic movement results from national, and increasingly international, economic, political and cultural forces. These forces may be expressed, for the sake of brevity, as globalization” (p. 249). Cantel (2012) employs the term “super diversity” to describe the interconnection and communication between people from different groups as a result of international travel, social media, and the Internet. Given this super diversity, the traditional boundary between different cultural groups’ shifts and people’s identities become more fluid and complex. This cultural context provides the expansive landscape of the five teachers’ intercultural lived experiences I will investigate here, as well as my own.

The five Chinese teachers featured in my research have migrated to the U.S. with
different motivations and expectations. Their stories figure the epitome of the intercultural teachers’ lived experiences under the big picture of globalization and teacher migration. Statistics from a variety of sources indicate that international teacher migration is becoming more widespread. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) claims that teaching internationally is a trend, and there are some 100 private agencies in the U.K. recruiting language teachers from other countries (UIS, 2015). A report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that about 10,000 overseas teachers were recruited in 2000 (OECD, 2005). The U.K. Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports that the long-term migration of “teachers and research professionals” was 16,000 in 2014 and 15,000 for the previous two years (ONS, 2015). Other research investigates the demographics of international teacher migration. Specifically, Brown (2008) studied the teacher migration trends in South Africa and illustrates that teacher mobility has impacted both teachers’ home and host countries. Xia and Wu (2012) argued that about 5 million more Chinese teachers are in demand to teach overseas than the last three years. Research focusing on teacher migration illustrates that teaching in different cultures is crucial to the current educational context.

At the same time, teacher mobility involves various consequences related to identity and cultural development (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Liu & Meng, 2009). This group of teachers is faced with foreign educational tasks, curriculum implementation, dilemmas, and concerns. Research shows that different social systems feature distinct educational expectations of teachers (Liu & Meng, 2009). For example, in China, students revere their teachers as they would their parents. Accordingly, teachers develop appropriate strategies and educational philosophies that meet their students’ needs (Liu & Meng, 2009; Wang, 2013;
Woods, 1981). Teacher identity is socially constructed and always in negotiation with the surrounding environment. Therefore, when entering a new social context, teacher professional identity is constantly evolving (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Adapting to the local culture is a sizable challenge for intercultural teachers. Portera (2008) claims that when teachers teach in different cultures, they are confronted with difficulties. Thus, intercultural teachers need to adjust their values in areas such as tolerance, mutual respect, acceptance, and intercultural competence related to multiple skills and intercultural communication.

Preparing intercultural teachers for a future teaching practice within their intercultural teaching context is imperative and beneficial. This study explores five Chinese intercultural teachers’ experiences, and focuses on identity development, culture, and curriculum.

**Chinese Intercultural Teachers**

In this section, I select Chinese teachers who have teaching experience in the U.S. and discuss their possible dilemmas and how their experiences may influence their teacher identity.

American and Chinese societies have different expectations and standards for their teachers; therefore, the construction of teacher identity varies within the two contexts. Adopting Woods’ (1981) categorization of teachers, the U.S. teacher-identity landscape consists of three principal cultural schemata. With such a landscape, efforts to control teacher actions are essentially neutralized by loose organizational structures. Specifically, U.S. teachers have a vocational commitment to teaching; for example, they care for pupils and encourage their growth and learning. They also have a professional commitment as subject specialists with an interest in charting a career within schools or the education system.
Finally, U.S. teachers often become part of the teaching profession because they have no other choice (Woods, 1981).

For teachers in China, teacher identity can be construed in an entirely different way. Most Chinese teachers are members of a national corps of civil servants responsible for implementing a relatively centralized national curriculum. This curriculum successfully generates and maintains a discourse that encourages all citizens to embody Chinese values and culture for the integrity of the nation (Liu & Meng, 2009; Wang, 2013). The boundary of the classroom door is an important attribute of teaching in China. In other words, Chinese parents rarely enter the classroom.

Based on my review of literature on teachers in both countries, the construction of American and Chinese teacher identities substantiates the point that teachers in different cultures are expected to meet different criteria in order to be considered a successful or effective teacher. Accordingly, for Chinese teachers who have intercultural experiences in the U.S., different criteria can pose possible cultural conflicts with Chinese teachers’ recognition of cultural identity.

According to Wang (2013), Chinese intercultural teachers face problems with their cultural identities due to conflicts of knowledge, behaviors, social systems, and worldviews. Conflicts of knowledge refer to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. When Chinese teachers enter a new society, they tend to change their teaching skills and behaviors to cater to the local standards and expectations. Different social systems can also cause conflict. In the U.S., education administration and policy are not the same. Finally, there can be the conflict of worldviews. Yan (2006) points out that the traditional identity of the teacher in China was structured by its historical institution. As a result, the long Chinese tradition
defines the teacher as a symbol of the national culture and ideology; therefore, Chinese teachers are more concerned about how their teaching practices contribute to the country. When teaching in the U.S., Chinese teachers’ worldviews can be challenged, and they may have to change their ideas. Deardorff (2006, 2009) develops a model articulating essential elements of intercultural competence which are attitude, knowledge, skills and desired outcomes. These elements provide a model to evaluate and reflect the competence that teachers need in intercultural communication and interaction. In this research, the model is employed as a theoretical perspective.

**Theoretical Framework**

For this research, I applied interculturalism theory and theories of teacher identity development. These two fundamental lenses constructed the theoretical framework of this study. Interculturalism theory and teacher identity development served both as the guiding theoretical and analytical frameworks to explore the experiences of Chinese teachers.

**Interculturalism Theory**

The concept of interculturalism can be traced back to 1959, mostly in relation to educational programming (Cantle, 2012). Interculturalism creates a culture of openness, discusses and challenges the relationship between two cultures, and talks about power structures, which is how autonomy and empowerment of one culture are affected by other cultures (Chin, 1989). Intercultural scholars think different cultures should be open to each other, and stress democratic and liberal approaches to this new era (Besley & Peters, 2012; James, 2008; Nagle, 2009). Besley and Peters (2012) illustrate that interculturalism theory has become increasingly associated with presuppositions of freedom, democracy, and human rights. Communication, dialogue, and interaction are other essential characteristics that focus
on exchange and reciprocal understanding between people from different cultures. According to Cushner (2011), interculturalism is more dynamic and focuses on “the penetration and interaction of an individual from one culture into another” (p. 606). When this theory is applied in the teaching learning process, there is a dynamic interchange between teacher and student; the interaction, interdependence, and movement of those involved will be more intimate: “a focus on intercultural influences provides the most relevant concepts to consider in the preparation of educators in an increasingly culturally diverse and interdependent global society” (Cushner, 2011, p. 606).

**Two Principles**

Intercultural theorists conclude that there are two basic principles of interculturalism theory (Bouchard, 2011; Cantle, 2012; Gundara, 2000; Zapata-Barrero, 2015). First, interculturalism is a model that incorporates a number of different societal components and rejects all discrimination based on differences. Instead, interculturalism embraces reciprocity and accommodation. Thus, interculturalism theory is characterized by integration, cohesion, and intercultural dialogue.

Second, interculturalism embraces a principle of reciprocity and demonstrates accommodation. Interculturalism is based on a principle of reciprocity, meaning that newcomers, members of the host society, and people from different groups all share an important responsibility. This reciprocity features an awareness of common basic values, which is necessary in a society characterized by interdependency and pluralism: “Interdependency requires mutual respect, including openness to criticism, when these values prove incompatible with other belief systems. There is, therefore, a need to build a framework for a set of common basic values and a curriculum relevant for education in a
diverse society” (Gundara, 2000, p. 148). People from different groups can contribute their value systems within a shared society. Furthermore, the principle of reciprocity highlights ideas of citizenship of trust, rights, and responsibilities (CIC, 2007).

**Characteristics of Interculturalism Theory**

Interculturalism theory is characterized by integration, cohesion, and intercultural dialogue (Cantle, 2012; Gundara, 2000; Muir, 2007). These concepts are not mutually exclusive and function holistically within a shared society. Integration is dependent upon awareness, the first step that accommodates conflicts and tensions between different groups based on basic common values; cohesion is practice-oriented, and provides diverse cultures with shared goals and practices. Thus, intercultural dialogue is an avenue to improve people’s intercultural competence so that they know how to participate in a cohesive community.

Integration in interculturalism rejects assimilation. It engages all citizens, operates on many levels (individual, community, institutional, etc.), and works in multiple dimensions (economy, culture, society, etc.). At this point, integration is distinct from “integrationism,” the latter of which is defined by Bouchard (2011) as forms of integration that are not respectful of diversity. Integration is based on common basic values for the relations between people, between people and culture, and between people and nature (Gundara, 2000).

Cohesion is another important characteristic of interculturalism. Cohesion sets goals so that people from different groups can contribute their backgrounds as part of a shared society. The basic elements of cohesion include a common vision and sense of belonging, an appreciation for the diversity of people’s different backgrounds that provides equal life
opportunities, the development of positive relationships nationwide, and the cooperation of people from different groups toward shared goals (Bouchard, 2011; Cantle, 2012).

**Interculturalism Theory and Multiculturalism Theory**

Interculturalism theory has often been compared to multiculturalism theory by both its supporters and opponents. Some interculturalism theorists argue that in this new era, in which globalization and super diversity have emerged, multiculturalism theory is no longer appropriate and should shift to interculturalism (Cantel, 2012, 2013; Tayler, 2012). Others think interculturalism theory and multiculturalism theory are two distinct approaches to the negotiation of cultural difference by and within liberal democracies that cannot supplant one another (Levey, 2012; Meer & Modood, 2012). In general, given their shared elements and related critiques, the two theories have distinct principles and features.

**A Shared Question: How to Live Together in Diversity**

While conveying different ideas and tenets, both interculturalism and multiculturalism theories are utilized to answer a same question: how do we live together in diversity? Antonsich (2015) articulates that as societies are becoming increasingly diverse, both theories discuss this central question. To answer this question, they share a principle of respecting difference, equality, and other basic elements.

Both interculturalism and multiculturalism respect difference and maintain that diverse groups should have equal rights. Multiculturalism theory focuses on the creation of equal educational opportunities and positive attitudes toward differences (Banks & McGee Banks, 2005). Multiculturalism advocates for a society in which there is no discrimination and prejudice. Neither the colonial past nor the social majority should privilege certain cultural groups, since each cultural heritage is valuable and unique (Gay, 2002; Ladson-
Billings, 2005). Based on these premises, Ponciano and Shabazian (2012) argue that interculturalism shares the spirit and adds a new layer to addressing diversity through its attention to the bi-directionality of the authentic exchange of cultural contexts. In interculturalism theory, as illustrated in the previous section, a noteworthy principle is that interculturalism is a model that incorporates a number of different societal components, and rejects all discrimination based on differences. In a cohesive community framed by interculturalism theory, people from different groups enjoy equal rights and their cultures are valued (Cantle, 2012).

On the other hand, the principle of respecting difference and equality is embodied in language, cultural heritage, custom, and other forms of diversity. Duarte and Smith (2000) describe the basic themes and future directions of multicultural education in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Multiculturalism theory focuses on these themes by justifying how cultural minorities are oppressed by the majority. Similarly, interculturalism theory explores how people with different forms of diversity can interact and communicate so that they can co-create a shared society. In other words, both theories have the same target and discuss the issues present within the same groups of people.

Moddod and Meer (2012) conclude that the debate of interculturalism theory versus multiculturalism theory is “one strand of wider discussion on the proper ways of reconciling cultural diversity with enduring forms of social unity” (p. 33). As two models coping with diversity issues, both interculturalism and multiculturalism have their practical significances and applications in specific social contexts.
**Different Attitudes and Trajectories on Difference**

While interculturalism theory and multiculturalism theory share common principles and elements, they are distinct frameworks and possess different attitudes on the concept of difference itself. Thus, the two models employ various trajectories to fulfill their claims and ideas. Specifically, they debate the concept of difference, the minority/majority dichotomy, and related educational practices.

First, the concept of difference is distinctly positioned in interculturalism theory and multiculturalism theory. Multiculturalism, which is often described as a “salad bowl” or “cultural mosaic,” promotes maintaining the distinctiveness of multiple cultures and rejecting cultural assimilation and racial segregation (McCormick, 1984). The concept of difference is highlighted by multiculturalism, and people are encouraged to demonstrate and maintain their cultural differences. On the contrary, interculturalism theorists criticize that too much positive recognition of cultural differences can lead people from different cultures to retreat into their community of origins; Taylor (2012) argues that focusing on differences can overshadow the equal communication between groups and claims, “in short, that it encourages ghettoization” (p. 414). Intercultural theorists think that as society becomes more diverse, people are more inclined to retreat into their own identity. Moreover, multiculturalism could accelerate this retreat due to its emphasis on cultural differences (Cantel, 2011, 2012; Sen, 2006; Sondhi, 2009; Taylor, 2012). Rather than putting an emphasis on difference, interculturalism theory advances cohesion and integration by avenues of Intercultural dialogue (ICD).

Another aspect of the issue on difference is the understanding of identity. Supporters of interculturalism think multiculturalism has positioned identity as fixed and ascribed
(Cantle, 2012, 2013; Sondhi, 2009). According to intercultural theory, identity is increasingly complex and transitory; no one individual fully represents an ethnicity or race. As a result, the identity itself is always changing. People from different identity groups in the same society can result in the growth of “mixed race” or multiple groups. At the same time, the growth of mixed race groups and national or international intermarriage suggest that identity is not static and bounded. Multiculturalism, on the contrary, attempts to reinforce the fixed conception of identity, therefore protecting and stereotyping minority groups (Gundara, 2000; Fanshawe & Sriskandarajah, 2010).

Secondly, interculturalism theory aims to demolish the minority/majority dichotomy at the center of multiculturalism. Cantle (2012) articulates that “difference no longer revolves around the interface between minorities and the majority community” (p. 3). Hammer (2004) maintains that, as opposed to a multicultural framework, one of the implications of an intercultural human right is that culture is acting in a multi-directional manner. Thus, culture is not only fulfilling a function of preserving minority group rights, but also plays an influential role in the makeup of the claim and the ensuing response. Interculturalism does not recognize the minority/majority dichotomy; instead, it is concerned with the equal rights of different groups.

Due to globalization and super diversity, interculturalism theorists hold that interculturalism manifests itself within a new context of globalization in which the former barriers between the minority and majority extend among more different groups (Cantle, 2012). Thus, interculturalism seeks to replace multiculturalism and provide a new paradigm for thinking about globalization and super diversity. This perspective maintains that the minority/majority dichotomy has simply not adapted to the new diversity because it
continues to regard the minority-majority relationship between communities within one nation as the driving force of differences. In other words, minority-majority relationships are not deciding differences, and tensions between minorities can arise as well (Cantle, 2012; Tayler, 2012). Sondhi (2009) argues that the minority-majority dichotomy isolates each specific cultural group, and this hinders a two-way conversation with the majority culture.

Interculturalism places more emphasis on the importance of dialogue and communication among groups than multiculturalism (Levey, 2012). Acknowledging and focusing on communication and interaction between different cultural groups, interculturalism aims to build trust and understanding beyond national boundaries by changing mindsets and creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity. This process requires thinking, planning, and acting interculturally. All nations are closely connected, and the issues formerly addressed by multiculturalism in one society are now more global in scope.

Finally, due to the different understanding of difference and minority-majority relationships, the emphasis and value of education practices vary in interculturalism theory and multiculturalism theory. Feng (2009) argues that while in some educational contexts one often finds multiculturalism and interculturalism are used interchangeably as concepts opposed to monoculturalism or cultural assimilation, and to address political and sociocultural dimensions in learning and teaching, these two concepts have different emphasis. Multicultural education concentrates on the equal rights of the culturally minorities and includes more critical and social justice issues (Banks, 2013). Referring to specific ideas, Banks and Banks (2005) argue that “Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender; sexual orientation, social class and ethnic, racial, or
cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (p. 3). Thus, multicultural education students are encouraged to glorify their own cultural heritage and equal rights, and fight against prejudice and discriminations. Compared to multicultural education, intercultural education focuses on promoting different people and cultures, and fostering students’ ability to conduct intercultural communication and dialogue (Gundara, 2000; Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). As discussed before, in intercultural education, teachers expose students to intercultural issues to improve students’ intercultural competence for better intercultural dialogue.

In conclusion, while multicultural theory discusses the disparity between minority and majority groups, interculturalism theory is basically concerned with how to make a society more cohesive with “a stronger sense of whole” (Meer & Modood, 2012, p. 32).

**Intercultural Dialogue and Intercultural Education**

Finally, interculturalism proposes that the rights of different groups, as well as social cohesion, can be safeguarded through intercultural dialogue (ICD), which needs to take place within the context of the universal values of human dignity, human rights, and the rule of law (Barrett, 2011). ICD is an instrumental component of interculturalism that contributes to and fosters understanding with others. Cantle (2012) argues that intercultural dialogue “has certainly helped to challenge ‘otherness’ in a spirit of openness, utilizing processes of interaction, and is an important and instrumental part of interculturality” (p. 143).

Intercultural education offers a robust concept to ground a framework for teaching culturally- and linguistically-diverse learners (Gundara & Portera, 2008). Portera (2008) explains, “Today, ‘intercultural education’ and ‘intercultural pedagogy’ are regarded as a more appropriate response to the new context of globalization and the increasing
convergence of different languages, religions, cultural behaviors and ways of thinking” (p. 484). Specifically, for teachers, intercultural education focuses on formulating intercultural teaching competence (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; MacPherson, 2010). MacPherson (2010) argues that these competencies include teachers’ attitudes, cultural responsiveness, curriculum and instruction, intercultural communication, and critical orientations. Attitudes refers to teachers’ empathy, which increases sensitivity to teach in intercultural contexts. Cultural responsiveness is based on the same concept of Multiculturalism: teachers should be knowledgeable about students’ cultures, caring, and have high expectations for all students (Gay, 2002). Curriculum and instruction highlights the direct and supported cross-cultural contact and experiences (Wihak & Merali, 2007). Intercultural communication requires that teachers learn applicable skills, such as intercultural instructional conversation (Tellez, 2008) and cross-cultural listening. Finally, critical perspectives help teachers to be more aware of their power and privilege.

In summary, interculturalism theory aims to build a shared society in which people are at ease with difference and understand difference as an opportunity for learning. By respecting difference and reciprocity, interculturalism theory highlights a tenet of integration to accommodate conflict and tension between different groups, and promotes community cohesion to fulfill a shared society. Intercultural dialogue (ICD) operates as an important way to enhance interaction and mutual understanding. Improving people’s intercultural competence (ICC) stands at the heart of ICD.

**Teacher Identity Development**

Beauchamp and Thomas (2008) articulate that a teacher’s identity is shaped and reshaped as a result of interaction with others in a professional context. Professional identity,
in this case teacher professional identity, refers not only to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, but also what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their professional and personal experiences (Tickle, 2000). Watson (2006) states that “professional action is doing professional identity” (p. 510). In other words, the way we perceive ourselves influences our actions and judgments. Thus, understanding teachers’ identity development is fundamental to gain insight into the essential aspects of teachers’ professional lives. Teacher identity development also includes broadly accepted images in society about what a teacher should know and do.

**Characteristics of Teacher Identity Development**

A teacher’s identity development is characterized by its multiplicity, ongoing process, and intimate connection to context. Narratives and discourse are both representations of teacher professional identity.

First and foremost, the idea of multiplicity is commonly accepted in recent literature on teacher identity development. Multiplicity often indicates various layers; teacher professional identity is one perspective of a teacher’s identity (Gu, 2007; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010), and teacher identity comprises multiple sub-identities (Alsup, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2000; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). For the first layer, Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) distinguish teacher professional identity as one component of multiple perspectives of a teacher’s identity. Gu (2007) adds three “dimensions of identity: professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity” (p. 106). For the second layer, Beijaard et al. (2000) describe teacher professional identity as consisting of three sub-identities: subject matter expert, pedagogical expert, and didactical expert. More generally, these researchers conclude that a teachers’ professional identity
consists of sub-identities relating to different contexts and relationships. Recent literature also speaks of different “identities” or “sub-identities” to denote the multiplicity of teacher identity (Alsup, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Søreide, 2006). For example, Søreide (2006) illustrates that the expression of multiple identities is possible through a teacher’s narrative position, e.g. the caring teacher or the creative teacher.

Second, teacher identity development is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences. Identity is not a fixed, stable, or internally coherent phenomenon; it is shifting and in conflict. Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue that identity is “shifting” and “unstable.” A teacher’s identity is continually formed and reformed through self-evaluation as her/his professional identity develops over time, and through interaction with others (Cooper & Olson, 1996).

Third, teacher identity development implies both person and context. Rodgers and Scott (2008) theorize that identity is formed in relationship with others. Alsup (2006) stresses that identities are formed in social and communicative contexts for socially significant reasons. To some extent, a teacher’s identity is not entirely unique. Teachers are expected to think and behave professionally, but not by simply adopting prescribed professional characteristics, knowledge, and attitudes. In other words, identity is crucially related to social, cultural, and political contexts. What individuals believe, and how individuals think and act is always shaped by cultural, historical, and social structures that are reflected in literature, art, media, language, technology, and numeracy systems (Wertsch et al., 1993).

Adams and Marshall (1996) describe identity development as a transactional process: “An individual’s personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual but the individual’s identity can shape and change the nature of these
living systems” (p. 432). This notion of the “person-in-context” reflects the relationship between the teacher as a person and the context s/he is in. Within the discussion of social characteristic is a concept of teacher agency. Teacher agency refers to teachers’ ability to influence their lives and environment while they are also shaped by a variety of social and individual factors (Lasky, 2005). Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehen (2002) maintain that teacher agency is part of a complex dynamic that shapes and is shaped by the structural and cultural features of academic and societal cultures.

Finally, teacher identity development is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through narrative and discourse (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Teachers differ in the ways they deal with these characteristics, and these two forms of representations indicate distinct approaches to their negotiations. Within the institutional environment, “teacher identity is (re)presented in teachers’ rational and emotional responses toward these conditions and discourses, along with their professional knowledge and training” (Song, 2016, p. 632).

**Cultural Influence on Teacher Identity Development and the Acquisition of New Identity**

Cultural influence is crucial to teacher identity development. Culture provides a framework for understanding the world and its people affected by various social contexts. Teacher identity varies widely across societies and cultures. While much research focuses on teacher identity itself, other scholars explore how teacher identity can be influenced by culture (Cunningham, 2013; Schwartz, Zamboanga & Weisskirch, 2008).

Postmodernist and constructionist thinkers argue that identity is no longer seen as an overarching and unified framework; instead, it is fragmented along the multiple social worlds in which people engage (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).
Accordingly, teacher identity in different communities causes a self that is decentralized into a multiplicity of social and situated contexts. Welmond (2002) claims that conceptualizing teacher identity in any society is a three-step process. The first level of analysis is identifying the specific configuration of cultural schemata: “This configuration defines what it means to be a teacher” (p. 43). The second task is to focus on the experience of teachers at the local level, trying to understand how they navigate this landscape. The final step examines the state’s education objectives and their influence on how teachers behave and think. Teacher identity in different societies determines teachers’ success and effectiveness. Given that teachers’ understanding and interaction with others is shaped by their cultural identity, it is reasonable to say that how teachers see themselves and are seen by others will be judged based on their cultural contexts.

Sercu (2006) formulates that “the main objective of language learning is no longer defined strictly in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language. Teachers are now required to teach intercultural communicative competence. It follows that new professional demands need to be made on teachers” (p. 55). The acquisition of a new professional identity embodied in foreign language and intercultural competence has become the new norm and necessity. For Chinese intercultural teachers, the acquisition of a new professional identity can be challenging. Yan (2006) points out that the traditional identity of the teacher in China was structured by its historical institution. The Chinese tradition defines the teacher as a symbol of national culture and ideology; therefore, Chinese teachers are more concerned about how their teaching practices contribute to the country. When teaching in the U.S., Chinese teachers’ worldviews can be challenged, and they may have to change their ideas and the way they interact with the local people.
Returning to Stories: An Overview of the Dissertation

In my dissertation, my understanding of interculturalism and teacher identity is the basis of my exploration. In this chapter, and in many other sections of this dissertation, I explicitly demonstrate a tone of “wondering” (Phillion, 2002). I reflect how my personal stories spur my inquiry, and then how the inquiry goes back to others’ stories. I weave my participants’ stories with my own. In the chapter, I also review the existing literature on intercultural teachers and discuss the theoretical framework I use in my research. I also discuss additional literature I have reviewed in other chapters of my dissertation.

In the next chapter, I articulate the evolution of how I employ narrative inquiry for my dissertation exploration, including the reasons for using narrative inquiry in my research, an examination of narrative inquiry as a useful methodology to research teacher identity, and the detailed process with which I conduct my data collection and analysis. Narrative inquiry is an essential and fruitful research methodology for understanding intercultural teachers’ experiences and identities.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I focus on depicting the “landscape” of teaching abroad in terms of the national policies and institutional contexts. Chapter 3 Narrativizing the Social Context of China focuses on exploring how social context may have affected Chinese teachers’ choices to teach abroad. In the chapter, Chinese institutional landscape is also discussed. For example, I articulate the impacts of the Confucius Institute on Chinese teachers’ electing to teach internationally. Furthermore, in chapter 4 Home(land), Families, and Cultural Identity, I expand and deepen my interpretation of the cultural landscapes of these Chinese teachers. I analyze how home(land) and family values have constructed their identities and influenced their lived experiences. I formulate how environment influences the participants’ migration,
including their early lives, hometowns, and family education. I aim to explore how and to what extent the “big picture” and environment drive these teachers to teach in different cultures and construct their identities.

Chapter 5, Emotions, Art work, and Negotiating Multiple Identities within an Intercultural Context discusses the personal and teaching experiences of five Chinese teachers working in the U.S. What are the dilemmas they are faced with? How do they cope with these difficulties in a different culture? Do they learn to improve their intercultural competence? Chapter 5 addresses these questions. While a variety of identities are inextricable, in this chapter I care more about my participants’ lives outside of classrooms. I focus more so on my participants’ lived experiences outside of the classrooms, and illustrate the wovenness of emotions, artwork, and identity development.

In Chapter 6 Teaching in American School: Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Intercultural Willingness, I explore the intersection of professional and cultural identity. I focus on the teachers’ professional experiences in terms of pedagogy and curriculum, interaction with students and relationships with local colleagues. Many of the intercultural experiences in local schools or institutions indicate that my five participants as teaching professionals can expect and behave different than being as “people from a different country.” The intersection of professional identity and cultural identity is also embodied in their pedagogy and curriculum. The way they teach and how they adjust their teaching reflect the progress of their identity development.

Finally, Chapter 7 is a conclusion and implication section, in which I craft the essence of the research. I discuss my thoughts about interculturalism theory and intercultural education, narrative inquiry and landscapes, Chinese intercultural teachers’ lived
experiences, and teacher professional identity. I also introduce the implications of my research and possible future research directions.

**Significance**

This study is societally significant and educationally meaningful. Teachers are practitioners of pedagogy and educational philosophy. Knowing more about their dilemmas with curriculum and life is beneficial both for the educational practices of this group of teachers, and their students’ learning (Kim, 2015). During months of communicating with five Chinese teachers, we have developed a number of strategies that can be employed to improve the efficiency of classroom teaching and learning. We also conclude with a list of suggestions for other Chinese teachers who plan to teach in the U.S.

As the economic power and international status of China develops, the Chinese government strives to improve its cultural and educational influence through soft power (Hartig, 2011; Paradise, 2009). Soft power is usually defined as how a nation employs culture, education, and diplomacy to persuade other nations to willingly adopt certain goals (Nye, 2004; Yang, 2010). For example, one implementation is that Confucius Institutes have been built by the Chinese government around the world, and require sending large numbers of Chinese teachers to different countries (Hanban, 2014). In addition, Chinese faculty make up a large part of the foreign-born population in U.S. institutions (Marvasti, 2005); accordingly, it is necessary to give voice to their experiences.

While there are an increasing number of studies that combine multicultural education and narrative inquiry to examine the multicultural Chinese context, very few studies use narrative inquiry with an emphasis on Chinese teachers (Phillion, 2002; Zou, 2008). Zou (2008) argues that since narrative inquiry was only recently introduced to China as a valid
education research methodology, much has yet to be developed. This narrative research will address this gap and contribute to research literature on Chinese intercultural teachers.

My research also addresses issues of identity development, including how teachers interact with parents, peers, students, institutions, schools, and societies, that can contribute to experiential approaches to teacher education and the development of intercultural teaching competence.
CHAPTER 2 NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO UNDERSTANDING CHINESE TEACHERS’ LIVED EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES

Narrative Inquiry for My Queries

In my work, I explored teacher identity from a narrative, intercultural perspective. I decided that narrative inquiry educational research methodology was the most suitable for my dissertation. My reasoning is closely related to my personal interests, my academic background, and my social concerns.

I have always been interested in a narrative way of understanding the experiences of other people. As I introduced in the prelude, I have travelled quite a bit and met people from many different cultural groups. A convenient way to get to know people, or to make friends, has been to listen to their stories and share my own stories. While I sometimes was unfamiliar with people’s dialects or accents, their story plots and facial expressions helped me to understand their past and personality. By communicating with them through sharing stories, we built relationships and familiarity.

Storytelling and retelling, as Yu (2014) argued, is the best way to present one’s inner world. I was not only interested in individual experiences, but also in the contexts of those experiences. I had been educated to always analyze the specificity of topics and their circumstances, which is one of the core concepts of Marx’s dialectics. In high schools in China, students are required to learn Marxism and its applications in the Chinese context. Accordingly, I have tried to trace the where, when, and how of each story I have heard. I gradually found that this method has made complicated things more understandable and reasonable. During my dissertation research, I did not only focus on the stories themselves, but also asked questions regarding my participants’ secret, sacred, and cover stories.
(Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Such secret, sacred, and cover stories were critical to Clandinin and Connelly’s discussion of teachers’ professional knowledge. They concluded that teachers have a sense of ownership or autonomy in their classrooms. Therefore, the teachers did not tell many secret or sacred stories regarding their teaching lives. Without telling or retelling these secret or sacred stories, “the classroom can become a place of endless, repetitive, living out of stories without possibility for awakenings and transform actions” (p.13). Also, teachers expressed themselves using the language of accountability as outside people expected, rather than really reflecting their own thoughts. Such language and stories were, instead, cover stories.

Curriculum Studies, which is concerned with topics like educational equity and social justice, taught me to care about the applicable and practical aspects of research. The audience of educational research is mainly professors, graduate students, and those within intellectual fields. Do the participants in such research understand the researchers’ intentions and approach? Can they make their voices heard while being completely represented by the researchers? Pinar (2004) insisted that there should be a detachment of theory and practice; however, I was still considering if there was a research methodology that can incorporate people outside of academia. Hence, narrative inquiry was a research methodology worth consideration. My doctoral program advisor, Dr. JoAnn Phillion, is a narrative inquirer and has done many studies on narrative inquiry as an educational methodology. JoAnn had many conversations with me about narrative inquiry, which I found intriguing and helpful. I first learned systematically about narrative inquiry in two methodology courses taught by Dr. Stephanie Zywicki and Dr. Jake Burdick, who are also members of my committee. After reading the work of Dewey, Connelly, Clandinin, and Barone, I was more fascinated by the
idea that people are willing to share stories of their lived experiences as research. Therefore, before my doctoral preliminary examination, I did an extensive literature review on narrative inquiry and decided to utilize it as the methodology of my dissertation research.

I was also interested in the social functions that narratives perform in people’s lived experiences, and in how people employed daily life stories and mundane situations to explore who they are. Narratives, or stories, not only reflected their lives, but also constructed characters in space, time, and interaction (Clandinin & Conlinley, 2002; Dewey, 1995). Furthermore, as a former Chinese teacher and current teacher educator, I was concerned about how narrative inquiry can be used to represent a teacher’s identity. Barone (2010) asked, is it possible for teachers to tell their own stories and reveal who they are “to each other, away from the voyeuristic gaze of the however-kind-and-empathetic researcher?” (p. 595). In other words, how can teachers and their school stories be heard rather than waiting to be given a voice by researchers? Narrative researchers have been working with pre-service or in-service teachers to accomplish this task since the 1980s (Conle, 2000), and narrative inquiry has become a critical methodology in research on teacher identity development. I gradually understood what JoAnn meant by “narrative has at its heart an awareness of humanity… a sensitivity to uniqueness” (Phillion, 2002, p. 39). This research methodology, an interpretation of teachers’ narratives and life stories, helped teachers make explicit and comprehensible their personality, professionality, and values. Moreover, narrative inquiry also underpinned their teaching practices and called upon others to better understand teachers’ identities.

With all these interwoven questions in mind, I was confident about my decision to employ narrative inquiry as the research methodology of my dissertation. This narrative
inquiry approach to better understand Chinese intercultural teachers was the research I had craved to pursue during my doctoral study at Purdue University. It was like the fragmented mosaic coming together and I became committed to the narrative approach.

**Narrative Inquiry, Identity Development, and Intercultural Learning**

Narrative inquiry is defined by Polkinghorne (1995) as a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe the human social world. Based on the foundational assumption that people create meaning of their lived experiences through the construction of narratives or stories, narrative inquiry is used in many disciplines as a research methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry examines stories, narratives, lived experiences, or descriptions of a series of events. In general, narrative inquiry “aims at understanding and making meaning of experience through conversations, dialogue, and participation in the ongoing lives of research participants” (Clandinin & Canie, 2008, p. 542). In this section, I briefly discuss narrative inquiry as a research methodology, its relation to identity development, and how it influences intercultural teachers.

**Narrative Inquiry as An Educational Research Methodology**

Narrative inquiry has increasingly drawn the attention of scholars from various disciplines. In the field of education, Connelly and Clandinin developed narrative inquiry as a research methodology, describing the ideas of three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As an extension of their work, narrative inquiry has been applied in many different educational fields, including the study of teacher identity and multicultural education. The epistemology of narrative inquiry rises from constructionism and interpretative assumptions, which understand reality as perceived, constructed, and interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Narrative inquiry not only studies individual
experiences, but also explores the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted and shaped. Although narrative inquiry is aligned with constructivist and interpretive perspectives, Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) argue that narrative inquiries can also be designed using other approaches or strategies, such as the ethnography or case study. Furthermore, many scholars align different theoretical perspectives with narrative inquiry. For example, Phillion (2002) employs narrative inquiry in the context of multicultural education, further developing the concept of narrative multiculturalism. Patton and Catching (2009) use critical race theory (CRT) to explore the counter-narratives of higher education and student affairs programs.

Hendry (2007) illustrates that narrative inquiry focuses less on the stories that people tell and more on the meaning and importance with which those stories are imbued by those who tell them. Narrative inquiry is more than just telling or capturing stories; it is also about treating the story as data and the narrative as analysis, which involves interpreting the story, placing it in a context, and comparing it with other stories (Bell, 2002; Patton, 2014). In their description of narrative inquiry as an ongoing process of thinking, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) draw on Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and his notions of interaction, continuity, and situation to develop the theory of three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. A Deweyan view of experience is central to narrative inquiry methodology, and is used to frame a metaphorical, three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Dewey theorizes three criteria of experience necessary to develop a narrative view of experience. Drawing on Dewey’s first criterion, interaction, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that humans are social subjects always in relation with others: “People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in
relation, always in a social context” (p. 2). Dewey’s second criterion is continuity, meaning that experiences can produce further experiences and past experience can be a source of future experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that “Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (p. 2). The third criterion, situation, refers to a place or places within the environment. It is further explained by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as that which “attends to specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (p. 51).


**Narrative Inquiry and Identity Research**

Narrative inquiry is closely related to identity research and a good fit for analyzing identity development, especially teacher identity. Søreide (2006) argues that when one tells and interprets narratives, s/he also constructs one or several narrative identities: “This understanding of identity excludes the belief that we can provide teachers with ready-made and universal identities” (Søreide, 2006, p. 544). A major methodological influence of narrative inquiry in the field of identity research is that it espouses the rationale that “stories are privileged forms/structures/systems for making sense of self, by bringing the co-ordinates of time, space, and personhood into a unitary frame so that the sources ‘behind’ these
representations (such as ‘author,’ ‘teller,’ and ‘narrator’) can be made empirically visible for further analytical scrutiny in the form of ‘identity analysis’” (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 377). In other words, narrative inquiry can effectively dissect and analyze people’s identities.

In the application of narrative inquiry in identity research, narratives refer to the aspects of situated language use which are employed by narrators to position situated and contextualized identities (Leonardo, 2013). Through analyzing narratives and stories within specific contexts, the researcher can achieve a “display” of concrete and multiple identities. The telling and retelling of personal narratives is a powerful strategy for interpreting and re-interpreting oneself and one’s relations to others (Bruner, 2004). Connelly and Clandinin (2003) discuss how narrative inquiry can be employed to analyze teacher professional identity in terms of “stories to live by.” A story to live by provides a narrative thread or plot that teachers draw on to make sense of themselves and their practice. Stories to live by combine teachers’ personal experiences and broad social cultures. These stories conceptually synthesize a teacher’s practical knowledge and complex identity. The stories of teachers are, in part, personal stories shaped by their own knowledge, values, and feelings; they are also collective stories shaped by the traditions of the school culture where the teacher works, and of the surrounding society. Teacher identity relates to “how collective discourses shape personal worlds and how individual voices combine into the voice of a community” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 15). Moreover, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) conclude that:

“One must struggle to comprehend the close connection between identity and the self, the role of emotion in shaping identity, the power of stories and discourse in understanding identity, the role of reflection in shaping identity, the link between
identity and agency, the contextual factors that promote or hinder the construction of identity, and ultimately the responsibility of teacher education programs to create opportunities for the exploration of new and developing teacher identities (p. 176).”

**The Influence of Narrative Inquiry on Intercultural Teachers**

I have reviewed Phillion’s (2002) work on narrative multiculturalism and teacher education from a lens of interculturalism, in order to explore the availability and appropriateness of narrative inquiry in an investigation of Chinese teachers’ intercultural experience.

On the one hand, narrative multiculturalism is a fusion of narrative thinking and multicultural thinking. Through an in-depth study of an immigrant teacher working in a culturally diverse classroom in Canada, Phillion (2002) developed a narrative multiculturalism that combines narrative inquiry and multiculturalism. Narrative multiculturalism offers a specific process for data collection and analysis based on the theoretical framework of multiculturalism. More than simply interviewing or observing a research participant, narrative multiculturalism researchers use narrative multiculturalism to critically examine the societal context in which their research is situated. Specifically, narrative multiculturalism research not only employs multiple types of data collection, including interviews, field notes, observations, and conversations, but also examines the materials connected to the relevant context. For example, a researcher can collect local media accounts, public policies, journal documents, letters, personal objects, and social artifacts. Phillion searched the school archives and examined old school records, diaries kept by the school’s principals, and meetings of the school board in order to understand the discourse and attitudes about immigration and non-white teachers in this particular research context.
Narrative multiculturalism offers flexibility and the capacity to integrate narrative inquiry as a methodology and multiculturalism as a theoretical framework within my research.

On the other hand, while both approaches share some elements, interculturalism focuses on creating intercultural dialogue (ICD) and improving intercultural competence (ICC) (Cantel, 2012, 2013; Deardorff, 2006). At the heart of ICD is the reduction of prejudice, which is defined as bias that can negatively impact social cohesion (Meer & Modood, 2012). Through ICD, members of different groups work together toward common goals based on an equal footing that leads to reduced intergroup prejudice. ICC is an individual’s world view about how one person perceives and responds to cultural difference, or the capability to shift cultural perspectives and adapt behaviors according to cultural commonalities and differences (Deardorff, 2006). ICD and ICC highlight the voice and world views of different cultural groups, and provide the possibility of a narrative space in which people are encouraged to communicate and interact. In intercultural education, both the teacher and student can expose themselves to intercultural issues so that their ICC is improved for better intercultural dialogue. interculturalism’s theoretical framework has points of connection with multiculturalism as a foundation for narrative inquiry.

Leonardo (2013) articulates the logic for using narrative inquiry for analyzing intercultural experiences as “a mixture of evidence and imagination” that works to encourage individual reflexivity and “to spur people to act, to strike an emotional chord and to inspire educators to sketch a new society” (p. 605). Narratives have productive potential as a strategy to increase one’s reflexivity about cultural identities and intercultural relations, especially for novice intercultural teachers (Cloonan, Fox, Ohi & Halse, 2016).
Research Positionality

Narrative inquiry highlights the importance of acknowledging the centrality of the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). During interactions with my five participants, I often reflected on how my positionality affected the research itself. Spector-Mersel (2010) argues that narrative investigators are present in their texts, not only by writing in the first person and expressing their personal subjective voice, but also by deliberate reflection on the ways in which they influence participants’ stories with their interpretation. After each interview, I reflected on the conversation as such in a research journal.

I, as a narrative inquirer, should be, and was, cautious about my research positionality. On the one hand, narrative inquiry requires the researcher’s immersion, so that s/he can elicit information-rich data from participants, and explore the participant’s life experiences. On the other hand, intense immersion may cause problems and issues, because researchers can become heavily involved in the participants’ lives. Their understanding of power dynamics between the researcher and participant can become blurry or be ignored altogether. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) caution that while researchers “must become fully involved, must ‘fall in love’ with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry” (p. 81). Lather (2007) is also concerned that the researcher can become “omnipotent,” with little awareness of his/her control of the participant and research.

Sometimes I felt I excluded a valuable participant’s perspective due to a lack of reflection on my part. For example, when talking about how the principal treated Mei unfairly, Mei elaborated on the little support she received from the Confucius Institute; rather than follow up on her experience, I focused on the critical aspects and racial issues more
relevant to my academic background. In chapter five, I further discussed the negotiation of interpreting Mei’s and other participants’ stories.

Maintaining an awareness of positionality should help the researcher to avoid bias and invalidity in data collection and data analysis. In addition, addressing positionality can bring the researcher’s own social identity and societal position into the research, helping both the participant and researcher understand how the research is being conducted within a certain context. Many of our conversations discussed our American and Chinese contexts, and how our identity as foreigners could influence our teaching. Rossman and Rallis (2010) discussed this relation as “simultaneous awareness of the self and other, and of the interplay between the two” (p. 384).

Given that acknowledging researcher positionality is essential to narrative inquiry, I investigated the literature that discusses strategies to negotiate its complexities. Specifically, Clandinin and Connelly (2004) came up with the tenet of “walking into the midst of stories” (p. 63), illustrating that researchers need to see themselves located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, personal, social, as well as in the middle of a nested set of stories. With self-reflection and placing themselves in the midst, researchers can start with their own narrative experience and autobiography, “telling stories of their past that frame the present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in place” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70). Chase (2005) distinguished three “voices” of narrative inquirers—authoritative voice, supportive voice, and interactive voice—and suggested how to apply them in research. The authoritative voice proposed an interpretation of the narrators’ narratives, the supportive voice placed narrators’ voices at the center of the text, and the interactive voice stressed the mutual influence between the researcher’s and
narrators’ voices, and how the researcher interpreted narratives. I employed these strategies throughout my data collection, analysis, and dissertation writing.

**Researcher-participant Relations**

Chan (2004) illustrated in her dissertation the negotiations with the participants, gatekeepers, and other people involved in research. She detailed how she spent a long time building relationships with the participants. While I was not immersed in my research site for two years like Chan, I still experienced the stages of establishing and negotiating relationships with my participants. During my study, I interviewed the five participants with both initial and follow-up interviews. Three of the participants were introduced to me by friends, so our conversations were smooth at the beginning. The first time I finished my interview with Shi Kun, I wrote on my research journal:

诗堃很健谈也很配合，但是她很客气。“客气”表现在她很少愿意分享自己的感受和情感，也表现在她谈及的很多内容都是一些很客观的、技术性的话题。比如，某个课程是怎么设置的；比如，这个教学法有哪些优势和不足。我认为这种“客气”在叙事研究中不论对于研究者还是研究对象，都是不利的，它源于诗堃对我的不熟悉，只是把这次谈话当成是一项研究，不是经历的分享；把我当成一个研究者，而不是一个倾诉的对象。

Shi Kun was quite conversational and participatory, but she was polite. This kind of “politeness” meant that she was rarely willing to share her feelings and emotions, as well as that many of the topics she talked about were very technical and objective. For example, how the curriculum was set, or the advantages and disadvantages of a teaching strategy. I think this “politeness” is negative for both the researcher and the participant. The reason she behaved that way, I assume, was that she doesn’t know
me well. She regarded the interview as a part of the research, rather than a conversation to share experiences. She treated me as a researcher, not as a friend” (Research journal, February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2017).

Interactions with my participants reminded me of the collaborative relationship between the researcher and participant I had learned and read so much about. Moving away from a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic, narrative inquiries recognize that the researcher and the researched in a study need to develop a relationship in which both of them learn and communicate with each other. The research perspective of narrative inquiry focused on both role’s interpretation and understanding of meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The narrative inquiry methodology effectively changed the relationship between the researcher and the researched. “Relationship is key to what it is that narrative inquirers do” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) discuss the issue of control in their research: who initiates the inquiry, who defines what the findings are, and how the data will be collected and interpreted. Narrative inquires share control over various aspects of the inquiry with their participants. Valued as active agents and inseparable subjects, participants are co-researchers in narrative inquiry. Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves (2013) argue that narrative inquiry attends to and acts on experience by co-inquiring into the living and telling their stories of experience. When writing their research texts, researchers and participants negotiate the interpretation of the narrative data. Sometimes the researched even becomes a co-author of the research manuscript. Secondly, after building rapport over the length and depth of time spent in the field with participants, researchers can draw data with various methods. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) articulate that narrative inquiries “embrace a relational understanding of
the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched” (p. 15); therefore, data in the form of stories can be collected in various ways by the researcher and the researched. By working collaboratively with participants, researchers will interpret any material related to the research that can serve as data.

Considering the writing process of the research text, I reflectively turned to texts that feature similar relationships with participants and readers. I moved back and forth between field texts and research texts, and found that each interpretation dialectically informs the other. The stories I shared in conversations with my five participants were shaped and reshaped as I told them and listened to theirs. I was aware that although I had not spent as long with my participants as Chan did with hers, I could still develop close relationships and have in-depth conversations, because we had many shared experiences and developed appropriate attitudes toward the relationship.

**Participants and Data Collection**

Based on Patton’s (2001) articulation that “the sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced.” (p. 242), I recruited my participants through purposeful sampling. Two of them, Feng and Fang Fang, were acquaintances of mine, and the rest were introduced to me by my friends. The five participants were defined as Chinese teachers who were born, raised, and educated in mainland China. Each participant taught in higher educational institutions or K-12 schools for one to three academic years. After teaching in the U.S. for one to three academic years, these teachers either returned to China or stayed in the U.S.; some continued their teaching career, others transitioned to different professions. Research shows that 25 percent of novice teachers in the U.S. leave teaching before their third year,
and almost 40 percent leave the profession within the first five years (Chang, 2009; Wilhelma, Dewhurst-Savellisa, & Parkera, 2000). Furthermore, these teachers were familiar with teaching and living in the U.S. after one to three years. A demographic chart is presented below.
Table 1 Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Teaching in China</th>
<th>Teaching in the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shi Kun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Taught Chinese as a substitute teacher at a junior high school in Henan. 1 year of teaching experience.</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a language school in Ohio; taught a bilingual education course at a university in Texas. 5 years teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ling</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Taught art-related courses at a university in Shanghai. 2 years of teaching experience.</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a Confucius Institute in Kentucky. 2 years of teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Taught Chinese at an international junior high school in Shanghai. 1 year of teaching experience.</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at two Confucius Institutes in Kentucky and San Diego. 3 years of teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feng</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a university in Changchun. 1 year of teaching experience.</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a Confucius Institute in Alaska. 2 years of teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fang Fang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a university in Beijing. 1 year of teaching experience.</td>
<td>Taught Chinese language at a Confucius Institute in Kentucky. 2 years of teaching experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample size of five is adequate in narrative inquiry based on the criteria of saturation and the research methods recommendations (Sandelowski, 1995). When I completed interviews with my first three participants, I thought there were many topics I had
not covered and that the data I had collected was insufficient in both quantity and quality. As a result, I searched for two more participants and completed my data collection.

I considered these participants co-researchers in this research. By telling their stories and interacting with me, we explored our experience of teaching in a different culture, and shared feedback and suggestions for teaching and living in the different contexts.

My data were drawn from interviews, autobiographies, artifacts, art work, field-notes, research journal reflections, and theoretical memos. Qualitative research methods, in terms of the interview, were suitable for understanding people’s experiences and exploring their perspectives (Burnard, 1991; Goldman et al., 2003). Therefore, in this research, I first conducted interviews with each participant to get to know her/his experience in life and work. Seidman (2012) argued that “when people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness” (p. 7), so I encouraged my participants to share her/his stories in as much detail as possible. I conducted two one-on-one interviews with each participant, and each interview was completed in Chinese based on the participants’ preferences. I designed the same interview protocol for each participant. The protocol (see Appendix A) included the opening questions, aiming at collecting the basic and broad information about my participants and their educational and teaching experiences. Each initial interview averaged one hour in length. Based on the transcriptions of initial interviews and field observations of each participant, I asked different questions to each participant in the follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews varied from fifty to seventy minutes in length. Both the initial and follow-up interviews were conducted via the communication application Wechat or Facetime. I recorded each interview using smartphone and the electronic record was transcribed and analyzed as text. After transcribing the
interview, I sent a copy of the transcript through email to the participant for review (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The electronic records were transcribed into Chinese by myself via MS Word. For each interview record, I took four hours to transcribe and one hour to check.

Autobiography was another data source. I, as a researcher, started the data collection by composing a 400-500 words autobiography that discussed my intercultural experience both as a Chinese student and as a teacher in China and the U.S. Clandinin and Caine (2008) articulated that narrative inquirers must begin their inquiries with narrative self-studies of their own experiences. They claimed that “narrative inquiries, thus, have both autobiographical narrative groundings as well as more theoretical groundings, and the autobiographical narrative inquiries are the starting points for initially shaping and deepening the research puzzle” (p. 643). I also proposed to ask each participant to compose a short autobiography discussing their educational and teaching experiences, because the essay could help them self-reflect and give more thought to their stories. Vavrus (2009) also argued that autobiographical discourse can assist teachers in reflecting on their teaching, which would help them understand the impact of school on their lives and their students’ lives. Only one of the five participants chose to compose a reflection, so I adjusted my plan accordingly and asked more questions regarding autobiographical discourse during the interviews.

I also incorporated artifacts—e-journals, on-line blogs and other documents—to understand their experiences more comprehensively. With the permission of my participants, I collected their existing writings on Wechat or Weibo. Wechat and Weibo, similar to Facebook and Twitter, are popular Chinese social networking platforms. The five
participants often posted their reflections or thoughts, so I included those posts in my data collection.

Art work, mainly referring to pictures and songs in this research, was another type of data. With the aim of the “enhancement of perspectives” and “suggesting new ways of viewing educational phenomena” (Barone & Elliot, 2012, p. 96), art-based research provides an enlightening way to conduct qualitative research. I collected poems, drawings, and songs from the participants by asking them if they could provide any art work that they thought were related to their intercultural experiences. When reviewing the art work and my research journal reflections on it, I realized that these pictures and songs moved my research to broaden and deepen our ongoing conversations about understanding Chinese teachers’ intercultural experiences by drawing attention to seemingly taken-for-granted notions. Especially for Ling, as she had been immersed in Chinese traditional paintings for a long time. Her drawings indicated multiple emotions, themes, and even conflicts, which were reflected in her intercultural experiences.

Finally, I continued writing periodic research journals and reflection notes. The reflection notes were like a summary of each stage of the research. After collecting one participant’s data, I wrapped up the entire process, including depicting the participant, summing up possible narrative constructions, and raising concerns and questions. Additionally, I wrote down commentary on useful theories in my theoretical memos. Along with reading research papers and reviewing literature, I identified many related theories or thoughts that could be used in my data analysis and discussed the application of each valuable theory.
This triangulation of different data sources bolstered the credibility of my research and collected reasonable data.

**Data Analysis**

I have employed Polkinghorne’s (1995) narrative analysis and Barone’s (2007) narrative construction for my data analysis. Narrative construction composes diachronic descriptions of events and happenings into a story, and the purpose of narrative construction is to produce stories as the outcome of the research. In this type of data analysis, the researcher needs to have a system with outlines or boundaries, such as a period of time, a certain group of people, or a specific space. The process of narrative construction synthesizes the data into a coherent developmental account, and the findings are formed in stories. Based on my narrative construction, I have developed three elements as the principles in my data analysis: attitude, strategy, and improvement. These principles have helped me to navigate my large data pool and increase my efficiency.

Attitude referred to reflexivity and making myself explicit. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) suggested that reflexivity is important in qualitative data analysis, and the researcher should recognize her/his emotional responses, and examine her/his ontological and epistemological assumptions. When reviewing the transcriptions and becoming concerned or critical about the participants’ stories, I tried to first identify my position and feedback. I used autobiography to concretize that process. I included different thoughts and ideas in data analysis, and discussed them in the text. As my analysis continued, I moved back and forth between my participants’ and my own perspectives.

a “deck-clearing” principle for narrative researchers to organize the retelling of participants’ stories. This meant that researchers imprint themselves upon participants’ stories and create the researchers’ own stories. In other words, narrative researchers can never be objective, but they can bring themselves to the text. Therefore, I continuously expressed my thoughts and reflections in analysis.

I developed a four-color data analysis strategy. I marked the transcriptions with four different colors, each representing a specific aspect of the data.

Black: tentative narrative constructions were written in-text in black. I underlined phrases and sentences when I thought those could be explored and expanded upon as possible narrative construction. I selected these stories based on my personal interests and on relevant theories I reviewed from literature, and recorded the names of those constructions. For example, when Feng elaborated on his hometown in China, I underlined the sentences describing the local tradition that young people leave their homes and work in different places, because I thought this tradition influenced his decision to teach abroad. After all, early life experiences did affect one’s future work in many cases.

Red: my thoughts, questions, and concerns were written in red on the right side of the transcription. Writing down my direct reflections provided a means of recording and addressing the internal reflections and external observations and conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I also included in red brief explanations on the tentative narrative constructions I wrote in black. When reviewing the data, the red writing helped me remind what I was thinking and wondering.

Yellow: I highlighted the words and terms signifying emotions or personal feelings in yellow. When researching teacher identity and intercultural education, emotions play an
important role (Menard-Warwick, 2011; Song, 2016; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2009).

Therefore, I paid much attention to the emotions displayed throughout each story.

Blue: I circled the experiences my participants and I shared in blue. When some participants illustrated their experiences, I responded with similar or different ones, and we deepened our conversations. I circled such experiences and made note of them. These shared experiences could contribute significantly to building the narrative constructions.

Below are figures of how I used the four-color data analysis strategy:
Figure 1 Four-color Data Analysis Strategy
The four colors helped to identify specific foci and perspectives. My research journal and reflections were used to synthesize the four-colored portions. I integrated the four-color sections and summarized them in my research reflection. Sometimes the content of the four
parts overlapped, but they provided me with an effective approach to analyze the data and compose the dissertation.

Finally, improvement is concerned with the recurring process of the data analysis. In narrative inquiry, there are no “holy transcripts” (Riessman, 2008) or “Hollywood plot” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); the data could always indicate new themes and emerged stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) warned that “another danger in composing narrative research texts is what we have called the ‘Hollywood plot’, the plot in which everything works out well in the end” (P. 181). Therefore, my data was always in process and worthy of development.

I changed my perspective to that of the reader to review the data analysis. I also asked my peers, for example, my colleagues at Purdue and my wife, to read the results. I provided them portions of unidentified transcriptions and my analysis, and sought their comments or feedback. In some parts of the writing, I presented the transcriptions both in Chinese and in English, as I thought that the original narratives of my participants and my translations can convey different perspectives and meanings. Barone (2010) argued that readers’ reading experience could be powerful enough to “raise embarrassing questions, cast doubt over totalizing master narratives, or promote ponderings on what causes the suffering and conversations about how best to alleviate it” (p. 596). I believed that my data analysis could be improved by involving a third party in my research.

Yu (2014) articulated that “the big jump from the original telling of stories by participants to the retelling of those stories by researchers is not a linear path – it is an art, like the complex process of producing tea from raw leaves” (p. 684). I agreed that, in
narrative inquiry, data analysis should never be a linear process, but an art of exploration and discovery.

**Narrative Inquiry into Understanding Chinese Teachers’ Lived Experiences**

In this chapter, I have discussed the motivations for employing narrative inquiry into understanding Chinese teachers’ lived experiences and reviewed narrative inquiry as a research methodology. I have also reviewed the rationale and tenets of narrative inquiry, and explored how it can be perceived as both phenomenon and methodology. Referring to the specific data collection and analysis, I have used various types of data in my research, as well as developed an attitude of reflexivity and a four-color strategy. I have applied these tenets, skills, and strategies into my research, aiming to better understand and interpret my participants’ lived experiences.

In my next chapter, I retell the participants’ stories by depicting the landscape of these five Chinese intercultural teachers. Specifically, I have focused on the national policies and institutional contexts, and how they have influenced my participants’ choice to teach and live within different cultures.
CHAPTER 3 NARRATIVIZING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF CHINA

The Landscape of Narrative Inquiry

The social context of lived experiences is essential to narrative inquiry, including the researchers’ life stories and the participants’ places, times, and social contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Within this space, each story is situated and can be understood and interpreted within larger cultural, social, and institutional narratives (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013). Therefore, I explored the Chinese social context of my participants’ lived experiences. In this chapter, I have discussed how social context, in terms of the government’s policies of Reform and Opening Up, as well as the Confucius Institute and Oriental School, influences my participants’ choice to teach in the U.S., and their experiences of teaching.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000, 2006), there are three features that designate the landscape of narrative inquiry. The first is place, which refers to the “specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place” (p. 377). For narrative inquirers, the specificity of location is important, because events all occur in some places. The second feature, temporality, connects with past, present, and future moments. In narrative inquiry, events and people are always in temporal transition and their experiences are always lived. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) articulate that “when we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time. Any moment, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future” (p. 29). Finally, sociality “points toward the simultaneous concern with both personal and social conditions” (p. 378). Personal conditions are the feelings, emotions, and moral dispositions of both the participants and the researchers. Social
conditions are existential: the environment, factors, and forces that form the individual’s context. Sociality refers to the relationship between participant and inquirer.

The social context of China is a three-dimensional space, in which the five Chinese teachers interact with space, time, and people. Rosiek (2006) points out that practitioners and their academic collaborators both “face similar conflicts between the discourses of their professional training and the discourses of the non-academic communities in which they live and work” (p. 269). Hence, understanding the landscapes of both professional training and non-academic communities becomes the research priority.

In addition, there is a close connection between the struggles of people and external forces as they navigate themselves in the landscape of narrative inquiry. Therefore, to interpret a person’s stories, the researcher should first depict their landscape and place their stories. In this and the following chapter, I have focused on presenting the landscapes of my five participants by drawing attention to the national policies and social contexts, as well as each participant’s early life experiences and surroundings.

Confucius Institute: Connecting Personal Experiences with National Policies

One day, after teaching a first-year art class, Ling was on the way to the dining hall. A flyer recruiting Chinese teachers to teach in the U.S. drew her attention. While there was already a crowd of people gathering in front of the bulletin board, Ling could still image the bold headline “孔子学院招聘赴美汉语老师” (Confucius Institute is hiring Chinese language teachers to teach in the U.S.). She squinted her eyes but could hardly read the detailed information. Then, without hesitating, she rushed to her dormitory, opened her laptop, and searched for the college’s website. Ling found that she met all the requirements to apply to the teaching abroad program, and the assistantship the Confucius Institute
provided was quite promising. She then called her parents, told them about her plan, and asked for their suggestions. Her parents agreed, because they knew their daughter had the expectation to go to the U.S.; the Confucius Institute’s opportunity was welcome encouragement. The procedures were simple. Ling submitted the application materials, took the examinations, and completed training. Several months later, like thousands of other Confucius Institute Chinese teachers’ trainers, Ling boarded an American Airlines’ flight headed to the country of her dreams.

Ling never thought she would have the opportunity to live and teach in the U.S. after graduation. After traveling to California during a summer vacation, she considered studying in the U.S. for her Master’s degree. “I thought the U.S. was like heaven! It’s the most developed country in the world and I really wanted to study there,” Ling described. She walked on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, took pictures with Mickey Mouse in Disney World, and enjoyed the overall leisure. Despite changing her tone about the U.S. in a later conversation with me (which I discussed in Chapter Five), at the time she really looked forward to studying in the U.S. However, she did not carry out the plan due to a variety of reasons; instead, she found a teaching position at a university in Shanghai. Fortunately, the Confucius Institute’s recruitment offered her a chance to make her dream come true. Ever since, her professional life has been tied to this national institute.

The Confucius Institute, or CI, is a school-based institution founded by China’s Ministry of Education. Since 2004, over 1500 Confucius Institutes have been established outside China to develop intercultural communication and build a more harmonious world (Hanban, 2014). According to Hanban, the headquarters of CIs, CI is a language- and culture-related institution that promotes international education. The basic work of CI is to
provide Chinese language and culture teaching resources. Every year, Hanban sponsors more than 3000 Chinese teachers to teach abroad, and that number is increasing. Like Ling, my other three participants’ choice to teach in the U.S. have greatly been influenced by the policies and practices of Hanban and Confucius Institutes, which are fundamental to their teaching landscapes.

**Hanban and Confucius Institute**

Feng’s parents were so proud of their son’s teaching in the U.S., especially when they knew Feng’s teaching abroad program was organized by the Confucius Institute. There was increasing news coverage about how learning Chinese was becoming a trend worldwide, and the large number of Chinese teachers sent by the Confucius Institutes to other countries. Accordingly, Feng’s parents recognized that their son was serving as an ambassador of the country. They told neighbors and relatives that their son worked for the Confucius Institute.

The Confucius Institute, a non-profit and the only official educational institute for international teaching, was founded in 2004 by the cooperative work of Hanban and its local partner in South Korea. Hanban, literally meaning the Office of Chinese Language, is CI’s headquarters in Beijing. Hanban is governed by the Office of Chinese Language Council International, affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education. With years of development and Chinese governmental promotion, CI and Hanban are widely known as the foremost platforms of language and intercultural communication.

Feng’s parents believed, as did many other Chinese people, that government programs are trustworthy and accountable. This had been the Chinese social tradition for some time. An investigation in *The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer* by Edelman—a company that focuses on the research of public relations—reported that about 76% of the total Chinese
population trusted their government, the highest percentage worldwide (Edelman, 2016). CI, a Chinese government program, benefitted from this affiliation and attracted many in-service or pre-service teachers to join the program. While Feng’s parents did not know exactly what their son was doing in CI, they believed what the government supported was meaningful and rewarding. This social context connected and directed many Chinese people’s life experiences.

According to Hanban’s official website, Hanban has three main functions: to make policies and development plans for the international promotion of the Chinese language, to support Chinese language programs at educational institutions in other countries, and to develop international Chinese teaching standards and language teaching materials (Hanban, 2014):

Hanban is committed to developing Chinese language and culture teaching resources and making its services available worldwide, meeting the demands of overseas Chinese learners to the utmost degree, and to contributing to global cultural diversity and harmony." (Hanban’s website, 2014)

Following these tenets, CI’s main objectives are to teach Chinese, to promote cultural exchange, and to facilitate business activity. Each year, thousands of Chinese teachers are sent to other countries to implement these objectives and establish CI’s legacy of connecting different cultures.

Feng thought being a Chinese teacher for the CI gave him many opportunities and changed his life. After conducting research on CI’s national policies, Feng explained that applying to teach abroad for CI offered beneficial stepping stone for his future career. He added:
“我很多身边的人都明白中国政府在推这个项目。我们可以有相当好的工资，有机会去其他国家生活教课，而且申请研究生或者找工作的时候还会有优惠政策。政府制定了相关政策来吸引大家去外国教课。

Many of my peers knew the Chinese government was pushing this program. We got quite good salaries, had opportunities to live and teach in other countries, and were offered an extra bonus when applying graduate schools and finding jobs. The government enacted policies to draw more people to teach abroad” (Interview transcription, 2017).

Feng’s statement makes sense. On the one hand, with the support of Hanban, Confucius Institutes have been established in many locations in Asia, Africa, North America, the Middle East, Europe, and Oceania. There are currently more than 1500 Confucius Institutes around the world, one third of which are in the U.S. (Hanban, 2014). Two types, the Confucius Institute and the Confucius Classroom, differ based on the level of education. The Confucius Institute is at the university level, and most students are college students or adults; the Confucius Classroom is established in primary or secondary schools. Broadly speaking, both of them can be identified as Confucius Institutes. Based on the policies of Hanban, CI offers a significant assistantship to the Chinese teachers who are admitted, including a high salary (compared to the average income of Chinese teachers), paid vacation, living expenses allowance, and airline tickets. After their service, CI teachers are often preferred when applying to graduate schools or looking for jobs.

My wife also served as a CI Chinese teacher in the Netherlands, so I was reminded of her experiences during my research process. She enjoyed one year in the Netherlands, where her course load was low. She travelled to several European countries and even saved a good
sum of money. After the service, her teaching abroad experience was valued by many companies. “It’s really a big deal!” I often said to my wife. National policies and the CI program’s context make a big difference for CI teachers who teach abroad. Accordingly, I further reviewed CI research and studies.

Based on a variety of partner institutions, Starr (2009) identifies three operation modes of Confucius Institutes: CI wholly operated by Hanban, CI with local partners as joint ventures, and “wholly locally run offices licensed by the Beijing headquarters” (p. 70). The joint venture structure is the most common CI, in which Hanban operates in conjunction with universities in China and local partner institutions abroad. For example, the Confucius Institute Mei works for is a joint venture by an American primary school and a university in China. However, the cooperative mode may result in several issues regarding teacher management and teaching practices (Hartig, 2012). For example, Hanban trains and places Chinese teachers, and it claims to manage issues as they arise. However, when these teachers arrive to their school sites, Hanban and CI rarely follow-up with them; accordingly, the teachers do not know how to seek help when they have problems. Moreover, Hanban’s revision of local schools’ curriculum can make teaching and learning more difficult.

The establishment of a Confucius Institute requires the following considerations. First, due to a stable financial system and continued, rapid economic growth, China is taking on the role of an international economic powerhouse. Paired with such improvements is China’s attempt to develop its soft power in terms of Chinese language and culture (Zhao & Huang, 2009). Soft power is usually defined as how a nation employs culture, education, and diplomacy to persuade other nations to willingly adopt certain goals (Nye, 2004; Yang, 2011). In addition, to relieve the world’s anxiety about China’s increasing economic and
military power, the Chinese government aims to project a more favorable image of the country and to reassure the world that its intentions are benign (Paradise, 2009). Finally, similar to the way in which English has been highlighted for many years in China, the Chinese government aims to provide more opportunities for people to study Chinese and Chinese culture (Paradise, 2009; Ren, 2012). As a result, the Chinese government builds and operates Confucius Institutes around the world that promote an understanding of Chinese language and culture for a more harmonious world. However, other researchers argue that due to the insufficiency of cultural content and key concepts, it is problematic to characterize CI as a part of China’s soft power (Ren, 2012). Other studies conclude that the creation of CI is not correlated with soft power and the rise of China, and prefer to think of CI in solely academic terms (Lin, 2006; Paradise, 2009).

**Educational and Communicative Practices of Confucius Institute**

Teaching Chinese language and culture is the main object of CI. Wei (2014) articulates that the main CI course types are language classes, culture classes, and cultural activities. Chinese language teaching and training play key roles in the curriculum, and cultural courses and activities are important supplements to CI pedagogy. CI offers three levels of Chinese language class: primary, intermediate, and high. In each level, students learn the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In most CIs, primary-level classes focus on a comprehensive curriculum; higher-level classes feature more specialized language skills. Besides these standard classes, additional CI courses focus on topics such as Business Chinese and Tourist Chinese. This range of course options reflects CI’s attempt to enroll a variety of student demographics (Zhao & Huang, 2010). Prospective
students take a placement exam prior to enrollment. Final exams gauge students’ language progress, and typically these final exams are comparatively easier (Wei, 2014).

Teaching Chinese culture is another important practice in CIs. Usually, the culture courses are taught in two formats. One is the lecture format, in which teachers introduce traditional Chinese culture. Another is more experience-based. Students can learn and experience traditional Chinese culture, including calligraphy, instruments, cuisines, etc. Instructors in this format are not required to be licensed teachers. CIs invite experts of traditional Chinese culture to present their skills in the classroom.

Students without any Chinese knowledge can still enroll in culture courses. Liu (2007) argues that for students who are not motivated by academic goals or job prospects, such a curriculum first cultivates their interest in China, and then often encourages them to study the Chinese language.

From 2010-2013, the number of people who learned Chinese as a foreign language rose from 100 million to 150 million (Zhang, Wang, & Zhang, 2013). In 2010, the total number of registered students at Confucius Institutes increased by 56%, paired with a net increase of 1,000 Chinese language teachers worldwide (Liu, 2010). Researchers claim that CIs have accelerated this international trend, and that this teaching practice is an important element in the future unity of the world (Zhao & Huang, 2010).

Confucius Institutes implement educational practices not only through Chinese language and culture teaching, but also by promoting intercultural communication. Following the objectives of cultural exchange and communication, CIs apply Confucius’ core concept of harmony to create a multicultural and multi-valued world. There are two characteristics of such harmony. First, harmony can occur on various levels, including harmony between
societies and different societal groups. Second, while harmony values natural relationship and mutual interaction, it does not seek sameness. Instead, Confucius respects difference and regards difference as a necessity (Li, 2006, 2008). Confucius Institutes are devoted to culturally-communicative practices and focus on local tradition and custom. All CIs hold a one-day activity in different countries called the “Day of the Confucius Institute.” Local people are welcomed to present their own cultures at the event, including food, traditional costume, and other activities. CIs also share Chinese culture with the local community at the festival. For example, the “Day of CI” in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia highlights both Ethiopian greeting traditions and Chinese martial arts. CI festivals encourage mutual learning between different cultures, and maintain that the world should be harmonious. This one-day activity provides a platform in which different cultures co-exist and are respected in a harmonious atmosphere, so that people from different cultures learn and communicate with each other.

Confucius Institute as the Landscape for Chinese Teachers

Craig (2011) illustrates that both teachers’ identities and stories echo within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as they connect in time, place, and society. The Confucius Institute, in which each Chinese teacher’s lived experiences are told, serves as the landscape of intercultural narrative inquiry and as a reminder of events of stories. For each of my four participants—Ling, Mei, Feng, and Fang Fang—her/his stories to live by at Confucius Institutes are intertwined within three-dimensional narrative space.

The dimension of time embodies that formulated policies influence Chinese teachers’ decisions to teach abroad. The dimension of place refers to CIs in different schools, about which these Chinese teachers tell and retell their stories. Sociality encompasses their colleagues, students, and friends, either in China or the U.S. In general, this Confucius
Institute landscape sets the stage for their stories and lived experiences. Furthermore, the Confucius Institute as a landscape is also deeply embedded in the social context of China.

**Narrativizing the Social Context as the Driving Force**

Four out of my five participants chose to teach in the U.S. Shi Kun’s story was different in this respect. She did not consider teaching abroad before coming to the U.S., nor did she consider to be a teacher for her career. Her educational, professional, and social contexts, both in China and the U.S., played a crucial role in driving the course of her life. In this section, I explored the landscape in which Shi Kun chose to study abroad and become a teacher. I discussed the educational effects of China’s Reform and Opening policies and narrativize Shi Kun’s lived experiences while learning and studying abroad. This landscape also references other Chinese teachers’ parallel experiences.

**The Reform and Opening Up Policies’ Effects on Education**

Shi Kun is among one of the Chinese generations for which studying in the U.S. became a widespread trend. That phenomenon was closely related to the policies of Reform and Opening Up. After thirty years of development, an alteration to the economic system of China was introduced. China had followed policies of Reform and Opening Up to the outside world, the policies which were initiated by the former Chinese premier, Deng Xiaoping in 1979. The major objectives of the policy were to readjust the economic structure, and to reform the economic and political systems. Specifically, the planned economy system of early China—which featured communes, family-oriented agriculture, and the limited introduction of prices and markets—was abolished and replaced by a natural market regulation that stimulates production. While the market-oriented economic system was traditionally implemented in Western countries, the Chinese government claimed that the
new economic system was a socialist market economy with Chinese features (Brandt et al., 2008).

After the Reform and Opening Up policies of 1978, China ushered in an unprecedented era during which Western products and values were welcomed and celebrated (Hao & Yang, 2010). Chinese people realized that they, in many ways, were far behind Western countries like Britain and the U.S. Therefore, as Hao and Yang (2010) argued, learning from the West had again become a task for the Chinese people. Western theories and international communication were hot issues in Chinese media and development.

Given this social context, the influences of the Reform and Opening Up policies on education were significant. Chinese educational administrators were eager to learn new curriculum theories and pedagogies from Western countries. For example, borrowing the tenets of Pinar’s Autobiographical Curriculum Theory (2004), the curriculum reform of students’ personal development and learning experiences was central to this transition period in China. Teachers were encouraged to share the classroom with students, and make students the focus of teaching and learning. Experimental courses, or classes that followed the curriculum in schools of Western countries, were set up in different schools. International teachers were welcomed and regarded as roles models of this educational shift. Shi (2006) articulated that Chinese teachers, parents, and students believed that the Western educational system enhanced students’ creativity and critical thinking. Therefore, bringing Western curriculum and pedagogy into the Chinese society were promoted.

Besides bringing Western educational values and ideas to China, study abroad became the new norm. According to the Institute of International Education (2013), the number of Chinese students studying in the U.S. increased by 3% from 2003-2013, with a
total population of roughly 200,000 students in 2013. The U.S. was the first-choice
destination for most Chinese students, the second and the third were U.K. and Germany.

With the development of economic conditions paired with the Reform and Opening Up
policies, increasing numbers of Chinese families opted for their daughters and sons to study
abroad. The graph below, which was drawn from the Chinese Educational Online Database,
shows the trend of Chinese students studying in the U.S. From 2007-2013, the number of
Chinese students who chose to study in the U.S. increased by approximately 17% percent.
The number is still rising currently in China.
Another aspect of this study abroad fever was incorporated into the CI teacher training programs. With the support of the Chinese government, many Chinese schools and universities sent teachers and visiting scholars to foreign countries for training. For example, the China Scholarship Council (CSC) was founded by the Ministry of Education as a non-profit institution that provides assistance to Chinese teachers to study abroad. These teachers were expected to learn valuable and practical teaching skills and ideologies.

In general, the educational effects of the Reform and Opening Up policies have encouraged many Chinese students and teachers to consider studying and teaching outside of China. Based on my interactions and communication with this study’s participants, I have no
doubt that my five participants’ choice to go to the U.S. was influenced by this sociocultural landscape.

**New Oriental School and its Teachers**

The development of English training institutes occurred in response to this study abroad fever, because English-speaking countries were often the preferred placement for such students and teachers. New Oriental school quickly established itself as the most reputable English language institute. In Shi Kun’s story, this institute was mentioned several times.

Shi Kun and her friend arrived in Beijing during the scorching summer of 2003. They travelled to the capital city to learn English. Several months prior, Shi Kun had enrolled in a TOFEL program with New Oriental. Shi Kun and her friend knew that many students would take the summer class, because New Oriental was known as the best English language school in China. “There were 20 openings at the beginning. Then 4 hours later, there were only two left, so I seized the opportunity without hesitation and we took the last two,” Shi Kun recalled. They were quickly amazed by the ardor of their fellow English learners. On the first day of the class, they found that there were more than 40 students crowding the classroom, some of which did not have desks. The program lasted for two weeks, and each day included six hours of English lessons and practice. When Shi Kun and I were talking about the course, she agreed that the summer in New Oriental was more than simply learning English; it changed her life trajectory. “That learning experience drove me to the U.S., and it made me think about being a teacher like the teachers in New Oriental,” Shi Kun said.

There are three well-known Chinese educational institutes. The first two are Tsinghua and Peking, the top universities in China (like Harvard and Yale in the U.S.). The third is the
New Oriental Education & Technology Group, or New Oriental, a training school that has satellite campuses all over the China. According to its official website, New Oriental is the largest educational company in China. New Oriental is also a national pioneer in assisting students to study abroad; or, in other words, a study abroad agent company. New Oriental has built a study abroad industry that ranges from teaching English to preparing students to apply to foreign universities. By 2014, New Oriental has established 56 schools and 703 learning centers in China, and has enrolled 20 million students. It is commonly said that if you see a group of Chinese students on any U.S. university campus, at least one has learned English from New Oriental.

I can relate to Shi Kun’s experience and how New Oriental had brought her to the U.S. to teach. I was an English learner at New Oriental, too. I was enrolled in their TOFEL and GRE classes for two semesters. Besides their renowned English learning methods and exam-prep courses, what attracted me to New Oriental was its presentation of U.S. society and its teachers. Unlike traditional Chinese teachers who just teach rote knowledge and insist on being the classroom authority, New Oriental teachers shared the classroom with their students. In addition to their effective and practical ways of teaching English, they provided suggestions about how to get along with American students, modeled how to tell interesting stories, shared their experiences, and even sang in the classroom. In one of my New Oriental classes, the teacher simulated the reception party Chinese students may experience during American university orientation. The teacher brought refreshments and drinks, and taught us what to say to greet others. After the party, he offered feedback to each student. The class session exemplified how students could learn from real life, which makes a big difference in my teaching philosophy. To some extent, the New Oriental School had transformed
traditional Chinese curriculum, and therefore broadened both Chinese teachers’ and students’
expectations of the classroom. Many other Chinese schools and educational institutes even
sent their teachers to learn how to organize the class from the New Oriental.

Shi Kun shared similar thoughts with me. Her New Oriental classes were the first
time she really felt what the U.S. was like. Her knowledge from textbooks or the Internet
paled in comparison to the vivid presentations by her New Oriental teachers who had lived in
the U.S. for years. In one interview, Shi Kun described to me the moment she decided to
become a teacher:

“They were like stars, you know, the movie stars, and we students were their fans. They wore fashionable jackets and told us interesting stories, making learning not a boring process. I felt like I wanted to see those teachers every day. I was amazed that teaching could be such a cool thing. Although I graduated from a teacher education program at university, it was at New Oriental that I really wanted to be a teacher; a teacher like them.” (Interview transcription, 2017)

I did not ask my other four participants if they had learned English through New
Oriental; however, I assume they probably had. Most Chinese students studying in the U.S.
could relate to what Shi Kun said about the New Oriental teachers. In my opinion, New
Oriental represented a social atmosphere that was open to learning from the outside world; in
this atmosphere, Shi Kun opted to study abroad and to later become a teacher. Shi Kun’s story represents how a person’s cultural landscape interacts with their lived experiences.

Reflection: Social Context and Personal Experience

When I began my research, I wondered why all of my participants chose to teach in the U.S. Each had his/her own stories regarding what had guided him/her to where they were now. For example, Ling enjoyed travelling to the U.S. Feng thought teaching in the U.S. brought honor and respect to his family. However, their social contexts had also played an important role in guiding these personal experiences. Such contexts, in and of themselves, are representations of the Opening Up social reformation in China at the time. In addition, exploring social context to understand teachers’ identities is a necessity in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Identity is achieved in the situated practices of everyday, mundane interactions. Bamberg and Demuth (2016) articulated that one should never disregard where and what s/he is in a particular situation. To understand one’s experience and identity, the researcher should first explore the social context in which participant is situated. Accordingly, I reviewed reflected on the social context in China.

Bamberg and Demuth (2016) discussed that narrative inquiry was particularly relevant for “contextual research” (p. 24), which explores the landscape of a person’s development. They argued that it is more productive to scrutinize a person’s micro-changes than to find and unfold people’s interiority, because “the context within which self-reflection makes sense is that we are, first of all, considering the interactive social situations within which we are embedded” (p. 19). Each person came into a being, as well as into a social being, within a context of socio-changes. Following the Reform and Opening Up policies, Chinese society experienced socio-changes in which an atmosphere of bringing in and
stepping out were promoted. In my teachers’ stories, the Confucius Institute and New Oriental were both products and representations of these socio-changes. Given the Chinese government’s promotion of teaching abroad and support of students to learn English and study in other countries, more and more students and teachers experienced such micro-changes.

Origin, in the case of this study, refers to Chinese society and is specified according to the place, time, and sociality of three-dimensional space. In other words, personal experience and social context are inextricable. In fact, social context can largely influence personal experiences, especially in a traditional, centralized country (in this case, China) where national will, societal power, and nationalism and collectivism are rooted in every citizen’s mind (Huang, 2017). Huang (2017) maintained that in China, citizens are so bonded to the whole country that each and every policy or regulation announced by the government can influence family decision making. As a Chinese citizen, I would never deny the imprint my country seared on me. My participants’ birth places, their life stories, and the people they interacted with are also a product of these social and cultural forces at work.

Furthermore, the influence of social context on teachers’ identity development not only features Chinese society, but also the intercultural context in which they taught. Such an identity is fluid and evolving (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009); therefore, these Chinese teachers are continually negotiating various identities. Due to the super-diversity brought by globalization (Cantel, 2012), China is gradually transforming its paradigm to a more diverse and opening one. Following this transformation are the new identities of the Chinese teachers. For example, for Chinese teachers who have intercultural experience in the U.S., different criteria can pose possible cultural conflicts on their recognition of cultural identity.
They would reflect on the continuity of their identity as the Chinese and the new identities as intercultural teachers. I have discussed more about the identity issue in the following chapters.

While this chapter primarily focused on exploring how social context may have affected their choices to teach abroad, the Chinese institutional landscape was also discussed. The Confucius Institute, policies of Reform and Opening Up, and learning English and study abroad fever were all products of the socio-changes and specific social context. They provided us the big picture and explained what these Chinese teachers’ life trajectories look like. In the next chapter, I further dissected the landscape of each participant and her/his particular environments, by the examination of how their life experiences and family values may have led them to intercultural teaching. I also explored Akkerman and Meijer’s (2011) claim that identity is as simultaneously unitary and multiple, continuous and discontinuous, and individual and social.
CHAPTER 4 HOME(LANDS), FAMILIES, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

回乡偶书

少小离家老大回，
乡音无改鬓毛衰。

儿童相见不相识，
笑问客从何处来。

Random Lines on Upon Returning to My Hometown

I left at a tender age, and now return old and decayed

My accent still remains unchanged, though my hair's entirely grey

The native children, to whom I must wear a strange mask

Politely smile upon meeting me; "Where do you come from?" they ask

—— A popular poem in China

The poem cited above is widely known by many Chinese people and expresses the poet’s homesickness. After having been away for a lifetime, the poet returns to his homeland and encounters some local children. While he has retained the accent of his native dialect, everything else has changed. He seems like an outside to the children. Their question—“Where do you come from?”—is the poet’s question to himself as well. “Who are you?” often follows, a question that refers to one’s identity. This poem grapples with the complexities of one’s homeland, family, and identity. The poem also brings me to my dissertation research. The poet leaves his home and lives in a different place, a journey similar to my participants and my own. We have been away from our homelands, and the questions
asked in this poem connect to the identity issues of great interest to me. Therefore, in this chapter I continue to explore identity as it relates to homeland and family.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, nationalism is one of the major ideological frameworks for the construction of Chinese collective identity. Home (land) and family narratives and discourses are particularly engaging for migrants and those living abroad. In this chapter, I expand and deepen my interpretation of the cultural landscapes of these Chinese teachers. I analyze how home (land) and family values have constructed their identities and influenced their lived experiences. I also incorporate the homeland stories of Shi Kun, Mei, Fang Fang, and Feng.

In addition to the literature discussed in the literature review chapter, I also include more research literature on teacher identity development with the focus of cultural identity in this chapter. I discuss the unitality, continuity, and individuality of identity (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2000; Gu, 2007), as well as how culture, cultural identity formed from homeland, and family influence one’s identity development (Alinia & Eliassi, 2014; Cunningham, 2013; Cross, 1971, 1995; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehen, 2002; Ndura, 2004, 2006; Simich et al., 2010).

When I did my study, every time when I was faced with new interviewees, I introduced myself, where I was from, and briefly mentioned my life journey. After this introduction, the participants often asked me to elaborate on my hometown and family, which is common in the conversations of Chinese people. They also asked about the personalities and character of the people in my hometown. I did the same as they were introducing themselves. These conversations supplied us with a glimpse of each other. I
gradually recognized that homeland and family were essential indicators of one’s character and identity, especially in Chinese society which has a long history and various traditions.

While identity is not fixed but always fluid and evolving from postmodern and constructivist perspectives (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2000; Gu, 2007), it is closely related to attributes that originate from people’s cultural heritage, geography, and tradition. McDougall (2011) employs a metaphor of “cultural DNA” to “describe a matrix or template that organizes the cultural information of a particular community and gives it coherence (p. 64).” McDougall’s (2011) definition of DNA refers more so to the passing of analogous instructions over generations, and also indicates the inherited attributes and traditions of the people in a certain cultural context. These attributes can remain for a life time without changing significantly as one’s identity develops. In other words, as Akkerman and Meijer (2011) propose, identity is simultaneously unitary and multiple, continuous and discontinuous, individual and social. One’s identity can be unitary and continuous toward her/his culture. For example, the habits or life attitudes a person has developed in her/his homeland can be maintained. Chinese people are often said to be firm and tenacious. They have experienced thousands of years of struggle with nature and intruders, but they are accustomed to stillness. Campbell (2000) argues that culture can make a difference in persons’ adherence to specific qualities and characteristics. While one’s life environment may change, these qualities and characteristics may remain. As a result, I have drawn my attention to the cultural root that affects the attributes of these Chinese teachers, and composed this chapter to illustrate the influences of home (land), family, and identity.
Shi Kun’s Story: Home (lands), Family Education, and Self-concept

The Walled University Town

I still remember the first time I visited Purdue’s campus. I searched for the campus gate and wanted to take a picture with it. In China, every university is surrounded by walls and several gates. The first-year students found the largest gate engraved with the university’s name, took pictures with the gate, and sent the photos to their relatives and friends. This procedure became a ceremony for most students to express their pride and happiness. When I discovered that there was no such gate at Purdue, I was a little surprised and realized that behind this phenomenon exists the different attitudes of the Chinese and the American people toward higher institution. Having studied in both Chinese and American universities, I feel that American universities are more inclusive and integrated into society. In China, the university campus is an Ivory Tower meant only for intellectuals. Walls are built to keep the university as a divine place removed from the mundane world; other people who would like to visit the campus can often be checked by the gatekeepers and denied entrance. I learned that most American campuses lack walls and gates, which reinforced my previous realization. The campus structure indicated cultural differences between China and the U.S. Such differences impact people who experience life in two cultures.

Shi Kun’s early childhood stories were in close proximity to a university campus. Born in a small town in central China, Shi Kun’s childhood was different than many of her peers. The town where Shi Kun grew up was built within a huge university. After years of development, the town and university had integrated and it was difficult to tell which part belonged to the university or the town. We Chinese people call such places as university towns. There are several university towns in China and they are different than their
counterparts in the U.S., because each Chinese university town is surrounded by walls and people could only enter through university gates. The university town is essentially a large private community in which there are also K-12 schools, restaurants, hospitals, shopping malls, student apartments, and other basic infrastructure and facilities. Most people living in the town are students, university faculty and staff, their families, vendors, and a few local residents. Some parents follow their children and relocate to the town as well. Most of the time the town is dynamic and bustling. During school vacations, however, the town becomes much quieter without the university students in residence.

Shi Kun’s childhood inside the university walls was mostly enjoyable, but sometimes she experienced the parting and sorrow. She knew many people in the town and visited every corner of the campus—after all, it was not a big city. Shi Kun did not yearn for the large city; the only attraction of the nearby city was its food and amusement parks. Shi Kun and her peers, who are usually the children of university faculty or staff, studied and played together. They went to the same K-12 schools. Most would apply to the town university and be classmates again. Life in the university town was simple and cozy. During school breaks, however, Shi Kun felt a little depressed. Several of her friends returned home, and some never came back. After mourning friends leaving for many times, Shi Kun gradually became accustomed to the possibility. She missed the friends much, but she learned to be more independent and not give so much of herself to others.

I was thinking that the university walls did not only isolate the town from the outside society, but also isolated Shi Kun’s life and social circle. After stepping out of the walls and graduating from the university, Shi Kun went to the U.S. for her Master’s degree. She maintained her Chinese habits and rituals. She kept a distance from her American classmates
and colleagues. She stuck to the philosophy she had developed in her small university town. Shi Kun “only discussed work and research with her academic adviser, without referring to personal life” (Interview transcription, 2017). Except for attending conferences in other places, Shi Kun usually kept to her office or apartment. I asked if this was because she was in a different culture and she did not like to interact with others, but she said no. She had no cultural conflicts and enjoyed life there. It was like the inertia that she followed the university town’s life, although she had been in the U.S. for about ten years. In a later interview with Shi Kun, I asked about if she kept in touch with her old friends from the university town. She used the word “paralleled” to describe their growing apart. Their life experiences were connected to their town homeland. Outside of the town walls, their lives became paralleled and no longer connected.

Much research presents migrants like Shi Kun as forever linked to their pre-migration locations, through cultures and family values that emphasize the importance of lineage and espouse the importance of homelands (Alinia & Eliassi, 2014; Simich et al., 2010). This link is human nature and maintained. When we are in a new context, people tended to apply knowledge and skills from their original cultures and communities. They engendered a sense of home that was not related to particular geographies, but to the maintenance of particular social practices and roles (Berger, 1984). Karlsen and Nazroo (2013) argued that the practices or attributes migrating people brought from their original homelands enabled them to act out specific social identities, “with home becoming a locale that is ‘simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and social unit of interaction’” (p. 690). Shi Kun’s walled university town homeland remained her the cultural DNA and represented her cultural identity. It was
connected to the schools Shi Kun attended, the people she interacted with, and her ways of life.

Furthermore, this cultural identity impacts the formation of other identities. In their studies on teacher professional identity within situational contexts, Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005) presented a model of self-concept formation and discussed the concepts of the actual self (the one that currently prevails) and the ought-self (the one recognized by society or an external group as the goal). In their research, the “self” played a crucial role in constructing the way people interact with their environment and made judgments within a given context. The “self,” developed from one’s family education and original culture, affected how s/he acted later on in life. Shi Kun’s story articulated the relationship between her cultural and professional identity. While studying and teaching in the U.S., she modeled how to be a good teacher based on her understanding of Chinese culture. In the next chapter, I present a more detailed discussion of these practices.

**Shi Kun’s Father’s Role in Her Choice to Become a Teacher**

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, family values and education have a profound influence on the formation of the “self” (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005) and, in turn, teacher professional identity development. In Shi Kun’s story in that walled university town, it was not difficult to identify how family values and education led her to who she is now.

“My father had planted a seed into my heart; a seed to become a teacher, just like him.” That was how Shi Kun responded when I asked if her family’s education had an influence on her choice to become a teacher. Shi Kun’s father was a professor of English in the university where she lived. He liked to speak to Shi Kun in English, and often he took Shi Kun to the university to sit in on his class or visit his office. In China, having such
employment was a privilege. Shi Kun’s communication and interaction with other teachers illustrated Rodgers and Scott’s (2009) theory that identity is formed in relationship with others. When her father brought Shi Kun to the university department, most of the people Shi Kun met were students or academics. The way they dressed, the topics they discussed, and even the titles they used to address each other guided and influenced Shi Kun’s own path within academia and to a position of becoming a teacher. The people in the university liked to chat with Shi Kun and showed her their work. They joked that Shi Kun was a “faculty” member of the English department like her father.

The university environment surrounding Shi Kun shaped her future in education. The notion of the “person-in-context” (Lasky, 2005) is apt to understand Shi-Kun’s experience. Her context, the university town, provided Shi Kun with a world of teachers and students, and her father opened the door to that world. In another conversation, Shi Kun told me more about how her father influenced her interest in English and becoming a teacher:

“I was fascinated by Japanese comics and wanted a related career when I was a child. You know, all my friends were fond of that. But most of the books in my home were English books my father had bought. So, every break when my classmates went back to their hometowns and left me alone at home, I had nothing to do but read those
English books. My father taught me what the words meant and how to pronounce them. When the new semester started, I brought these books to my classmates to show them off. None of them knew the books and they asked me the meanings of some English words. I told them and felt that I was so smart! My teacher asked me if I would like to be a teacher, and I said yes!”

Shi Kun’s family education provides a context in which studying abroad and becoming a teacher are valued, which had a deep impact on the development of her professional identity. Alsup (2006) stresses that identities are formed in social and communicative contexts for socially significant reasons. In her family and university town, being a person in academia or a teacher was a vocational choice. The English books Shi Kun read and taught to her classmates, the New Oriental school she enrolled in, and her decision to study and teach in the U.S. all indicate the influence of her family and homeland. Identity is crucially related to social, cultural, and political contexts. What individuals believe, and how individuals think and act is always shaped by cultural, historical, and social structures that are reflected in reflective tools such as literature, art, media, language, technology, and numeracy systems (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom., 1993). In other words, Shi Kun’s professional identity implies both a person and a context.

From the experiences of Shi Kun and my other four participants, I conclude that a teacher’s professional identity is not entirely unique and can be shared because of their living experiences. These Chinese teachers were born into and cultivated some common attributes and characteristics. Identity can be unitary, continuous and social.

In the next section, I narrativize Mei and Fang Fang’s stories and discuss how their family values and contexts influenced their personal experiences.
Family Values and Personal Lived Experiences

Living as a Man: Mei and Fang Fang’s Stories

Confucianism is inextricable from Chinese ethics, morals, and the relationship between citizens (Li, 2012; Liu & Xu, 2016). While traditional Chinese society was mostly well-ordered and stable, numerous Confucian tenets created negative phenomena. For example, the ideology that the male is superior to the female in social status. Within ancient Confucian society, the government deemed that a respectable woman must be affiliated with a man (Liu & Xu, 2016). In a Confucian classic, The Book of Rites, the scholar Dai Sheng of the Han dynasty (the extract date cannot be traced due to historical reasons) develops the tenets of the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. The Three Obediences state that a woman is required to obey her father before marriage, her husband while married, and her sons in widowhood. The Four Virtues refer to fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech, and efficiency in needle work. The Three Obediences and Four Virtues have become the shackles of Chinese women for centuries. Women are regarded as subordinate and less competitive. They are encouraged to stay at home in order to serve the men of their family and look after the children. Although gender equality has been championed for many years and the government has established various laws to abolish these backwards gender customs, the traditional preference for sons are deep-rooted in some regions of China, particularly in small towns and agricultural communities (Bie, 2016). Given this context, the belief in male superiority and female inferiority still exists in some Chinese families.

Mei and Fang Fang were born into such traditional families. Their parents hoped for a son when their mothers were pregnant, and their early life experiences were quite similar. Mei’s father raised her as if she were boy. He sent Mei to a boarding high school in another
city to encourage Mei’s independence and self-reliance, not a common practice for young Chinese daughters. He pushed Mei to participate in speech contests and encouraged Mei to compete with boys in sports games. He liked to use the phrases “that’s futile” or “loser” to rebuke Mei when he thought Mei was doing “girly” activities. For a time, Mei and her friends were fond of weaving bracelets. The young girls bought colorful plastic strings from a vendor near their school and learned how to weave bracelets from Internet. When Mei proudly showed her parents the bracelets she made, her father criticized her and negated the endeavor. “‘It’s futile!’ I clearly remember that’s what he said when he saw my bracelet. He was somewhat disappointed!” Mei said to me with a frustrated smile when recalling that experience.

As the only son in my immediate family, my childhood experience was quite different from Mei’s. Nevertheless, Mei’s father greatly influenced her choice to teach abroad. In traditional Chinese culture, sons travel and live far away from their parents. In one of our later conversations, Mei mentioned this cultural expectation. When searching for jobs, Mei’s mother wanted Mei to work in town, but Mei’s father insisted that Mei venture away from town. When the family heard the Confucius Institute was recruiting Chinese teachers to teach in the U.S., Mei’s father supported her to finally do “something futile.” With her father’s encouragement, Mei applied to the teaching position at the Confucius Institute.

Fang Fang’s family similarly valued their daughter’s education. As I discussed in the prelude, Fang Fang is a second child and her father was a little disappointed by her gender. Fang Fang’s name was given to her by her grandmother conveys the family hope that Fang Fang would travel around the world and succeed like a man. Like Mei, Fang Fang was raised and educated as if she were a boy. Fang Fang’s grandmother often brought her to the family-
run grocery store, and let her talk with neighbors. Fang Fang’s parents entered her in speech competitions with boys. As Fang Fang described, she really appreciated her family’s pushing her to speak and sing in front of a crowd of strangers. She grew up to be brave and confident. Unlike other girls who just stay at home and mind their own business, Fang Fang had more opportunities to communicate with different people and listen to their perspectives. Fang Fang is open-minded, confident, and a skilled communicator as a result of this experience. The qualities developed from it, I feel, are assets in her teaching career.

It was difficult to tell whether the ways Mei and Fang Fang’s parents raised them are inappropriate. The two families were aware that Chinese men and women do not share equal social status. However, the parents did not follow the rules that women will serve as the sideshow of the men’s world. Therefore, I would argue that their family values significantly impacted the life trajectories of these two female Chinese intercultural teachers. Mei and Fang Fang were encouraged to be competitive like boys and exceed their male counterparts, which contributed to the construction of their identities. Mei and Fang Fang became more tenacious and active than other Chinese girls. In their later intercultural U.S. teaching experiences, they continued to adapt and even tried to change their environments. For example, when Mei taught in a primary school, she received unjust treatment from the principal. The principal forced young Chinese teachers to tutor many students after hours without compensation. Sometimes when these Chinese teachers made mistakes, the principal asked them to write out mantras of self-criticism and read it to other teachers. Most of the Chinese teachers chose to follow the rules, but Mei protested and argued with the principal for the unjust treatment. She sought out school law assistance and tried to make changes.
Over time, the principal finally showed the Chinese teachers more respect and corrected his behavior.

Mei and Fang Fang’s lived experiences reflect Adams and Marshall’s (1996) description that identity development is as a process of transaction and transference. They further argued that “an individual’s personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual, but the individual’s identity can shape and change the nature of these living systems” (p. 432). First and foremost, Mei and Fang Fang’s identity was transferred from the submissive Chinese woman to the independent and communicative intercultural teacher. Secondly, their individual identity was also changed as a product of their environment. To some extent, they were given agency in their living and teaching choices (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehen, 2002; Lasky, 2005). Teacher agency refers to teachers’ ability to influence their lives and environment while also being shaped by social and individual factors (Lasky, 2005). Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehen (2002) maintained that teacher agency is part of a complex dynamic that shapes and is shaped by the structural and cultural features of a school and its societal cultures. When Mei and Fang Fang transitioned from student to teacher identities, their family values and education played an essential role in this dynamic. They became more reactive and critical. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the concept of teacher agency in these Chinese teachers’ negotiation of multiple identities.

When I was writing this chapter, narrativizing how Mei and Fang Fang were educated by their families as boys and how the families’ values influenced their identities, an Indian movie called *Dangal* (*Wrestling Competition* in English) premiered December 21, 2016 in North America, and later became very popular in China. The movie described a father, a former amateur wrestler and national champion, who coached his two daughters to become
top wrestlers. The father trained the two girls as if they were boys, and pushed them to transcend limits. He forced his two daughters to have their hair cut short and wrestle male athletes. The girls could not bear their father’s harsh requirements and did not understand him. After years of hard training, the two girls finally won the national championship and earned others’ respects. The process of following their father’s orders, protesting their father’s requirements, and competing without their father’s help reflected the transition of their identities, especially within the social context of India. In India, an even more patriarchal society than China, a woman has minimal rights and is considered the subordinate of a man. In Dangal, during the process of experiencing the gender discrimination, challenging the social norm, and changing the environment, the family histories, the fathers’ support and encouragement aided the daughters to challenge gender stereotypes and expectations. In this sense, I see how different cultures can be interconnected and shared. Mei, Fang Fang, the Indian girls in the film, and women in other cultures who face gender inequality, are sharing the experiences of fighting for social justice. This experience echoes with the principles of reciprocity in interculturalism.

In general, Mei and Fang Fang’s identities as a daughter, underrepresented woman, challenger of social norms, and intercultural teacher are all closely influenced by their family values and education. Their identity development, in turn, influences their own environments.

Feng’s Story: Homeland Tradition and Family Hope

In the Zhejiang province of southern China is a well-known city called Wenzhou. Wenzhou is very famous among the Chinese for producing skilled business executives. The town tradition is that the people of Wenzhou area are employed in commercial ventures.
Young generations are encouraged to leave home and make their own living, including running family businesses, doing trade work for others, or starting their own companies. Because of this tradition, these people are given the colloquial title of Chinese Jews. Feng was born and grew up in a small town within Wenzhou area.

In Feng’s memory, the small town he lived in was quite prosperous and wealthy. Many people brought goods from around the world to the town that Feng had never seen before. Others talked about how they conducted business with traders from Shanghai city, Shanxi province, or even foreign countries like the U.S. Feng liked to join their discussion and listen to these businessmen’s stories. From these conversations, Feng had a hazy image of what the outside world was like, and his curiosity to explore it himself grew. However, Feng’s parents hoped their son would do something different and bring the family glory.

Feng’s parents were also in business and worked in an investment company. In Wenzhou area, there were some so-called investment companies. These companies are essentially dealing with goods that have investment worth of speculation. For instance, they purchased tons of coal from other provinces and hoarded it in a barn. When the time was right, these companies sold the coal at a comparatively higher price to secure high margins. This practice allowed Feng’s family to have a comfortable life and not worry about living expenses.

Feng’s father expected that he would receive an elite education and pursue “decent” jobs. Because of the limited educational resource in the town, he sent Feng to a private middle school in a nearby city, so that Feng received a better education than his peers. Feng’s parents were extremely fond of their niece, who had studied abroad in Japan and currently worked as a lawyer in Shanghai. In his parents’ eyes, Feng’s cousin was a good role model. She had studied in a foreign country and had a respectable job in a big city. As a result, when
Feng was selected by Confucius Institute to teach abroad, Feng’s parents were so ecstatic that they immediately visited neighbor’s and relative’s homes to share the news. Chinese culture has always regarded the teaching profession as a respectable and “decent” job. Moreover, teaching foreigners is considered even more prestigious. Feng can clearly remember how his parents were of him:

“他们觉得特别有面子！我能去国外当老师，教外国人，而且还是国家的项目。包括我后来申请上了美国的博士，他们也觉得又一次在亲戚朋友面前非常有面子。

They felt to save face (They felt especially honored)! I would teach abroad, teach foreigners for a national program. Also, when I was admitted by the PhD program in the U.S., they saved face (they earned reputation) once more in front of their friends and relatives.”

(Interview transcription, 2017 March)

In Feng’s description, he used a Chinese phrase, “有面子,” which literally means saving face or having “Mianzi.” In Chinese culture, “Mianzi” describes one's reputation or dignity in social contexts, and it is often translated into honor, prestige, and respect. So “有面子” conveyed the meaning that Feng’s accomplishments brought honor to his parents. Feng’s U.S. teaching and PhD studies gave his parents bragging rights when interacting with friends and relatives. The importance of finding a decent job and saving Mianzi to honor his parents plays a crucial role in Feng’s choices to teach and study in the U.S.

Feng’s Wenzhou homeland also invited him to leave and explore the world. More than half of Wenzhou residents worked and lived outside their hometowns. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics (2013), about 12 million people from Zhejiang province
engage in business deals in other Chinese regions or countries. This population migration is the largest in China. Except for the elders and children, most people choose to leave town. Young people could be regarded as incompetent if they stuck around, as Feng described, and “you would feel embarrassed for just staying there.” Within such a cultural context, Feng had the goal of working elsewhere.

The two dynamics of family values and local tradition constructed Feng’s identity as an international teacher and explorer. Erickson (1968) described the process of identity development and places cultural identity at the core of the individual. In his research, at the core of one’s cultural identity too is his or her “common culture (p. 24),” which refers to family values and the social norms of the homeland. This common culture raised Feng into a curious person eager to explore the outside world. Listening to neighbors’ fantastic stories, Zhejiang traditions, and his parents’ hope that he finds a decent job engraved Feng with specific cultural predispositions.

The cultural identity initially developed in his homeland also influenced Feng’s new identities. Feng worked as a Chinese teacher in the U.S. and served as a conference organizer for the Confucius Institute. Feng invited scholars from other universities to give lectures to the students and present diverse perspectives on Chinese language and culture. He travelled around the U.S. He oversaw students’ club and spent time with his American students. Feng’s classroom was inclusive and welcomed to people from different groups. He articulated his vision as follows: “I want to make my classroom a place of communicating different stories, just like the scene in my hometown that people came back from every corner of the world and shared their experiences.” A common cultural identity provided the foundation of his development.
In a recent interview with Feng, I shared with him my plan after graduation—that I would like to go back to China and work in Beijing. Feng answered that he hoped to find a faculty job somewhere new, like Singapore or Hong Kong, because these areas were in-between Western and Eastern cultures. I witnessed again his spirit of exploration, the spirit of the Wenzhou people. I hope this explorer will follow his dream.

**Cultural Identity: Seeking the Roots of Homeland and Family**

In this chapter, I have discussed the homeland context and family values of my participants, and how these Chinese teachers’ identity development was shaped accordingly. In the process, I have realized the importance of cultural identity development beginning with each participant’s early life experiences. According to Cunningham (2013), cultural identity is how a person understands “the network of meaning to which certain people have access and from which they draw to communicate and recognize one another” (p. 19). Cultural identity is found in the relationship to networks of meaning with which a person identifies or understands the cultures of those around them. For example, Feng appreciates that the Wenzhou people are encouraged to leave home and explore the outside world. People’s cultural identity can illustrate how they developed a sense of belonging and the ways in which they think, believe, value, and act. Research on cultural identity provides a perspective with which to analyze these Chinese intercultural teachers’ experiences.

Nearly all discussions of cultural identity in the fields of education and psychology are derivative of the work of Cross (1971, 1995), who initially proposed a five-stage model of racial identity, reclaiming cultural identity from a more integral and positive perspective. Cross (1971, 1995) outlined the progression of racial identity for African Americans. The first stage, pre-encounter, refers to individuals who have limited awareness of race or may
have strong anti-Black and pro-White feelings. The second stage, called the encounter stage, occurs when people “experience an event that causes them to challenge their previously held beliefs and is accompanied by feelings of confusion, alarm, and depression followed by guilt, anger, and anxiety” (Thomas & Speight, 1999, p. 153). In the third stage of immersion, individuals immerse themselves in Afrocentric culture and develop intense feelings of indignation. The fourth and fifth stages are internalization and internalization/commitment. In these stages, individuals have internalized their racial identity with their self-concept and will take actions to change or terminate the oppression of their people. While for different cultural contexts, Cross’s work can be applied to interpret these Chinese teachers’ cultural identity development, and reinforces the illustration of teacher agency (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehen, 2002).

A substantial amount of work has addressed issues of cultural identity in terms of its formation and relationship to other identities. Ndura (2004, 2006) argues that cultural identity is composed of people’s cultural experiences, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability status. For example, Mei and Fang Fang were faced with gender inequity and fought against social norms. During the process, their identities became interwoven. Tisdell (2006) explained that spirituality can construct cultural identity, noting “identity in a positive way as a spiritual experience” (p. 20). The sense of self these two girls gained from their families and homelands paved the way for their future identity development. They had to negotiate their gender once more while teaching in the U.S. The spirits and attitudes they formed at a young age supplied them with the skills and confidence to solve the problems they encountered.
Exploring the cultural identity of these Chinese teachers helps me to understand their experiences. Reflecting on cultural identity encourages them to enhance their sense of belonging to their new environments. Schwartz, Zamboanga, and Weisskirch (2008) argued that cultural identity focuses largely on cultural values and practices, the ways in which one regards the ethnic or cultural groups to which one belongs, and the relative prioritization of the individual and the group. In casual conversations with my five participants, all of them agreed that the value and culture of being communicative and self-confident helped them to develop a sense of belongings in the U.S.

These Chinese teachers’ experiences illustrate Kim’s (2007) five themes of cultural identity. The five themes include cultural identity as an adaptive and evolving entity of an individual; cultural identity as a flexible and negotiable entity of an individual; cultural identity as a discrete social category and an individual choice; cultural identity as a flexible and negotiable entity of an individual; and cultural identity as a discrete and non-negotiable social category and group right. The five themes discuss the relationship between personal identity and social identity, indicating that cultural identity stands between the two identities and connects an individual to a society. My teacher participants began to form their cultural identities in their homelands. Their cultural identities adjusted and continued to evolve in the U.S.

Developing an awareness of cultural identity is beneficial when building relationships in a multicultural classroom. In one study of pre-service teachers, Cunningham (2013) discussed how teachers who grew up in culturally homogenous communities developed an awareness of their cultural identity that assisted them when teaching students from multicultural contexts. When Shi Kun, Mei, Fang Fang, Feng, and Ling taught in the U.S.,
they reflected on their cultural identities and navigated the new U.S. social context.

Cunningham (2013) noted that “the ability to identify political, cultural, and historical contexts that shape diverse students’ identities may be informative with respect to developing positive student-teacher relationships” (p. 22). As these Chinese teachers themselves are from a different culture, they are more interculturally sensitive when teaching students from different cultural groups. Feng’s inclusive classroom provides a convincing example.

In general, cultural identity originates from the homeland context, family values, and evolves in different contexts. After writing this chapter, I reread the Chinese poem that begins the chapter. I found that I was unable to distinguish whether the poem reminds me of my research or my research reminds me of the poem. Like the relationships of homeland, family, and cultural identity, these points of view are also intertwined and interconnected.

The exploration of teacher identity is never complete. In the following chapter, I shifted my attention to the multiple identities of these five Chinese teachers and discuss their personal and teaching experiences while working in the U.S. Through the analytical lens of interculturalism, I presented the dilemmas these teachers faced and how they coped with the difficulties of a different culture. I also focus on my participants’ lived experiences outside of their American classrooms.
Ling posted the above mural on her WeChat, a social networking application. Ling included the golden calla lily painting to encourage herself to be positive when she felt down. That day came when Ling had problems understanding some documents distributed by her school about teaching Chinese in American schools. Ling sought help from a local colleague, a white middle-aged woman, but the woman pretended not to hear what Ling said and did not respond to her. Ling said, “I don’t think my English was that difficult for her to understand,
and I repeated my question several times. She just neglected me.” Ling still seemed frustrated when referring to that experience ago. Like many other days, after work Ling returned to her apartment and quickly drew this painting.

In Chinese culture, and likely many other cultures, the calla lily is a symbol of perseverance and diligence. While these flowers close during the night, calla lilies bloom in the early morning and show their brightness to the world. Ling appreciated these traits of the flower and felt that her drawing, as she posted on WeChat, “will let you get happiness.” The calla lily served as Ling’s totem while she was working as an intercultural teacher in the U.S.

The only art teacher of my five participants, Ling tended to paint to relieve the pressure and loneliness she felt in the U.S. During many my conversations with Ling, I was impressed by how she regarded artwork as an emotional media of self-expression. Painting became a particular outlet to display Ling’s identity. Ling liked to draw flowers as both metaphors and inspiration. Later on in my study, I realized this not only about Ling, but about my other participants as well. Some chose to listen to music or watch films. These Chinese teachers experienced the development of multiple identities as women, teachers, and foreigners, intruders… Among all of these identities, however, they are first human beings who experienced a variety of emotions. In narrative inquiry, stories are composed of various forms of data, and artwork often plays an important role (Barone, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). Therefore, I felt it was necessary to further explore and discuss how these Chinese intercultural teachers negotiated their multiple identities in their intercultural contexts through artwork.
Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I depicted the homeland and family landscapes of my five teacher participants, and explored how their cultural identities formed and developed. Moreover, I discussed how their cultural identities influenced their professional identities. In this chapter, I shift my attention to the multiple identities of these five Chinese teachers, and discuss their experiences while living and teaching in the U.S. I began this chapter with the vignette of Ling’s artwork, as art serves as narrative material for my study. In narrative inquiry, artwork helps researchers to understand and interpret their participants’ experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2003; McKenna, 2015). Through the theoretical framework of interculturalism, I have presented the dilemmas these teachers faced and how they coped with these difficulties. I have focused more so on my participants’ lived experiences outside of the classrooms, and illustrate the wovenness of emotions, artwork, and identity development.

One question in my interview protocol asks my five participants to talk about their most unforgettable experience in the U.S. To my surprise, three of them—Mei, Fang Fang, and Ling—told me that they would never forget their American colleagues’ help and support. Mei worked in two different schools and appreciated the help she received from one of her school principals. The principal treated and cared for her as if she were a family member. The town where the school was located had no public transportation, so the principal offered Mei a ride to and from school for the entire semester. Mei was invited to have the dinner with the principal’s family a number of times. When Mei planned to learn to drive, the principal provided his own car for her driving practice. Mei was extremely grateful to the principal. She said, “I knew Americans were very cautious about their own cars, but he
taught me how to drive using his own car. When he had no time, he even asked his son to teach me. He is like a father to me.”

Fang Fang shared similar gratitude. On Fang Fang’s last day of teaching, the other teachers hosted a surprise farewell party. They brought homemade refreshments and gifts for her. When Fang Fang arrived at the dining hall to have lunch as usual, she was surprised to see that the hall was decorated with colorful ribbons, balloons, and farewell posters written in both English and Chinese. Fang Fang felt like crying as every colleague approached and hugged her. She never thought she would be given such a fantastic farewell party. The grievances, loneliness, and resentment Fang Fang had from her two years of teaching, as she described, dissipated. Her hard work was appreciated and she was proud that she had devoted herself to this lovely school.

Well into my research process and after several conversations, my participants concluded that they did not have material difficulties—each was paid well and could afford to live in the U.S. However, they did reference more pressing emotional or spiritual trials while teaching abroad. These Chinese teachers experienced difficulties and culture shock in the U.S., and emotional support from their American friends, colleagues, and even students greatly encouraged them to move forward in their intercultural contexts.

Using the theoretical perspective of interculturalism, I have reviewed how emotions played a crucial role in these Chinese teachers’ negotiations of multiple identities while teaching in the U.S. (Cooper & Olson, 1996; MacPherson, 2010; Menard-Warwick, 2011; Song, 2016; Zembylas, 2003, 2005). Emotions impact teachers’ identity development and closely relate to teachers’ intercultural competence. Zembylas (2005) argues that teachers reflect on and learn from their emotions based on changes of environment. Their acceptance
or repression of certain emotions leads teachers to prioritize different characteristics. Teachers can be traditionally reduced to school professionals, rather than complex human beings with their own needs. Their emotions and lived experiences are rarely acknowledged or valued, and this is especially the case for intercultural teachers. I continue this chapter with an exploration of how artwork from various media can convey these intercultural teachers’ emotional expectations and help them to respond to difficulties and dilemmas (Barione & Eisner, 2012; Bochner & Ellis, 2003; Couldby, 2006). I utilize an art-based educational research (ABER) framework in my narrative inquiry to understand and interpret my participants’ lived experiences.

**Emotions of Teacher Identity Formation and Development**

As teachers earn their licensure, master pedagogical knowledge, and receive professional training they simultaneously construct themselves as school professionals (Menard-Warwick, 2011). The ways in which teachers behave and interact with their students and colleagues plays a crucial role in their identity formation and development. Song (2016) argues, “teacher identity is (re)presented in teachers’ rational and emotional responses toward these conditions and discourses, along with their professional knowledge and training” (p. 632). However, such a definition neglects a teacher’s own emotional needs, and the dynamic (rather than rational) nature of a teacher’s identity (Menard-Warwick, 2011; Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005; Zembylas, 2003, 2005). Exploring and interpreting teacher identity more comprehensively—beyond its cognitive and rational manifestations—is crucial. An examination of the role of emotional awareness indicates how teachers’ emotions are central to self-transformation and teacher agency (Zembylas, 2003, 2005). In this section, I have well illustrated Mei and Fang Fang’s experiences while living and teaching in the U.S.
Mei’s Story: Teachers and Schoolteachers

Qing: what are the differences between teachers and schoolteachers?

Mei: While teachers are people, schoolteachers are machines or facades. What you have said and done represent your school. You should be very aware of that.

Qing: Yes, I think that is more common in China.

Mei: No, it’s the same. I used to think it was different in the U.S., but now I don’t see much difference.

Qing: Okay…

It surprised me to learn that Mei thought school teachers are treated as “machines” in both China and the U.S. While I have conducted education research and taught pre-service teachers, I have no practical teaching experience in the K-12 schools of either country. In my mind, there should be many differences in how Chinese and American educational institutions mold each educator as an individual, rather than as a collective professional group. It is my opinion that teachers should be valued first as human beings and then as school ambassadors. However, Mei’s viewpoint challenged my assumption and drew my attention to the concepts of teacher and schoolteacher.

Mei worked as a Chinese teacher for the private Pacific Asian Language School (PALS), located in the Pacific Northwest U.S. The school was operated by a cooperating model in which the Confucius Institute sends Chinese teachers to PALS and the school accommodates these teachers with teaching facilities. While the Confucius Institute claimed responsibility for the management of teachers’ affairs, the PALS principal was in reality, Mei’s and other Chinese teachers’ supervisor. In Mei’s eyes, the principal, a middle-aged Mexican American, was more so like a “boss” than an educator. He did not speak Chinese,
despite the fact that the Chinese language program was PALS’ largest. He carefully monitored school expense budgets and stressed the importance of school image. He often reminded his staff to serve students and parents with their hearts and souls.

During weekly staff meetings, the principal would remind the teachers that they were PALS staff. Teachers were required to obey school rules and teach based on the school board curriculum. Teachers’ voices were rarely heard because the principal insisted that “personal opinions often didn’t consider the whole picture of the school development.” For many times, Mei was asked to tutor students after school, and the principal justified the overtime workload by saying that schoolteachers should meet students’ needs. Mei was frustrated by such school regulations and related pressures. Schoolteachers, in Mei’s opinion, were not respected as alive human beings, but instead as teaching machines who delivered set curriculum and served students. However, she could not complain or show any personal resistance, especially when she was in the presence of students. Mei was infuriated by the school environment, in which “teachers should be professional and never bring their personal feelings to the class.”

When parents visited the school, however, the PALS school culture changed drastically. Mei noticed that the principal treated the schoolteachers like family members when parents were present. The principal spoke highly of every teacher, and assured parents that the school encouraged its teachers to be creative and develop their own pedagogies and teaching styles. “I just felt weird when the principal treated us so differently when parents were there. I guess he considered himself as a façade, too,” Mei said.

Mei also found cause for concern with the Confucius Institute. The Institute enacted regulations to ensure that the Chinese teachers did not damage the CI reputation or that of the
country of China. During new teacher orientation, the CI dean, a Chinese male professor, ordered, “You should comply with your school’s rules and never show much of your character. You may feel unequal sometimes, but there is no real equality. Who said that people are all created equal?” Mei felt disappointed because she thought the dean would better understand these Chinese teachers’ dilemmas and advocate for them.

Mei and her colleagues often felt confined by their teaching. They carefully conducted the curriculum and tried to not be critical. Their effectiveness as educators was judged by their students’ achievements, test scores, and parents’ evaluations. Their everyday greetings of “How are you?” was quickly understood as “How is your work?” or “How do you get along with your students?” In other words, their own emotions were rarely prioritized or discussed. Mei was tempted to give up and return to China many times. She said:

“没有人真正关心你。我真是想到要辞职，你懂的，离开这职位。可是如果我以后还想做老是，我最好就别留下这种记录，不然以后没有哪个学校会要我。No one really cares about you. I thought about quitting, you know, leaving the position. If I wanted to stay in the teaching field, though, I couldn’t leave on bad terms or no school would hire me.”

I can relate to Mei’s frustration and isolation. I am familiar with the entrepreneur model of American schools, in which teachers serve their student customers and the value of teachers is measured by standardized test scores. I am familiar with the Chinese tradition, in which individual educators are subservient to collective honor. In these two educational contexts, the teacher’s own life is often overlooked. Moreover, intercultural teachers like Mei faced a double-edge sword: they had to comply with their American school rules as well as the Confucius Institute regulations. They were expected to be rational and professional, and
their emotions were not considered valuable or worth consideration, as Mei said, “Our problems are not a big deal!”

In addition to being cognitive and technical, teaching is an emotional practice (Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2003). There is a crucial link between identity formation and emotion; the performative character of emotion makes it a particularly affective and direct way of self-knowing (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Lasky, 2005). Emotional awareness is directly related to self-evaluation and self-reflection, all of which further contributes to the formation of teacher professional identity (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Cooper & Olson, 1996; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Self-evaluation and self-reflection involve completely describing and carefully supervising both personal beliefs and instructional behaviors. Teacher identity is continually formed and reformed over time via interactions with students, parents, administrators, and other teachers (Cooper & Olson, 1996). This process is evident in Mei’s experience. Mei was inclined to regard herself as a less valuable teacher as a result of her interactions with the PALS principal and CI dean. She was treated as a teaching machine, and she consequently considered resigning from her teaching position.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) articulate that teachers engage in a continuous process of searching for valuable ways to understand their position as part of their teaching practice. Self-reflection is a key means by which teachers become more aware and better understand how they fit into a larger context. In other words, self-reflection is a critical aspect of identity. Self-evaluation and self-reflection explain Mei’s distinct definitions of teacher and schoolteacher. In Mei’s opinion, teachers should be autonomous, creative, and implement curriculum however they see fit. Her school culture defined teachers as performers who carried out the school plans. Teacher feedback and emotions were largely
ignored and unacknowledged. In addition, a teacher in Chinese culture has a strong emotional connection with students. The traditional address for teacher in Chinese is “师父”, meaning father or mother. The idea behind such an address is that teachers should make their emotions explicit and build relationships with students. However, in Mei’s mind, schools are severing that emotional connection and schoolteachers are required to detach personal emotions from school curriculum.

Furthermore, these emotions are necessary for learning and development (Zembylas, 2003). The subjective emotional world allows the individual to develop personal constructs and meanings for outer reality, make sense of relationships, and understand her/his place in the world. Teachers’ displays of emotion create a communicative avenue by which feedback and experiences are exchanged, which further encourages teachers to reflect on their positions and grow as a result. Zembylas (2003) argues that emotion is part of the very fabric constituting the self, which is socially organized and managed through “social conventions, community scrutiny, legal norms, familial obligations and religious injunctions” (p. 108). An understanding of the importance of emotion in teaching self-formation, relationships, and resistance are fundamental considerations.

Zembylas (2003, 2005) further articulates that institutional contexts often construct the self by suppressing some emotions while encouraging others that are more related to pedagogy and profession. For example, Mei and the other PALS school teachers were encouraged to showcase their passion and enthusiasm, but they were not welcome to reveal emotions like dissatisfaction or anger. Research confirms that school teachers are expected to serve as rational professionals and leave their “negative” emotions outside of the classroom (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). Teachers are required to positively represent their school and
curriculum. In general, teachers’ emotions are not recognized at school due to widespread professional techniques and pedagogical knowledge (Zembylas, 2003).

As a teacher affiliated with both the Confucius Institute and PALS, Mei was treated as a cog in the larger school machine. She was encouraged to show her “positive” emotions, such as kindness and patience; her “negative” emotions—frustration and anxiety, for example—were suppressed. Both the CI dean and PALS principal dictated the acceptable emotional norms for the schoolteachers, which affected the construction of those teachers’ identities.

Teachers’ emotional awareness is closely related to the development of their intercultural competence. While teachers’ intercultural competence can be promoted by various pedagogical means, such as classroom teaching and professional development, emotions play a more important role in encouraging teachers to express themselves and communicate with others (MacPherson, 2010; Taylor, 2007). Many formal and informal conversations with my participants indicated that their experiences outside of the classroom helped them to fit into their local contexts, and they felt “more real when not teaching in class” (interview transcription, 2017). Zembylas and Chubbuck (2009) articulate that emotions cannot only be seen as internal aspects of the mind, but also as actions constructed by social and political dynamics. These Chinese teachers’ intercultural competence was determined and shaped by individual characteristics, relationships with students and colleagues, and their social and political contexts.

The following section is a discussion of Fang Fang’s intercultural emotional experience, which provided me with a sense of how emotions, especially uncomfortable
emotions, can encourage teacher agency, develop intercultural competence, promote self-evaluation and self-reflection, help to develop personal growth, and make changes.

**Discomforting Emotions and Teacher Agency**

When intercultural teachers enter a new environment, they experience the transformative process of participating in a new culture and community (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) articulates that these teachers are faced with a disorienting dilemma when they are put into a situation unfamiliar to them. This new experience cannot be explained by “their pre-established meaning schemes and meaning perspectives” (Jokikokko, 2016, p. 219). They begin to challenge their prior experiences and knowledge. These teachers negotiate multiple new identities as well.

These descriptions mirror Fang Fang’s experience. She arrived in the U.S. under the impression that Americans were hospitable, polite, and always being ready to help. This is understandable, as the American dramas that were popular in China featured characters who had pleasant lives, were kind to each other, and welcomed guests from different places. However, Fang Fang’s assumption was challenged as soon as she entered her school site. There was no warm welcome or school staff assistance. Fang Fang contacted the school secretary, who instructed her via phone. At the time, Fang Fang felt so disappointed that she cried. “But I didn’t tell others about my feelings. I didn’t know if it was the cultural difference or the secretary just didn’t care about me,” Fang Fang said. Her fiancé, who worked as a computer engineer in another city, drove to the school and helped Fang Fang get acclimated.

Fang Fang found that the secretary was repeatedly prejudiced toward Chinese teachers. Whenever the Chinese teachers had questions for the secretary, she responded
impatiently or pretended to not understand their English. Although the Chinese teachers sometimes showed their discomfort emotions to the secretary and with the school environment, the school administration did not give much attention to this racism, which became a conflict between Fang Fang and the secretary.

After one year of a two-year teaching appointment, Fang Fang planned to apply for a Master’s degree program. The school policy was that the principal would write a letter of recommendation for every teacher; however, Fang Fang did not hear about the policy until the end of the semester. Fang Fang tried to calm herself down and rushed to the secretary’s office.

“Hi, Betty! A colleague told me that the principal writes recommendation letters for teachers who have taught here for at least one year. Why wasn’t I notified of this?” Fang Fang remembers asking.

“Oh yes, but I thought you were not going to teach and I knew you would study in a university, so I didn’t tell you about the recommendation letter,” the secretary replied nonchalantly.

“But all in-service teachers are offered that letter, whether they will continue to teach or leave, correct? This is my right!”

“OK, I will ask the principal to write you the letter,” the secretary said.

Fang Fang finally received the letter of recommendation. She learned that it was necessary to express her dissatisfaction regarding unequal treatment. Later, she requested a meeting with the school principal and other irritated Chinese teachers. They discussed their unpleasant experiences and that the school had not given them much care or consideration. The principal was impressed by the Chinese teachers’ initiative and incorporated their
feedback into future school culture discussions, reclaiming the equality and inclusiveness of the school atmosphere to all school teachers.

“I used American ways to defend myself. Does that mean I became more American?” Fang Fang had a smile on her face as she said this to me. She seemed to be quite proud of herself when talking about that story to me.

Fang Fang and her colleagues experienced a transformation from silent Chinese teachers to expressive educators. During this process, discomforting emotions played an important role in their teacher identity development. Frustration and anger motivated Fang Fang and the other Chinese teachers to examine the inequality of their intercultural context and affect change (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2013). On the other hand, cultivating emotions like pride and excitement could also inspire teachers to better understand cultural differences and discern unequal situations (Jokikokko, 2016). This vignette also indicates Fang Fang’s reflection on her teaching practice. She realized how to use the “American way” to be heard.

MacPherson (2010) illustrates that in many informal and non-formal contexts, intercultural competence can be related to the social and emotional learning (SEL) of teachers. SEL refers to reflection on and mastery of emotions in a new social context. Teachers’ awareness of their social contexts and emotions can improve their intercultural competence.

Fang Fang’s transformation also relates to the concept of teacher agency. Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, and Paloniemi (2013) define professional agency as the practices in which “professional subjects and/or communities exert influence, make choices and take stances in ways that affect their work and/or their professional identities” (p. 61). Teacher agency is shaped by teachers’ professional and social positions. Based on Mei and Fang Fang’s experiences, Chinese teachers imposed certain identities on themselves and expected
to achieve new social roles. They should negotiate with the new identities and learn to “take stances” to adjust to the new environment. Priestley, Edwards, Priestley and Miller (2012) argue that unlike the individualistic view that agency serves as a set of context-free individual capacities and efficacies to act upon the world, teacher agency is completely bounded and reinforced by cultural systems and social contexts. The conceptualization of teacher agency highlights the interdependency between agency and the school environment (Lai, Li & Gong, 2016). In many studies, researchers (Djerasimovic, 2014; Lai, Li & Gong, 2016; Lee, 2012) have found that interactions in some transnational educational institutes are often characterized by unequal power relations and disproportionate contributions from among, and disproportionate contributions from, teachers of different cultural backgrounds (Djerasimovic, 2014). These institutes and schools often rely on a one-way school culture and pedagogical practice in which the teachers from other cultural groups are marginalized and subdued (Lee, 2012). Such a situation results in either blind and uncritical, one-sided learning or stereotypical attitudes towards intercultural teachers (Montgomery, 2014). Fang Fang’s school secretary serves as an apt example.

Therefore, teachers’ emotions are necessary, especially for intercultural teachers. Mei and Fang Fang’s experiences suggest that school cultures that value personal emotions, share diverse pedagogical practices, and manage teachers’ professional identity enhance teachers’ agency to engage in an intercultural context and improve their intercultural competence.

I found that these teachers’ autobiographical narratives were integral to their emotional expression and professional identity formation. Their early childhood, previous teaching, and intercultural experiences offered reflections and representations of their personal emotions. These narratives strengthened my belief that these Chinese intercultural
teachers’ emotional awareness was the basis of their self-evaluation and self-reflection, which in turn shaped their identities.

**Art Work as a Media for Negotiating Multiple Identities**

At the time of the 2015 Chinese Spring Festival, I was writing an essay for a course. It was the first time I was away from my family for the holidays. Chinese Spring Festival is like Christmas in the Western world. It has a special meaning for all Chinese people, and they usually return to their hometowns to spend the holiday with family. Every family has a lavish banquet and watches Spring Festival Gala, a variety show produced by China Central Television to celebrate the festival and to entertain people. Watching Spring Festival Gala with family members has become the tradition in the evening of that holiday. I watched it on YouTube the day after it aired and became obsessed by a song called *The Way to Home*. With affable and soothing melody, the song features the loneliness and homesickness of a traveler. I excerpted some of the lyrics below:

回家的路, 数一数一生多少个寒暑
数一数起起落落的旅途
多少的笑 多少的哭
回家吧,幸福
幸福,能抱一抱父母

……

回家吧 孤独
孤独 还等待著安抚
脱下那一层一层的戏服
吹开心中的雾

On the way home, I counted the summers and winters of my life

I counted the ebb and flow of my trip

And the smiles and tears when I was away

……

If you feel happy, come home

The happiness of a hug from your parents

If you feel lonely, come home

The loneliness will be no longer

Take off your costumes

And melt the ice from your heart

I believe the rhythm and lyric, such as those in this song, speak out the opaque senses of mine and relieves my sorrow and loneness, because words can never express the intertwining and abstract emotions. This song provided me with much catharsis at the time. When I shared it with my participants, they agreed that a pleasing song or piece of music had cheered them up in the past. Ling reiterated how artwork helped her to discover herself. I realized that art supported these teachers as they negotiated multiple indemnities within new cultures. Accordingly, in this section I discuss the influence of artwork on these intercultural teachers’ identities.

Artwork, Where Ling Finds Herself

It was a scorching summer after Ling completed the first year of her two-year teaching commitment. Ling was ready to return to China for an enjoyable summer break. She went shopping to buy presents for her relatives and friends, searched for airline tickets, and
began packing. It would be a great summer! When she shared her itinerary with the Confucius Institute, however, she was informed that due to policy changes and other some issues, U.S. visa renewal was no longer available. She had to remain in the U.S. for the visa renewal process, and there was no ensured time to get the approval. Hearing that news, Ling was struck with despair and frustration. She lied on the grass, cried, and asked herself what had happened and why she had chosen to come to teach in this place.

After immersing in the deep disappointment for a long time, Ling tottered to her apartment. In the thick of such deep disappointment, all she could do was to paint.
Figure 4 Ling’s painting *Michelia Alba*

The piece is called *Michelia Alba*. Magnolias grow on trees rather than on vines, bushes, or stalks. The flowers are sweet smelling and creamy white with wide-petaled blossoms. The magnolia is also the city flower of Shanghai, Ling’s hometown. As Ling described, the magnolia looks fragile, but it is independent, elegant, and fragrant. Ling
believed the magnolia was a symbol of Chinese teachers like her. While they are not always shining and do not always stand out, they cannot be ignored or despised.

Describing this artwork invited Ling to recall additional memories. She thought about teaching her first class, and being nervous about speaking well a whole long English sentence fluently. She remembered the hard day when she spent five hours preparing a 45-minute Chinese painting lesson. Her American students were invested in drawing and class discussion; she cannot stop missing the students who gave her a bunch of handmade flowers on Teacher’s Day. These memories provided a movie reel of her teaching life. The happiness, sorrow, loneliness, annoyance, and anger—as Ling described—were all interwoven in this picture, and then took a singular form in the magnolia. Ling liked to share her paintings with others, especially her American colleagues and students. She agreed that words, in many situations, were pale and could not express what she intended to say. Given the language barriers and different cultural backgrounds, Ling believed her artwork became a tool for her to communicate with people from different cultures.

Ling’s belief concurs with Couldby’s (2006) argument that it is import to employ art work as an intervention in intercultural education, and to provide an opportunity to frame the discourse of perceiving different cultures. Art work plays as a media for both teachers and students in negotiating the cultural differences in an intercultural context. As Ling shared, while teachers and students may come from different cultures, art work integrates them and bypasses the language barrier. Music, painting, poems, and other art forms provide intercultural narratives of teacher identity, self-reflection, and self-evaluation.
Ling repeatedly used the phrases “stay gold” and “never forget to be original” when reflecting her living and teaching experiences in the U.S. “Stay gold” came from the poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by a well-known American poet Robert Frost:

> Nature’s first green is gold,
> 
> Her hardest hue to hold.
> 
> Her early lead’s a flower;
> 
> But only so an hour.

Ferguson (2015) reviewed the poem that in Frost’s eyes, green is the first mark of spring and a reminder of life. In fact, the first flush of vegetation from the New England birch and the willow is not green but the haze of delicate gold. Hence green stands for a prelude or sign of spring. Gold is the fact. This golden hue is described as hard to hold, as evanescent as gold metal itself. “The hue of gold with all its value associations of richness and color cannot be preserved. Nor can flower, delicate and evanescent in its beauty, last long; hence we are touched by melancholy when gold changes to green and flower changes to leaf” (Ferguson, 2015, unpaged).

“Stay gold” conveys the hope that one could stay in her/his initial mind or faith as time changes, and people come and go. Ling has kept this phrase to remind herself to stick to her mind, no matter how difficult or different her new environment.

Bochner and Ellis (2003) articulate that “art can become reflexive, turn on itself, invite us to question our own premises, to ask, how do I see? What can I know? How do I know what I know?” (p. 508). In Ling’s story, the creation of artwork becomes a practice of self-reflection and self-evaluation. Emotions and art are interconnected. Paintings and poems
alike can be representational and evocative embodiments of one’s senses and emotions. The colors and composition Ling uses reflect her emotional ups and downs, and the painting reflects her hopes and expectations. In other words, “the experience of emotions is one of the preeminent reasons for seeking out art and entertainment” (Wagner, et al., 2016, p. 134).

Furthermore, Ling is cognitive of the identity development encouraged by her painting *Michelia Alba*. While art can be viewed as an object or product, it is essentially an idea as well as a way of knowing and a manner of speaking. Bochner and Ellis (2003) further argue that art cannot only reveal an artist’s perceptions and feelings, but also can be employed to recognize oneself. In other words, art becomes a process and form of inquiry. In an intercultural context, art has the power to reflect and reveal the artist’s multiple identities (Couldby, 2006).

A few days ago, Ling sent me *Rhyme of Leaves*, another painting of hers. Ling drew stretched and lightened golden leaves. She told me that she was surprised to find several leaves turning gold in the late summer time and realized that fall was coming. Ling was also reminded of when she was in the U.S. She thought she was like the leaves, different from her peers and drowning in the hustle and bustle of an unknown city. Ling believed that although these leaves were currently not fitting in with the others, as time went by they would finally settle into the environment.
I was introduced to art-based educational narrative inquiry in one of the educational methodology courses. In that course, I was fascinated by Bruner’s (2014) constructivist approach to narrative inquiry based on an examination of the nature of thought. With the central premise that “world making” is the principal function of mind for both the sciences and the arts, Bruner (2014) states that instead of happening in the real world, stories are constructed in people’s heads; therefore, life is composed of narratives. The perspective was
new to me at the time, and I wondered how art could be employed as data or narratives to better understand people’s stories. As I read and learn more about ABER in narrative inquiry, I recognized that people were authors of their stories; art work or narrative are the ways people tell their experiences and interpret others’.

Interacting with my participants strengthened my understanding of ABER’s utility in narrative inquiry. As Ling continued to send and narrativize her paintings and favorite poems, I found that the metaphors in the art work served as a third space in which to understand her emotions and experiences. I would agree that words, as Ling described, are pale and cannot convey abstract feelings and thoughts. Art work narratives allowed more time and space for reflection and understanding. McKenna (2015) articulates that art and narrative inquiry are essentially relevant: narrative inquiry moves the interpreters beyond the story to the meaning of the narrative composed. The aesthetic art experience “requires the perceiver to move beyond subject matter to interpreting meaning expressed through the artist’s use of elements” (p. 87). In my understanding, narrative inquiry provides an aesthetic experience for researchers, participants, and readers.

Bochner and Ellis (2003) concur with the articulation that art is a mode of narrative inquiry as well as the relationships between ideas and forms of art in narrative inquiry. They claim that “to use art as a mode of narrative inquiry was to move toward a new research paradigm in which ideas became as important as forms, the viewer’s perceptions as important as the artist’s intentions, the language and emotions of art as important as its aesthetic qualities” (p. 507).

Barone and Eisner (2012) articulate that art-based educational research (ABER) should feature empathic understanding and virtual realities, meaning that researchers can
create a virtual world for readers through expressive language to help them understand the artwork; after all, the educational and emotional resonances behind this artwork may be unavailable to readers. Thus, I came to create a virtual reality to help me interpret my participants’ stories. For example, as Ling recalled and reflected on her teaching and living experiences in the U.S. when drawing *Michelia Alba*, I tried to understand Ling’s emotional or spiritual journey on several occasions, given that ABER needed to be judged by the “illuminating effect” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 102) that the researcher can reveal what has not been noticed in education.

I discussed in the early section of this chapter that emotions are often ignored or suppressed by schools and educational institutions. ABER in narrative inquiry provides a new perspective for researchers to elicit teachers’ emotions for exploration (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Wagner, et al., 2016). By employing and analyzing art as narratives, researchers and participants can construct lived stories in creative and innovative ways. Because emotions can often express teachers’ abstract and subtle reflections on their teaching practices, Barone and Eisner (2012) further argue that “one of the fundamental aims of ABER is to make narratives vividly subtle but significant so that the awareness of the educational world that the research addressed increased. Art-based research, in this sense, culminates in work that is referentially adequate (p. 102)”. Therefore, I chose to address these teachers’ unspoken words through emotions and artwork narratives, both of which can be integrated into my spirit of narrative inquiry: making the unrepresentativeness or teachers’ voices heard.

Using artwork as a model of narrative inquiry was advantageous to presenting my participants’ lived experiences. This chapter focuses on discussing these Chinese teachers’ emotions and identities within an intercultural context. I have illustrated that when
expressing emotions, these teachers reflect on their identities as people from a different culture. They then engage a teacher agency capable of self-reflection and self-evaluation. Moreover, artwork serves as a media for conveying abstract and complex emotional states, which has particular utility for these intercultural teachers.

In the next chapter, I return to pedagogy and curriculum. I discuss classroom teaching, the relationships between local students, these Chinese teachers, and their schools and institutes. Data analysis shows that pedagogies in terms of in-class teaching and teaching skills may not cause much difficulty for the Chinese teachers. The challenges mainly came from school curriculum and cultural issues. My guiding questions include: What are the difficulties these Chinese teachers faced when teaching? What strategies did they use to deliver curriculum? How do they understand teaching within an intercultural context?
“The classroom teaching is practically the same… in American society, though, teachers are more like attendants. Teaching to serve students, parents, and administrators. But in China, we teachers are more respected,” Mei said about teaching in China and the U.S. (Fieldnotes, February 2017).

“I agree that the teaching profession in the U.S. has the nature of service. Teaching is service. But I like to teach in American classrooms. The students are more participatory and communicative here,” Feng elaborated (Fieldnotes, April 2017).

These two statements refer to the teachers’ classroom experiences in China and the U.S. What Mei and Feng articulated about teachers in the two countries effectively represents the voices of my five participants. They share the perspective that culture is the biggest difference and challenge for teachers who have taught in China and the U.S. The Chinese teachers in my study had no difficulties with utilizing the pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills used in American classrooms; however, they often felt embarrassed or even depressed because of the attitudes and treatment of their students and colleagues. Interacting in the classroom with students from another culture came easily to them. In fact, they prefer to teach American students and enjoyed their teaching positions in the U.S. Language was a barrier for some of my participants, but they did not treat it as a serious concern. In narrative inquiry, such lived experiences embody the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) in terms of interaction, continuity, and situation. Accordingly, these reported experiences are interconnected, evolving, and specific. They connect to the
school context and people, and influence the Chinese teachers’ teaching and living in American schools.

These Chinese teachers’ lived experiences are of considerable value. To some extent, they have challenged my perception that all Chinese intercultural teachers have experienced huge differences or gaps when teaching in American schools. Moreover, their experiences indicate about how these Chinese teachers choose to interact with students and other teachers in a different culture. Accordingly, in this chapter I attempt to understand and interpret my teacher participants’ lived experiences through their narrative constructions using the theoretical lens of interculturalism and through their narrative constructions.

Chapter Overview

I have narrativized the experiences and stories of Ling, Fang Fang, Shi Kun, Feng, and Mei in this chapter organized by pedagogy, curriculum, and culture. These are the major themes I have developed from my interactions and interviews with these five participants. In the previous chapters, I have mainly discussed my participants’ lived experiences in terms of the social contexts of China and the U.S., their homelands, emotions, and art. In this chapter, I return my attention to their classroom and school-based contexts. Specifically, my research has formulated that these Chinese teachers were more likely than I have expected to develop new pedagogy and teaching skills for classroom teaching, a process that eased their transition and performance in American classrooms. However, adapting to school curriculum and different cultures created its own dilemmas and difficulties. As a result, they tended to retreat to their comfort zones when interacting with students and colleagues. Finally, Guidelines for inter-comprehension and intercultural willingness are discussed in response to each theme.
While my teacher participants had to adapt to new pedagogies and curricula, they reported that developing new teaching and classroom management skills in the U.S. was not a big challenge. What overwhelmed these Chinese teachers was interacting with American students, parents, and other teachers. In other words, the technicalities of teaching did not create many problems for these Chinese teachers, but the cultural aspects were more challenging.

Based on my collected data, I reviewed additional literature and discovered that while many studies discussed teaching in cultures foreign to the teachers (Ashavskaya, 2015; Li, Mazer & Ju, 2011; Liu & Meng, 2009), most focused on pedagogy and teaching skills. Research on teachers from specific countries was limited. For international migrant teachers, teaching in American schools requires English proficiency, particular classroom management styles, pedagogical techniques, and ways of interacting with students (Ashavskaya, 2015; Li, Mazer & Ju, 2011). These teachers must simultaneously negotiate their integration into the school environment and culture (Coulby, 2006). This is an ongoing and evolving process that occurs in a number of spaces: the classroom, school, and administration. During this process, these Chinese teachers are faced with dilemmas from different angles. For example, Li, Mazer and Ju (2011) articulate that the communication between intercultural teachers and American high school students can be impeded due to the fact that many students possess mainstream American values and practices. These American students may avoid getting to know their international teachers because they may feel that “they will lose [the] ‘power’” (p. 461) of the dominant American culture.

As my research deepened and expanded in its scope, I recognized that cultural issues led to the most problems and difficulties for these intercultural teachers. Hence, I have
explored additional studies focused on intercultural teaching experiences. Among this research, the concepts of willingness to communicate (WTC) and communication apprehension (CA) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; Roach & Olaniran, 2001), as well as the inter-comprehension of teachers’ intercultural sensitivities (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Pinho, 2015), provide solid theoretical bases for my further research. WTC and CA discuss how teachers’ predispositions influence their communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. The inter-comprehension of teachers’ intercultural sensitivities examines the importance and improvement of intercultural competence within the school environment.

Furthermore, by employing narrative inquiry as my research methodology I have become more alert to cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), official stories (Ayers, 2006; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009), and small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Clandinin and Connelly (1996) conclude that teachers expressed themselves in cover stories by using the language of accountability as outside people expected, rather than really reflecting their own thoughts. Similarly, official stories are stories that teachers tell to ensure that what they have taught or enacted is consistent with the school or institutional requirements. Small stories, on the other hand, feature everyday occurrences and mundane personal details. These narrativized story forms helped me to construct and analyze the Chinese teachers’ intercultural experiences. They also served as Lenses with which to better understand my participants’ lived experiences.

After I conducted additional in-depth interviews with my participants and reviewed related studies and theoretical traditions, I composed this chapter to explore these Chinese teachers’ stories based on the themes of pedagogy, curriculum, and intercultural teaching.
Developing a New Pedagogy and Inter-comprehension: “Teaching in American Classrooms is not so Different!”

“Teaching in American classrooms is not so different!” Mei, Fang Fang, and Ling agreed with this statement. Their reasoning referred to the more technical aspects of teaching in American classrooms. For example, they utilized the classroom management and teaching skills they had developed and practiced in China. Their thoughts sparked my interest in the particularities of their teaching experiences because I assumed that they would face a variety of obstacles in American classrooms. I pursued this topic, recorded their corresponding ideas and stories, and gave reflections.

New Pedagogy for Classroom Teaching: “Pedagogically, I Like Being a Teacher in American Schools!”

While I had many enlightening conversations with my teacher participants, I was most fascinated by our discussions regarding teaching Chinese and American students. All five teachers concurred that they preferred teaching American students to teaching Chinese students. This shared opinion piqued my curiosity. Many of my American colleagues and professors with teaching experience in American K-12 schools or higher education believed that Chinese students were more likely to be “ideal” students. Using the adjective “ideal,” they meant that Chinese students were more hardworking, always complied with school rules and teachers’ instructions, and turned in high-quality assignments on time. Chinese students neither made noise in class, nor were distracted during lectures. My participants, on the other hand, were born and educated in mainland China. They were more familiar with Chinese students’ study habits and knew how to teach them. However, all of my participants
explicitly or implicitly agreed with Ling’s opinion, “Pedagogically, I like being a teacher in American schools!”

While Ling was often worried about her English language proficiency, she still developed the impression that she was more comfortable teaching American students. When teaching art courses, Ling used the phrase “纯粹(pure)” to describe her American secondary school students. Ling explained that her use of the word “pure” was representative of her students’ educational priorities. Her Chinese students often cared too much about what she thought of them. In Ling’s Chinese painting appreciation course, she displayed one Chinese painting and described her understanding of it. When Ling asked her students to share their response to the work, the Chinese teenagers paid more attention to whether their answers were consistent with Ling’s taste. Their American counterparts were more likely to express themselves and share alternative interpretations. Ling said,

“What will the teacher think about me? Am I a good student in my teacher’s eyes? Chinese students have too many questions along these lines. They only pay attention to how you judge them and always try to cater to you. American students might care about my comments, but they are mainly focused on learning and understanding the content of my class.”

Ling enjoyed discussing Chinese paintings with her students. She played video clips, presented slides, and listed key words during her lectures. To better lead class discussion, Ling prepared related topics and English phrases that would possibly come up in class. Sometimes she required students to present American paintings with themes similar to the Chinese paintings, which inspired students to participate in class. In Ling’s mind, while
Language can cause problems, improving one’s pedagogy and teaching skills can make up for one’s deficiencies.

Language was also the main obstacle for Fang Fang, as she sometimes could not understand what her elementary students said. This language barrier was partially the result of her younger students’ often abbreviated or vague sentences. Fang Fang tried to be patient and always reminded herself, “They are just little kids and I am a foreigner! So, I should learn more.” Like Ling, Fang Fang developed her own teaching methods to overcome these difficulties. She requested that the school allocate to her an assistant teacher for the second half of the semester. With the help of the assistant teacher, Fang Fang could understand what her students said most of the time. She used her spare time to observe how other local teachers taught. Fang Fang employed a classroom economy, an incentive system the local teachers used to motivate students. Students who actively participated in class discussion or efficiently completed assignments earned fake currency they could use to “buy” prizes “sold” by their teachers. Fang Fang integrated some Chinese elements into the classroom economy. She awarded Chinese gifts and ornaments to students as prizes. Fang Fang quickly adapted to her new teaching environment and built rapport with her students.
Ling and Fang Fang’s teaching experiences in American classrooms proved to include hardships and successes. This process in which they learned to work through the dilemmas reflected their increased awareness of intercultural communication and sensitivity. Liddicoat (2008) argues that teachers’ using their second language in classroom instruction is, in and of itself, intercultural communication: “When people use their second language they are encoding ideas in a linguistic system located within a cultural context, one which will be interpreted as being located within that context” (p. 277). Faced with their own language barriers and teaching environments, both Ling and Fang Fang reported considerable openness and empathy in their American classrooms and instruction. Ling employed art to engage with her students and strengthen their communication. Fang Fang sought out help
from her American colleagues and learned how to better understand her students. Both teachers tended to build relationships with students by learning their local cultures. When miscommunications occurred, they often refrained from immediately blaming their students. Such behaviors, representations of inter-comprehension, improved these Chinese teachers’ intercultural sensitivity and competence (Cushner and Mahon, 2009; Pinho, 2015; Pinho & Andrade, 2009). With this newly acquired inter-comprehension, they became more inclined to learn new teaching skills and pedagogies, which more effectively facilitated their teaching and student interactions in American classrooms.

**Developing Inter-comprehension to Improve Teachers’ Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Competence**

Pinho (2015) defines inter-comprehension as “a practice in which people with different language backgrounds and repertoires communicate with each another, each using their own language(s) (usually, but not necessarily, their mother tongue) to understand the language(s) of other(s), even when they have not necessarily learnt these language(s)” (p. 149). This definition addresses how people with different dominant languages can still adequately communicate, which came to bear in Ling and Fang Fang’s stories. My further literature review indicates that developing inter-comprehension improves teachers’ intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Pinho, 2015; Pinho & Andrade, 2009).

Inter-comprehension relates to a person’s background and home country culture (Pinho, 2015; Pinho & Andrade, 2009). Teachers in multicultural classrooms are able to establish bridges which can co-construct shared meanings with students from different cultural groups by resorting to their previous cultures and languages (Pinho & Andrade,
Ling and Fang Fang’s experiences prove how inter-comprehension applies when Chinese teachers work in the U.S. While they are confronted with difficulties, their tenacity, patience, and optimism developed in their home(lands) (which I have discussed in chapters three and four) become important tools for responding to problems and issues. Moreover, building shared meanings in their teaching practices addresses the gaps between these Chinese teachers and their students. For example, Ling used paintings to connect to American student culture. Fang Fang developed a classroom economy with Chinese prizes. These instances demonstrate the important role that inter-comprehension plays for Chinese intercultural teachers in order to establish harmonious relationships.

Secondly, inter-comprehension encourages intercultural dialogue, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence (Cantel, 2012) by drawing upon teachers’ openness and curiosity. Pinho (2015) addresses that the processes of inter-comprehension are dependent on a cognitive and communicative flexibility in which openness and curiosity toward others are highly valued. Such flexibility helps teachers to deal with lesser-known or unknown languages and cultures because they are open to and curious about different cultures. Therefore, intercultural dialogue can become an avenue to increased flexibility and understanding.

Ling created an interactive dimension in her classroom in which inter-comprehension facilitated intercultural dialogue. She achieved this by sharing her ideas about art and inviting her students to express themselves. For both Ling and Fang Fang, intercultural dialogue was also embodied in their efforts to learn American teaching styles and their greater school cultures.
Inter-comprehension is related to interculturalism in its reliance on teachers’ positive emotions and attitudes. According to Cushner and Mahon (2009), when people are dealing with human complexity and especially conflict management in intercultural interaction, individuals with inter-comprehension are more likely to develop intercultural sensitivity that promotes positive feelings and attitudes, such as empathy, openness, and inclusivity.

Intercultural teachers’ positive attitudes in a multicultural classroom increase their sensitivity and the efficacy of their teaching practices. Brock, Moore, and Parks (2007) argue that when teaching is considered ineffective due to cultural misunderstanding, the more effective teachers with high intercultural sensitivity attribute such an obstacle to their own teaching, whereas the less effective teachers tend to blame their students.

Pinho and Andrade (2009) believe that inter-comprehension can be enhanced when there is a conversational effort to understand others not only in linguistic terms, but also in terms of their identity(ies). When engaging in intercultural dialogue, the willingness to construct shared meanings often results in teaching practices that are adjusted and improved. Both differences and commonalities are celebrated and understood as community strengths. Inter-comprehension requires intercultural sensitivity and includes an attitudinal, affective dimension in communication (Cantel, 2012; Pinho & Andrade, 2009).

Furthermore, developing inter-comprehension not only helps teachers to improve their intercultural sensitivity and competence, but also benefits students. Cushner and Mahon (2009) illustrate this phenomenon when they refer to the cultural and ethnic diversity of the U.S., acknowledging that teachers must have intercultural sensitivity and competence in order to develop their students’ intercultural competence. The pedagogy teachers employ influences students and can guide them to form intercultural sensitivity. This is quite
pragmatic, and various studies show that students taught by teachers from different cultural groups tended to feel more comfortable and were curious to explore the unknown or new cultures (Portera, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2010). In my research, some participants discussed that their American students became more understanding and inclusive when they were exposed to Chinese cultures.

During our final conversation, Shi Kun shared with me an interesting teaching experience she had in China. Last year Shi Kun was invited by her alma mater to give classes to students enrolled in a summer teacher education program. The students were mainly pre-service or in-service teachers from the same province of Central China. Shi Kun thought it would be easy to teach the class. She had been educated in China and was familiar with the university. To her surprise, however, she felt considerable discomfort when teaching in a Chinese classroom. Shi Kun found it difficult to engage the students, and the topics she brought to the classes seemed irrelevant to the Chinese teachers. In my opinion, Shi Kun’s story serves as a counter example of inter-comprehension. She had lost her previous openness and curiosity toward her students within this more familiar Chinese teaching context. This tendency reflects the importance of inter-comprehension no matter the cultural particularities of one’s teaching position. I re-examined Pinho’s (2015) definition on inter-comprehension and concluded that inter-comprehension may not only relate to teaching in a second language, but teaching in any intercultural context as well. This is enlightening for both my research and teaching practice. In my future research, the inter-comprehension of teachers who teach in their own cultures is a worthwhile topic of study.
Cultural Differences and Teacher-student Relationships in American Schools

Whether from my participants’ or my own teaching experiences, I have recognized that being a teacher is not only about preparing lesson plans and giving lectures; the profession also refers to building relationships with students, getting along with colleagues, and learning to adapt to your school environment and culture. The teacher’s identity is intertwined with a variety of other identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Many studies have concluded that institutional or school context, teacher-student relationships, and cultural differences are crucial to teacher identity formation and development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Schwartz, Zamboanga & Weisskirch, 2008). Pennington and Richards (2016) interpret the notion of teacher identity by highlighting the individual characteristics of teachers and how the integration of professional identity and institutional identity is realized in specific teaching contexts.

Different cultures and complicated relationships offer teachers opportunities to negotiate multiple identities. In this section, I discuss how cultural differences and teacher-student relationships in American schools significantly impacted these Chinese teachers’ professional identity development.

Professional Distinctions in Two Cultures: “Culturally, I don’t Like Being a Teacher in the U.S.!”

If teaching students in American classrooms was the main reason that my participants taught in the U.S., then culture may have been a reason some of them pursued other professional opportunities. “Culturally, I didn’t like being a teacher in the U.S.!” Mei exclaimed. She never understood why she had been assigned to teach daily classes. Mei started work at eight in the morning. After five hours of teaching, she was often required to
tutor several students on their HSK, a standardized test of the Chinese language. The heavy workload stressed and exhausted her. She had never taught six classes a day in China. Mei also suffered from the strict management of teachers by her school administration. She could not even bring her smartphone into the classroom. One day she was reported by the other teachers for playing on her smartphone after class. The principal referenced the “misbehavior” without allowing Mei to explain. Although Mei clarified that she only texted after class, the principal insisted that Mei violated the school expectations.

Mei had never experienced these problems while teaching in China. Mei said, “The school just dehumanizes us and we have no dignity! That’s capitalism for you!”

I am not sure if Mei was making a joke, or if she really believed this. I have recognized that the workload and management of American schools are markedly different. In both my own and my participants’ opinions, teaching in the U.S. is not so different from other service industries. The school establishes regulations and rules for teachers, and the teachers serve as employees to profit their school companies. Students and parents are consumers who have paid for teachers’ services. Parents submit a complaint to the school administrator if they think a teacher is irresponsible, or if their sons or daughters have not demonstrated reasonable academic achievements. Given this entrepreneur school infrastructure, teachers are more vulnerable in American society (Pinar, 1995). In China, however, being a teacher has a distinct prestige due to Confucian culture and the social morality of the teacher. Teaching is a more respectable profession in China. The word teacher can be translated as “师父” (teacher-father/mother or master) in the Chinese language, which indicates the intimate teacher-student relationship and the high social position of educators. Li (2010) argues that Confucianism places the teacher profession at the
core of societal development. A famous Chinese saying, “一日为师，终身为父”, literally means “Be my teacher for a day, be my father for a lifetime,” and encapsulates the cultural respect give to the Chinese teacher—on par with that of a parent. Chinese teachers possess more rights and privileges. For example, Chinese teachers have lighter workloads; Chinese parents and students are more likely to take responsibility for academic inadequacies than to automatically blame the teacher, the latter of which is more common in American schools.

Because of such cultural and curricular differences, Chinese intercultural teachers may feel uncomfortable teaching in American schools. This also explains why Mei thinks her development as a teacher and her communication with her American colleagues was stifled by her school administration and responsibilities.

Taking Safe Reactions for Self-protection: “I was Afraid that Certain Punishments would have Gotten Me into Trouble.”

After Shi Kun completed graduate school, she worked as a substitute teacher in a local secondary school. The supervising teachers had a two-day leave due to personal affairs, and Shi Kun took over their classes. The temporary teaching assignment did not cause her much trouble, except for a boy who kept making noises in class and disturbing other students. Shi Kun tried to redirect the student by giving him verbal warnings. After several reminders, the student was still disruptive. Shi Kun did not calm the boy down and instead proceeded by ignoring him. Soon enough, the class bell rang and she was released from her duties. In the interview, Shi Kun explained:

“I really felt helpless and didn’t know what to do at the time. I didn’t know if I should shout at him after several reminders. I mean, I intended to do that, but I just called his name and that didn’t seem to work. I saw other American teachers scream at
misbehaving students and order them to get out, but I had no idea if I could ask a student to leave the classroom. You know, I’m an international teacher and I was afraid that certain punishments would have gotten me into trouble.”

I have had thoughts similar to Shi Kun during my own teaching experience. For international teachers, the challenge of appropriately interacting and communicating with American students involves questions beyond classroom instruction and lesson planning. Prior to gaining teaching experience in this different culture, we were afraid of breaking the rules or overstepping our bounds. “Is it okay to do that? Will this get me into trouble?” These were the questions I often asked myself. When faced with such fears and uncertainties, we often chose to behave cautiously or retreat in order to protect ourselves.

When responsible for negotiating these scenarios in addition to the demands of curriculum and teaching, teacher-student relationships become more complicated and power dynamics fluctuate. Roach and Olaniran (2001) articulate that intercultural teachers can have miscommunication issues with their students if they are not clear about cultural differences and are fearful of making mistakes that may result in issues. Therefore, in many cases, intercultural teachers are more conservative in their teaching. In Shi Kun’s story, such fear was also the reason she only mildly addressed the misbehaving student rather than seriously reprimand him. Similarly, when teaching new lessons, she employed more “reliable” tactics and was “careful about not crossing the line.”

**Cultural Discomfort and Self-retreat: “I Felt Embarrassed When I was Alone with Students.”**

Feng had mentioned in passing that he was often concerned about the decision to open or close the door when students came to talk to him in his office. As he said, “I felt
embarrassed when I was alone with students.” For each day’s office hour, Feng faced the dilemma that when he closed the door, this might be interpreted by students as too intimate or formal; if he left the door open, the conversation with his student was not private enough. Feng believed that American culture dictated that when a teacher was alone with a student, the educator should be cautious about the distance and conduct. In his mind, it would be necessary to make all student interactions public unless the student requested a personal conversation. In China, however, such ethical concerns are rarely in question. It would be common and acceptable for a Chinese teacher to be alone with her/his students. Feng learned to follow the unstated rules for teacher-student rapport in the U.S., although he often wondered if he could use the Chinese customs. “But I didn’t want to take the risk!” Feng mentioned.

Another issue arose during Feng’s discussions with his students. Feng was uncertain whether some topics were off the table. In one of the interviews, we had an interesting dialogue on the concept of freedom in China and the U.S. We both used to think the U.S. was a freer country. Especially in speech, we can talk and express ourselves publicly without much concern. This choice is less common in mainland China due to the speech restrictions of the government. However, after living in the U.S. for an extended period of time, our fear about speaking our minds had grown. We learned that there were some off-limits topics when communicating with Americans. For Feng, these topics included politics, race, and sexuality.

Because of his scruples, Feng always tried to keep conversation with his students short and related to academia. As Feng formulated, talking about students’ studies and school activities was safer when he was alone with a student. Feng elaborated:
“I could neither talk about politics nor religion. But education is always related to politics. I couldn’t gossip about school happenings with students. So, besides sports and weather, discussing students’ study was the most appropriate topic!”

Thanks to the more relaxed, liberal nature of my academic department, I have not experienced Feng’s restrictions; however, I understand the pressure and anxiety he felt. After entering another country and majority culture, these Chinese teachers reported becoming more aware of not breaking the rules or bucking the system. Logan, Steel and Hunt (2017) formulate that intercultural willingness to interact is highly associated with anxiety and uncertainty. Feng, Mei, and Shi Kun’s experiences manifested emotional responses along these lines. On many occasions, they were unwilling to communicate or interact and chose instead to step back into their comfort zones and cultural identities. Accordingly, developing an intercultural willingness to interact and communicate proved to have pragmatic value and instruction for these Chinese teachers.

**Developing Intercultural Willingness to Interact and Communicate as Part of Teaching in American Schools**

I did not intend to define the illustrated stories of my participants as negative examples of intercultural education, but at times Mei, Shi Kun, and Feng chose to keep silent or retreated when they were faced with dilemmas or difficulties. Mei did not advocate for her smartphone use after class. Shi Kun resorted to ignoring the disruptive student. Feng shortened and narrowed the scope of conversations with his student. In general, they all showed their unwillingness to communicate with colleagues, superintendents, or students in their intercultural contexts.
Roach and Olaniran (2001) argue that a major reason for unwillingness to communicate is fear. Richmond and McCroskey (1998) agree and employ the term communication apprehension (CA) to extend this conception of fear. CA is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998, p. 37). All three participants’ stories present how these Chinese migrant teachers feared interacting with people from another culture. The fear originates from the Chinese teachers’ lack of understanding the cultural differences. As they refuse to step forward and communicate, the fear grows. Therefore, fostering intercultural willingness to interact and communicate becomes crucial and necessary for the elimination of fear and miscommunication.

Intercultural willingness, in terms of willingness to communicate (WTC) and communication apprehension (CA), provides a theoretical perspective to interpret Mei, Shi Kun, and Feng’s interactions and communications with their local students and colleagues. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) define willingness to communicate (WTC) as a "personality-based, trait-like predisposition which is relatively consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers" (p. 73). Accordingly, WTC relates with one’s personality. A person’s inclination to perform and communicate is also highly influenced by her/his cultural predispositions (Roach & Olaniran, 2001). This helps to explain why my three participants were quite confident with their teaching and lessons, but feared communicating or interacting with students and other teachers outside the classroom. Because of the fear of the barrier of cultural differences, Mei, Shi Kun, and Feng tended to make concessions or self-retreated. Furthermore, WTC echoes the theory that teacher professional identity is the product of multiple factors, including personality, school context,
Intercultural willingness to communicate and interact plays an important role in multicultural teaching and learning contexts. Developing intercultural willingness encourages teachers to utilize positive attitudes and appropriate communication techniques when they are faced with cultural barriers (Pennington & Richards, 2016; Portera, 2008). Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver and Eckstein (2016) articulate that for students, especially younger children, fostering a willingness to interact with different cultures can improve their intercultural competence so that they more easily adapt to multicultural contexts. One effective way to improve intercultural willingness is to create a comfortable and safe community, as both WTC and CA are context and situation based (Roach & Olaniran, 2001). Mei shared that her first principal treated her like a family member and the second one was less respectful of her. It follows that the local American schools and Confucius Institutes can serve as the foundation of comfortable and safe communities.

Based on my teacher participants’ lived experiences, I have recognized that schools and educational institutes have the potential to develop teachers’ intercultural willingness to communicate and interact in teaching. School sites are important acculturative contexts that can facilitate long-term societal integration (Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver & Eckstein, 2016). Just as interculturalism theory is characterized by integration, cohesion, and intercultural dialogue (Cantle, 2012; Gundara, 2000; Muir, 2007), I have also realized that
schools and educational institutes can provide the frontier for embodying and implementing these intercultural values.

Cover Stories, Official Stories, and Small Stories

“Mei: I’m not really satisfied with the management of the Confucius Institute! It’s chaos. I think that many CI teachers have the same feelings as me.

Qing: Why? Would you say more?

Mei: CI administrators and superintendents just don’t care as much. It’s like our dignity is trampled upon! When we are treated unfairly, we have no opportunity to complain…”

This conversation occurred during my first interview with Mei. She was quite critical of the CI’s lack of support for its Chinese teachers. A few weeks later, I intentionally followed up on Mei’s opinion of the CI. This time I heard a different version.

Qing: During our last interview, you used the word “chaos” to describe the Confucius Institute administration and was quite disappointed about it. Can you give me one or two specific examples of your frustration?

“Mei: This is not a sensitive topic, right?

Qing: No, it’s just your experiences and thoughts about CI.

Mei: Just in case, if it’s better not to talk, I request that you anonymize.

Qing: Of course. The consent form states that all names will be anonymized and confidentiality will be ensured.

Mei: That’s fine… I think CI’s program has more advantages. Both China and other countries can benefit from the program. It’s a win-win situation. The CI teacher training system is not well-developed, but I think it will be better.
Qing: Interesting…”

I had similar conversations with Fang Fang, Ling, and Feng, who also served as Confucius Institutes Chinese teachers. All of them provided “cover stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25) through which they portrayed themselves as practitioners who complied with both the Confucius Institutes’ and their local schools’ curriculum and policies (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Cover stories are constructed by participants to describe situations which are different from what actually happened. Chan (2004) defined cover stories as “stories of success that present a given situation as it might occur in an ideal situation to obscure the fact that what is actually occurring may be very different from the descriptions being provided” (p. 217). I heard many cover stories as my research progressed. It was not difficult for me to identity that my participants told a different version of the same story to cover what they had previously narrativized. At times during the course of the same interview they changed their narration of a story and described it differently.

When I asked them to share more about their experiences working for CI, my participants often first presented their dissatisfaction or criticism. Later on they would concede that CI’s Chinese teacher program was important and meaningful, and they did not have much to complain about. They would even argue against others’ critiques of CI. In fact, the cover stories these Chinese teachers told also aligned with official CI descriptive language. I searched on Hanban’s website and read the Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institutes (Hanban, 2014). I discovered that many of my participants’ CI comments echoed the document itself.

During many of my formal and informal conversations with Shi Kun, she discussed the technical aspects of her teaching; for example, what teaching skills she used, the
problems she encountered with textbooks, or how she prepared her lesson plans. These pedagogical topics were valuable for my research. However, she repeatedly avoided directly responding my questions regarding cultural and emotional dilemmas. Her evasions made it difficult for me to learn about and interpret her lived experiences. It became clear to me that Shi Kun was hiding behind these teaching techniques. Such stories provided another category of cover story. Shi Kun confined her personal development to her job description, the “official” title and corresponding skillsets of her professional identity.

My participants’ cover stories regarding CI and their teaching reminded me of the question asked by Ayers (2006): “What is missing from the ‘official story’ that will make the problems of the oppressed more understandable?” (P. 88). By reflecting on Mei’s narrative that she was afraid of having negative professional records, my other participants’ stories of unjust treatment, as well as their various reactions of sorrow and anger, I gradually came to understand the lived experiences behind their “official claims.” MacPherson (2010) elaborates, “Challenging school-based personnel is a risky business for new teachers, yet, if they learn to overlook problems of discrimination by colleagues and superiors in the short term, it is difficult to imagine how they will relearn and find the courage to step up in the long term” (p. 282).

Malcolm and Zukas (2009) argue that there are always gaps between official and unofficial stories due to institutional reasons. In other words, these teachers had to comply with their school paradigms. After all, they were institutional staff.

Returning to Ayers’ (2006) question, I believe that, besides directly asking my participants to explain the oppression they suffered, I can also locate the missing pieces in their emotions, interactions with the environment, and their narratives. In order to excavate
their lived experiences from their cover stories and official stories, I have tried to develop a triangulation of connecting their experiences to their landscapes, interpreting their stories through my theoretical perspective, and assembling the details provided by their small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Compared to intact and fully-illustrated stories, small stories are mundane debris that reflect limited information and few themes. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) discuss the concept of “small stories” and define them as follows:

“An umbrella-term that captures a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. These tellings are typically small when compared to the pages and pages of transcript of interview narratives” (p. 385).

Based on Bamberg and Georgakopoulou’s (2008) definition, the time range for a small story can be short, recent (‘this morning’, ‘last night’), or continuous events. These small stories contain slices of experience and seemingly uninteresting vignettes that may not influence the research. However, from these plain incidents I can gauge my participants’ authentic reflections and thought patterns. I would like to call such incidents undecorated titbits. Because of the collaborative relationship between the researcher and participant, the participant can become inclined to cater to what the research would like to explore (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), especially when the participant deliberately narrativizes a long story in response to the researcher.

Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) further argue that small stories have not necessarily actually happened. The researcher can fictionalize the narrative construction based on the topics discussed during the interview. “Small stories can even be about –
colloquially speaking – ‘nothing’; and as such, indirectly reflect something about the interactional engagement between the interactants, while for outsiders, the interaction is literally ‘about nothing’” (p. 385). This claim relates to Barone and Eisner’s (2012) argument about the use of art-based educational research in narrative inquiry. The stories behind the art work can be fictitious, but the researcher’s need to interpret participants’ incomplete narratives and incidents allows them to construct more detailed stories or fictionalize the missing parts.

In this chapter and in previous chapters, I included many small stories to illustrate the scattered cases of my participants’ teaching lives. For example, Feng was concerned with closing his office door when he was alone with a student. Fang Fang worried about her English when communicating with American students. Shi Kun did not know if she should punish her misbehaving student. I presented my participants’ emotions and feelings from their narratives and artifacts in order to interpret their lived experiences through my theoretical perspective. These plots or small incidents were like chipped pieces of pottery that came together to make the mosaic of these Chinese teachers’ lived experiences. From these small stories, my participants shared undecorated feedback about their teaching and living in the U.S., which makes up for moments when they avoided their own emotions and reflections.

Furthermore, I concluded that pedagogy and school curricula are often embodied in small stories or incidents. During Ling and Fang Fang’s descriptions of in-class experiences, they mention many teaching methods or pedagogical skills without detailed description. However, their “unimportant” small incidents provide essential material to my research study
and my understanding of their professional identities. After assembling these fragmentary stories, I can finally identify a larger picture.

In this chapter, I have discussed my participants’ teaching in American schools with thematic emphasis on pedagogy, curriculum, and intercultural willingness to communicate and interact. Pedagogically speaking, these Chinese teachers experienced less difficulty with adapting to new teaching techniques and different classroom environments. However, they did face cultural issues in terms of their school cultures and teacher-student relationships. I have also illustrated how small stories impacted my research and uncovered my participants’ cover stories and official stories.

In chapter seven, the final chapter of this dissertation, I have summarized the content of each chapter and provided a reflective discussion of interculturalism, intercultural education, and Chinese teachers’ professional identity. I have also concluded my findings. However, I cannot help but acknowledge that while the next chapter marks the end of this research experience, narrative inquiry is alive and always evolving. The inquiry never ends.
CHAPTER 7 BEYOND STORIES: SUMMARIES, DISCUSSION, AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

In the previous chapters, I examined five Chinese intercultural teachers’ lived experiences in the U.S. My examination of the specific events and stories from my participants’ experiences addressed how their personal dispositions, social contexts, and cultures contributed to their teacher identities. These Chinese teachers’ intercultural experiences and identity development also influenced their pedagogy and curriculum.

In this chapter, I summarized the contents of previous chapters and reflected on some of the stories I had narrativized. This allowed me to further discuss my thoughts on interculturalism theory and intercultural education, narrative inquiry, the landscapes in which my participants lived and taught, their lived experiences, and their professional identities as teachers. I also discussed how the insights of this dissertation research will contribute to my future research and the body of research referenced in my literature review. My research questions focused on exploring these Chinese teacher’s intercultural experiences, identity development, lived experiences, and narratives from a variety of dimensions. This section answered the questions I had initially raised. I concluded with my application of interculturalism theory to Chinese society and traced these Chinese teachers’ motivations to teach, teaching strategies, intercultural connections, and communications. As a narrative inquirer, I employed multiple perspectives to interpret these Chinese teachers’ lived experiences and stories. I discovered how teacher identity functions as a negotiated unit by discussing the traits indicated by these Chinese teachers’ intercultural experiences.
Applications of Interculturalism Theory in Chinese Society, Chinese Teachers’ Lived Experiences, and My Research

I concluded my research with the understanding that intercultural theory is essential to Chinese society, Chinese teachers’ lived experiences, and my own dissertation research. China has a long history and tradition of integrating people from different cultural groups into a national identity of shared values. Regardless of whether the central government or regional communities understand China as multicultural, the concept of a unified society is ingrained in people’s minds. Chinese people prefer to name themselves as “炎黄子孙 (Descendants of Yan and Huang).” According to the traditional Chinese myth, the two emperors Yan and Huang, ancestors of the ethnic Han and other ethnic minorities, waged a war against each other. After several battles, Yan was defeated and surrendered to Huang. However, because of their equilibrating strength, the two tribes finally merged into a new confederation of the Yanhuang tribe. Yanhuang became the origin of Chinese peoples from different ethnic groups and races (Wang, 2017). Integration, cohesion, accommodation, and interconnection have characterized Chinese society and been valued throughout China’s history (Callahan, 2012; Wang, 2017).

Based on this Chinese social context, I identified interculturalism theory as the theoretical framework of my dissertation. I made this choice even though many of the American professors in my department, including my major professor and committee, specialize in multiculturalism and multicultural education. During my doctoral studies, I learned many pragmatic and meaningful multiculturalism theories and understood that a theory should fit its applied social context. Multiculturalism theory is particularly suitable for American society. As I illustrated in chapters three and four, Chinese society and culture are
distinct from American society in a variety of ways. Therefore, I adjusted my research approach to interculturalism theory. I reviewed the applicable intercultural literature and identified many important theories for my research. For example, Cantel (2012, 2013) and Taylor’s (2012) tenets of cultural reciprocity, social cohesion, and intercultural dialogue provided a framework for how people from different cultural groups work together to share goals. Portera’s (2008) intercultural pedagogy offered specific instructions for how intercultural education should be conducted. Deardorff’s (2006, 2009) intercultural competence model offered guidelines for evaluating and improving teachers’ and students’ intercultural competence. These intercultural studies served as referential touchstones of my research.

My dissertation research offered evidence that interculturalism theory applies to Chinese society and my data analysis. My participants’ narratives, reflections, and dispositions echoed many of the tenets of interculturalism. Accordingly, I discussed and reflected on how interculturalism theory and intercultural education were representative of Chinese society, these Chinese teachers’ lived experiences, and my research project.

**Interculturalism Theory in the Chinese Context**

In this section, the suitability and application of interculturalism theory and intercultural education in Chinese society were examined. Based on chapters three and four, I concluded how interculturalism theory applied to the Chinese context and influenced my teacher participants’ experiences.

China is developing and adapting to the paradigms of diversity and integration, which provide a more realistic foundation for interculturalism. Furthermore, the Great Harmony concept of Confucian ideology shares many elements with interculturalism theory. Great
Harmony showcases the relationship of people from different groups and explains how different cultures can interact within a shared society (Cao, 2010; Li, 2006). The basic principles and tenets of Great Harmony are social harmony and the harmony of diversity. Chinese people are deeply influenced by Confucius, and the similarities between interculturalism and Great Harmony are further evidence of the applicability of my intercultural theoretical lens.

While the Chinese government traditionally emphasizes China’s social homogeneity, China is ethnically diverse and currently experiencing a transformation into a more diversity-focused society (Li et al., 2009). Callahan (2012) referenced how China “is increasingly becoming a site of inward immigration, by exemplifying that Wudaokou in Beijing has a Koreatown, and over 300,000 Africans live in a neighborhood in Guangzhou that the Chinese call the ‘Chocolate City’” (p. 22). International marriages between Chinese and non-Chinese people have become increasingly common. In the city limits of Shanghai’s countless multinational corporations are more than 3000 mixed-race marriages every year. These partnerships of different faiths, sexual orientations, and identities are complex and dynamic. According to the Report of Homosexuality in China (Ministry of Public Health, 2004), the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) population of China is 20 million, about 1.5% of the total population. This report is the first official document to publicly address the Chinese LGBTQ community. Accordingly, the Chinese paradigm of homogeneity is changing to one of super diversity. Interculturalism is consistent with China’s national circumstances. Jiang (2006) suggested that China’s national and institutional policies should be based upon interculturalism to move beyond mere tolerance of cultural diversity toward a more cohesive society.
Another paradigmatic aspect is the Chinese K-12 curriculum for ethnic minority
groups, developed based on the tenets of intercultural education. The intercultural
competence valued by intercultural education proposes a culturally-inclusive curriculum
influenced by gender and race theory. Pinar (2004) claimed that such a curriculum should
eliminate gender discrimination and racial disparity—including different cultural group
designations—to build a pluralistic and multicultural curriculum. Intercultural education
provides beneficial instruction for ethnic minority K-12 students in China. For example,
textbooks for students from ethnic minority groups are written in both Mandarin and their
own languages. The customs and history of Chinese ethnic minorities are taught to Han
students to develop their intercultural competence. In general, interculturalism has a positive
influence on the increasingly diverse intercultural context of China.

In 2008, Beijing hosted the 29th Summer Olympic Games. The slogan of the
Olympiad was “one world, one dream.” As epitomized by the slogan, the official agenda of
the 2008 Beijing Olympics was to promote harmony among the global human race. The
intercultural concept of Great Harmony was instrumental in the promotion of this Olympic
motto. By acknowledging that differences exist and diversity is valuable, both
interculturalism and Great Harmony consider a shared society to be ideal. The two models
respect diversity, and tend to encourage interaction and dialogue between different groups so
that a shared society can be achieved.

Harmony, the state in which everything lives and interacts in natural relationship, is a
core concept of Confucianism. One of the characteristics of harmony is that it can occur on
various levels, including harmony between societies and different cultural groups. Harmony
can also be achieved between different ethnic groups, political parties, or the same ethnic
group (Li, 2006). Simply put, harmony is universal and emphasizes resolving contradictions at every turn. Li (2008) argued that harmony is anchored in morality and can be achieved through a process of locating equilibrium.

While harmony values natural relationships and mutual interactions, it does not seek sameness. Instead, Confucius respected difference as a necessity. In the Analects (13.23), Confucius says that, “君子 the junzi (a noble person) harmonizes but does not seek sameness, whereas the petty person seeks sameness but does not harmonize.” Li (2006, 2008) maintained that Confucian harmony is not a “perfect agreement.” Usually the coexisting parties of harmony differ from one another. While in harmony there is sameness, sameness is not necessary to create harmony. On the contrary, harmony can be sustained by the interaction of different elements in creative tension. This kind of interaction generates energy, which promotes the coordination of all parties. Callahan (2012) employed the term of “harmony-with-diversity” to describe the relationship between harmony and diversity. Harmony-with-diversity refers to a united condition that accommodates diverse perspectives. Under this condition, different cultures are respected and collaborate toward shared goals. Harmony prefers favorable relationships and provides a context for different parties to interact and communicate.

Great Harmony and interculturalism theory share principles and characteristics. First, both emphasize the importance of differences and reciprocity. The dialectical discussion of sameness in Great Harmony stresses what can be achieved from difference. Second, the two ideologies are concerned with the relationships between diverse groups. Intercultural integration accommodates conflicts and tensions between different groups; Great Harmony values natural relationship and positive interaction. Each has the goal of a shared society. The
cohesive community of interculturalism theory provides the foundation of a shared society, and harmony-with-diversity envisages ideal societal conditions. Intercultural dialogue and community cohesion provide specific ways to fulfill a shared society. However, Great Harmony does not offer parallel guidelines for personal conduct and practices.

Interculturalism theory offers meaningful applications in the Chinese context. Due to the globalized super diversity of the nation, China is gradually transforming its paradigm into one of diversity (Cantel, 2012). Moreover, Confucius’ Great Harmony provides a rationale for Chinese society to incorporate an intercultural framework. *Analects* 5.7 states, “since my doctrine is making no headway, I shall get upon a raft and float out to sea” (道不行, 乘桴浮于海). Confucius initially found it hard to apply his Great Harmony and build a shared society in ancient China. In contemporary Chinese society, however, interculturalism has a systematic potential to bolster Confucius’ Great Harmony.

Interculturalism theory and its embodiment of Confucius’ Great Harmony deeply influence Chinese society and the lived experiences of my Chinese teacher participants.

**Chinese Teachers’ Intercultural Competence**

My teacher participants’ growth and Chinese educational environments set the stage for their teaching and living in the U.S. Their beliefs in cohesion, integration, and the concept of Great Harmony may have provided them with the ideology that people from different cultural groups can be integrated through intercultural dialogue. Such intercultural awareness was embodied by their behaviors and teaching practices. Largely influenced by interculturalism theory and intercultural education, these Chinese teachers focused on becoming integrated into their local U.S. contexts and communities. They learned to develop intercultural pedagogies from their American colleagues, and strengthened their interactions
and communications with students. For example, Ling and Fang Fang learned new teaching skills and techniques from local American teachers and incorporated Chinese ways of teaching into their pedagogies. These Chinese teachers demonstrated high intercultural awareness and improved their intercultural competence.

Deardorff (2006, 2009) proposed the following essential elements of intercultural competence: attitude, knowledge, skills, and desired outcomes. These elements suggested that the Chinese teachers were competent in intercultural communication and interaction. According to Deardorff, attitude is how a teacher respects and is open to different cultures; knowledge is an awareness of one’s own culture and others’ world views; skills include the ability to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and relate; desired outcomes reference the external outcome of achieving one’s goals and the internal outcome of one’s inner emotions.

Deardorff further explained intercultural competence with a Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence, in which the four essential elements of attitude, knowledge, skills, and desired outcomes were arranged into a hierarchical order. Deardorff suggested that an intercultural person should have the appropriate attitude, respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery. S/he respects different cultures and values, and accepts diverse cultures; s/he is willing to learn from other cultures and is tolerant of new things which may make her/him uncomfortable. An intercultural person also possesses abundant knowledge and skills. S/he is aware of her/his or culture, as well as other cultural norms, custom, and taboos. Sometimes this person can distinguish the potential or underlying meanings of specific discourse. S/he also has the skills to communicate with people of different cultures. Last but not least, Deardorff defined these traits as the desired outcomes of internal and external outcomes. The
desired internal outcomes refer to how one can shift or become accustomed to a different culture. For example, did s/he use the appropriate communication styles to adapt her/his behavior? Desired external outcomes reflect to what degree one can effectively achieve her/his goal based on their attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

Figure 7 Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (from Deardorff, 2006, 2009)

Deardorff’s (2006, 2009) analysis provided a solid model with which to summarize these Chinese teachers’ acquisition of intercultural competence. They first formed their self-reflective perspective and openness to diverse cultures. Such Pyramid Model attitudes are represented by the intercultural willingness I discussed in chapter six. The Chinese teachers showed great curiosity and openness to both American students and their culture. The teacher participants were sensitive to the cultural differences and showed interest in learning new skills and knowledge. In chapters four and six, I presented how they were aware of cultural differences and interaction, which illustrated the model’s knowledge and skill attributes. The
five Chinese teachers envisioned their desired outcomes and developed the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills to fulfill them. The Chinese teachers’ emotional experiences (chapter five) indicated the disparity or alignment of their reality to their desired outcomes. When they experienced frustrating or uncomfortable circumstances, they sought to change their attitudes, embraced their teacher agency, and acted. Additional instances in the research indicated how the Chinese teachers learned to improve and demonstrate their intercultural competence. They embodied the dynamic spirit of intercultural communication and cohesion, both of which originated from their Chinese education and values. In the previous chapters, I discussed how these Chinese teachers’ homelands and landscapes cultivated their values and cultural dispositions, as well as influenced their behaviors when teaching in American schools.

Despite their strong intercultural competence, all my participants confronted difficulties and dilemmas while teaching. These incidents happened when they became defensive of their Chinese cultural identities and discouraged by the challenges of cultural difference. For example, Shi Kun and Feng chose to remain conservative despite acknowledging that they should be careful about the differences between Chinese and American school cultures. Such experiences relate to interculturalism theory analysis of cultural difference. Cultural difference should be valued and legacies celebrated, while overlooking the difference of accelerated social assimilation and cultural defaults (Banks, 2013; Barrett, 2013; Cantel, 2013). However, as we addressed cultural differences and how some cultural groups were privileged, communication and mutual understanding tended to be less considered and highlighted (Cantel, 2012; Tyler, 2012). Tyler (2012) argued that people retreated into their own identities as a result of focusing on cultural differences while
ignoring interconnection. He claimed, “…too much positive recognition of cultural differences will encourage a retreat into ghettos” (p. 414). The negative experiences of my teacher participants could have occurred because they concentrated so excessively on how their Chinese culture was different from American culture. On the other hand, their experiences reflected that they were still developing their intercultural competence. Indeed, such improvement is a continuous and evolving process (Deardorff, 2009).

Furthermore, these Chinese teachers’ dilemmas had implications for their teacher education, especially teacher preparation and intercultural teaching development programs. **Improvement of Teacher Preparation and Development Program for Intercultural Teaching**

The stories of my teacher participants often referenced the limitations of their education preparation and development programs. Such programming is essential for teachers, especially in the initial stages of their teaching careers (Boyd et al, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al, 2005). This is clearly reflected in the experiences of the novice Chinese teachers in my research. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) argue that teacher effectiveness is a direct reflection of teacher preparation and development program quality. Accordingly, the Confucius Institute had a significant impact on the Chinese teachers’ initial teaching lives.

My teacher participants’ complaints and official stories suggest a lack of proper training and support in terms of intercultural knowledge and teaching skills. Specific cases in this research show that this deficiency can be multifaceted and impactful. Instead of learning the teaching skills that are used in American classrooms, Ling and Fang Fang had to develop new pedagogy based on their observations of American colleagues’ classrooms. Mei did not seek support from the Confucius Institute when she was confronted with difficulties in her
American school. These instances provide glimpses of how less supportive teacher preparation and development programs can cause pedagogical and ethical issues for intercultural teachers.

Teacher preparation and development programs also help teachers to gain intercultural competence. While enrolled in the programs, teachers have opportunities to prolong and accumulate intercultural experience during a gradual process of intercultural evolution (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009). Teacher preparation and development programs play a vital role in the cultivation of cultural understanding and the formation of cross-border relationships (Crose, 2011). Teachers can develop intercultural competence as they apply knowledge and theory acquired from these programs to their teaching practices and reflections. In general, the teacher preparation and development programs referenced in my study were strongly related to the teacher participants’ intercultural experiences. This correlation deserves further discussion and research.

**Being a Narrative Inquirer within an Intercultural Landscape**

For the past year, I have been communicating and interacting with my five teacher participants as well as sharing my own beliefs and stories as a Chinese doctoral student and an intercultural teacher. To learn about the Chinese teachers’ experiences, I conducted several formal and informal interviews with each of them. I interacted with them on social media, helped them revise their English essays, and returned to the U.S. from China with foods or products they had requested. We moved back and forth between the Chinese and American intercultural landscapes. On most occasions, we shared our experiences as Chinese acquaintances living in the U.S.
Given my long-term and intense involvement with my participants, I grew to know them quite well. I knew the stories behind their names, the places where they grew up, and their families. I was familiar with their personalities; who was more sensitive and who was always optimistic. They liked to treat me as a listener and shared with me their worries and passions. While I came to know most of them over the course of just one year (I have been friends with Fang Fang and Feng for several years), these Chinese teachers did not hide themselves from me. I felt that I built close relationships with them while learning about their lived experiences.

I believe my teacher participants grew to know me as well. They learned why I came to the U.S. to seek my Ph.D. degree and my plan after graduation. They knew I returned to China for winter and summer breaks, and they envied me for that. By sharing our stories, our lives became connected not only as Chinese teachers, but as acquaintances with similar cultural backgrounds.

As a narrative inquirer within an intercultural context, I continuously reflected on my exploration and interpretation of my participants’ lived experiences. Moreover, my narrative inquiry offered additional insights and concerns.

**Employing Narrative Inquiry as the Pedagogical Vehicle for Intercultural Teaching Practices**

Narrative research is commonly used as a research methodology to understand people’s lived experiences (Clandinin, 2014). As my research continued, I gradually noticed that narrative inquiry also has pragmatic meanings and teaching practice applications. I can analyze my Chinese teachers’ pedagogies and the corresponding educational ideas or curriculum theories at work in their teaching practices. Because I encouraged these Chinese
teachers to tell their teaching stories, they reflected upon and reexamined how to improve their intercultural teaching. I found that narrative inquiry can serve as the pedagogical vehicle to improve intercultural education.

A Chinese idiom states, “一叶知秋 (The fall of a single leaf ushers in the autumn),” meaning a small sign can indicate a great trend and a single episode offers the whole picture. I believe the idiom interprets the essence of narrative inquiry. By focusing on a person’s lived experiences, one can recognize the diverging perspectives and link the experiences to a broader context. In other words, narrative inquiry connects a person’s lived experiences in time, place, and relationship to others. These stories reflect the applications of pedagogy and curriculum in their teaching practices. The Chinese teachers’ intercultural teaching experiences in China and the U.S. feature their feedback and comments on specific educational ideas or curriculum theories. For instance, Shi Kun discussed how her Chinese and American students understood ESL theory from different perspectives, which she thinks it has not yet been fully researched in the ESL field. Ling and Mei commented on the similar classroom management and teaching skills of the two countries. Their narratives convey instructional meanings for the pedagogy and curriculum of intercultural education.

Ding (2008) employed the Marxist concept of “praxis” to emphasize how educational narrative inquiry can inform teaching pedagogy and curriculum. Ding further argued that educational narrative inquiry should be action-based and instructive for teaching practices. Educational narrative inquiry can, to a certain extent, effectively solve the long-standing problem between curriculum theory and teaching practices. Educational theory used to be the concern of educational researchers, and teachers simply worked as the practitioners of the theories developed by the experts (Sun & Chen, 2009). Narrative inquiry, on the other hand,
offers a two-way educational research methodology with pragmatic value in pedagogy and a curriculum that connects researchers and teachers as crucial education stakeholders.

Accordingly, narrative inquiry can further benefit the improvement of individual teaching practices. Zhang and Zhang (2012) articulated that teachers can employ educational narrative inquiry as their own action research and become both the narrator and researcher. After all, the narratives are related to the teachers’ educational experiences and challenges. This articulation of my research embodies how my teacher participants reflected on their teaching and developed a new awareness of their pedagogical choices. By focusing on how to solve the problems of teaching and apply research findings into practice, these researcher-teachers processed their attitudes and therefore developed valuable knowledge and skills.

Each unique narrative study features specific conditions and relationships, times, and places which are interpreted as the concepts of interaction, continuity, and place according to Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) conceptualization of three-dimensional narrative spaces. In this sense, the five Chinese teachers’ past experiences, present life circumstances, plans, and relationships are interconnected. These interconnections highlighted the pedagogy and curriculum of the narratives, therefore improving their teaching practices.

**The Value of Lived Experiences Constructed within an Intercultural Context**

Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) and Hendry (2009) articulated that narrative inquirers usually adopt an interpretivist perspective rather than a positivist one, which means that their inquiry is less about predicting or generalizing behaviors and more about interpreting intention and meaning in context. However, the lived experiences of my teacher participants, which are constructed in intercultural contexts, have a generalization value that is enlightening for pre-service intercultural teachers. Recalling my participants’ reflections
on pedagogy, curriculum, and cultural differences, I found that their teaching and lived experiences in the U.S. offer valuable insights to present and future intercultural teachers.

The epistemology of narrative inquiry has roots in constructionism and interpretivism, both of which understand reality as perceived, constructed, and interpreted. Many scholars of social science understand constructionist epistemology as that which we can never know even if we have accurately depicted that reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Accordingly, narrative inquirers argue that narratives and experiences are socially-constructed and understood. While narratives and experiences are personal, they are thoroughly shaped by socio-cultural conventions (Hendry, 2009; Spector-Mersel, 2010). This theoretical basis reveals that people who abide by similar socio-cultural conventions can share feelings and learn from each other’s experiences. In the very act of storytelling, people engage in constructing certain kinds of experiences while interacting with other people. I observed that my participants’ emotions were shared and often resonated with each other. For example, when Mei told me how s/he felt depressed because of an incident, my retelling of Ling’s feelings when faced with a similar incident brought comfort and made Mei feel less anxious. By the end of these interviews, my participants’ expressed hope that their intercultural experiences and feedback would be helpful for pre-service teachers.

This narrative paradigm suggests that we shape and interpret reality through stories. Narrative inquiry values experience as “the stories people live. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415). While people live different lives, sharing these stories and emotions can be generalized and valuable. In summary, focusing on these Chinese teachers’ ongoing stories and lived experiences provides references for other readers.
Teacher Identity as a Negotiated Unity

Teacher identity determines teacher success and effectiveness in different societies. Welmond (2002) introduced a three-step framework for researching teacher identity. The process includes a specific configuration of cultural schemata, an understanding of teachers’ local context and landscape, and an examination of the local education objectives and their influence on teachers. Based on the narrative inquiry process and my data analysis, I found that the Chinese teachers often negotiated and attempted to integrate multiple identities.

Furthermore, for teachers who are teaching and living in the intercultural context, the centripetal force of their home cultures requires more research consideration. These Chinese intercultural teachers were inclined to rely upon the dispositions they formed in Chinese cultures to deal with the dilemmas and problems they encountered in the U.S.

Moreover, I found that academic research on teacher professional identity is limited in China. I searched the keys words “教师专业身份 (teacher professional identity)” on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the largest academic database in China, and received about 3400 results, most of which were theoretical reviews rather than research-based studies. This lack of studies on teacher professional identity represents the need for additional studies like mine.

The Cultural Roots of Teacher Professional Identity

My research shows that while these Chinese teachers’ identities are fluid and evolving, their identity strongly adheres to these teachers’ cultural roots in Chinese society. Born and educated in mainland China, my five teacher participants developed cultural habits and preferences ingrained in their personality. During many of their stories, they first identified themselves as Chinese and then as Chinese teachers. They performed common
“Chinese ways” while teaching and living in American society. Ling’s stories of using Chinese painting to teach American students and Feng’s conservative approach to interacting with students exemplify such Chinese behaviors. In conclusion, Chinese teacher professional identity often strictly adheres to its cultural roots.

Erickson (1968) also placed cultural identity at the core of individual identity development. Erickson argued that at the core of one’s cultural identity is his or her ‘‘common culture’’ (p. 24), which refers to one’s family values and the social norms of one’s homeland. In chapter 4, I discussed Shi Kun’s childhood in a walled university town. Her life there contributed to the development of her independence and sense of isolation. The culture of the schools Shi Kun attended, the people she interacted with, and her ways of life impacted her identity formation. Shi Kun later developed her identity as an intercultural teacher; however, her Chinese cultural identity remained. Feng inherited the Wenzhou tradition of professional adventures and travel.

As a doctoral student and Chinese teacher, I tend to rely on the knowledge and experience developed in my early adulthood to solve the problems I encounter in the U.S. While I have participated in American society for years and developed a new identity as an intercultural person, the worldview and values I hold are still etched with my Chinese cultural dispositions. Even in this dissertation I have employed many Chinese idioms or customs to express myself. This tendency indicates the connection of my teacher identity to my experience of Chinese culture.

From the postmodernist and constructionist perspectives, identity is no longer regarded as an overarching and unified entity. Instead, it is fragmented for people who live in various environments (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009); that being
said, identity is still concerned with the recognition of cultural identity. This anxiety can easily be tracked in the experiences of many migrants, diasporas, or immigrants. Chinese culture has a strong centripetal force, and many Chinese people living in other societies or overseas experience the struggles between their cultural identity and other identities. During the 1980s, root-seeking literature became widespread among Chinese intellectuals and researchers. Root-seeking literature, as the name indicates, expressed the willingness of reexamining the homeland and seeking out the uncovered identity (Ji, 2014). These root seekers encountered identity dilemmas which originated from the negotiation of multiple, continuous, and socialized identities. Accordingly, these Chinese teachers aspired to identify their cultural roots and describe their homelands. This root-seeking literature echoed the identity development these Chinese teachers experienced. As these teachers lived and taught in a different culture, they were more likely to reflect on their reconciliation of multiple identities. Although teacher identity results in a self that is decentralized into a multiplicity of social and situated contexts, a core identity remains and adheres to one’s cultural roots. As referenced earlier in this chapter, the Great Harmony and other interculturalism-oriented ideologies of Chinese culture set a conceptual stage for the Chinese teachers’ choice to teach abroad, learn new skills, and integrate themselves into their local contexts. It is the adhesion to their cultural roots that assists the formation of the intercultural identity (Kim, 2008). Kim (2008) defines intercultural identity as “an open-ended, adaptive and transformative self–other orientation” (p. 364) which attaches to one’s cultural identity and emerges from intercultural experiences. Since the Chinese teachers have presented strong cultural dispositions in which interculturalism has taken root, they become more adaptive and flexible within their intercultural contexts.
Multiplicity of Identities: Teaching as Insiders and Outsiders in the U.S.

Through many interviews and interactions with my teacher participants, I found that their teaching experiences in the U.S. presented the characteristic of multiple identities. In other words, they have negotiated their roles as both insiders and outsiders. When discussing culture, they defined themselves as outsider international aliens confronted with cultural shocks and difficulties. During their entire teaching experience, however, they intended to integrate into the local culture as insiders. They were seen as insiders and expected to be teaching professionals. At times they were treated as outsiders by students, teachers, and administrators. When it came to relationships with students, they were Chinese teacher outsiders as well as teacher insiders. In general, my teacher participants constantly jockeyed between the roles of insider and outsider, and this process was influenced by their personal dispositions and teaching contexts.

The multiplicity of teacher identity includes two layers. Teacher professional identity is one perspective of a teacher’s identity (Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010; Gu, 2007). Teacher professional identity is also comprised of multiple sub-identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Teacher identity corresponds to the insider-outsider trends of my analysis. For many situations, these Chinese teachers stepped out of their professional identity and experienced other aspects of a teacher’s identity. For example, Shi Kun is a doctoral student who has a heavy academic workload outside of her teaching. These Chinese teachers are also daughters and sons who left home and settled in another country. Besides a professional identity, these teachers also developed other personal identities. Their multiple sub-identities were formed based on their willingness to immerse themselves into the local context. According to my data analysis, while my teacher
participants defined themselves as Chinese language teachers, they were more so passionate about becoming members of the school community and friends of their American colleagues. They participated in local activities to bridge their intercultural experiences and identities.

In my opinion, their outsider roles signified an awareness of cultural difference and isolation. At the same time, they tried to become familiar with the local cultures and build relationships with their students and colleagues. Therefore, these Chinese teachers tried to attain to the role of insiders.

This multiplicity of identities as insiders and outsiders is relevant to these Chinese teachers’ dispositions and contexts. Reid (2017) argued that first-year teachers have more opportunities to explore their identities and determine the ways they will interact with students. After the first year, however, teachers are more likely to comply with the political and societal factors that deeply influence their teaching experiences. The different positions indicate the various perspectives these Chinese teachers employed when teaching within their intercultural contexts. As they became more integrated into the local context, the Chinese teachers were forced to change and develop new identities. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) claimed that unity and multiplicity, continuity and discontinuity, and individuality and sociality provide conclusive binaries of the essence of teacher identity as a negotiated unit.

Rethinking Intercultural Education in a Flat World

Friedman (2005) demonstrated that the world has become increasingly flat as globalization has changed various aspects of people’s daily lives, work, and communication. Economic connectivity and cultural interaction have transitioned current society into a much more diverse world (Cantel, 2012, 2013). Policies are made to strengthen international trade, migrant workers and outbound tourists are increasing, and instant messaging technology
makes long-distance, face-to-face meetings possible. A result of globalization and the increasingly flat world is the exchange of knowledge and values. Under this context, people experience identity changes and they no longer belong to a fixed cultural group. Interculturalism and intercultural education provide a paradigm for people to rethink how to live together in diversity (Antonsich, 2015; Barrett, 2013).

The lived experiences of the Chinese teachers in my research respond to the question of living with diversity in a flat world. These Chinese teachers are practitioners of intercultural education and disseminators of interculturalism. They teach Chinese language and culture in the American society. They believe in the tenets of integration and cohesion that are fundamental to both interculturalism and the Great Harmony. In this research, I discussed many aspects of how they create intercultural dialogue with their American students and colleagues. Their intercultural teaching practices and lived experiences are enlightening, and invited me to rethink the intercultural education of the flat world.

First, difference and integration are not mutually exclusive within intercultural education. It is inevitable that difference can cause tension and conflict. As economic connection, technological development, and inter-continental migration continue to accelerate this flat world, people will finally learn to value differences. Interculturalism theory explores how diverse and different people can interact and communicate so that they co-create a shared society (Barrett, 2013; Modood & Meer, 2012). For example, in my research I discussed that due to cultural adhesion, the Chinese teachers were uncomfortable with cultural differences. Even so, they intended to learn how the local teachers communicated with American students. This was the negotiation process of harmonizing difference and integration, and intercultural education promotes this harmonization.
Difference is an undeniable truth of interculturalism, and the task of intercultural education is to help students learn how to utilize difference to build a shared world.

Accordingly, the foci of intercultural education are to develop people’s intercultural awareness and to cultivate their intercultural competence. Many intercultural educators formulate specific models or pedagogy to convey the priorities of intercultural education. Examples include Deardorff’s (2006, 2009) Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence, Portera’s (2008) intercultural pedagogy of identity, culture, and otherness, and MacPherson’s (2010) intercultural teaching competence of teachers’ attitudes, cultural responsiveness, curriculum, instruction, intercultural communication, and critical orientation.

Secondly, intercultural education guides the formation of multiple identities. Kim’s (2008) articulation of intercultural identity addresses that a new identity can be formed due to the interaction and inter-communication between different cultures. When negotiating a personal identity and other identities, intercultural education can provide instructions and help people by fostering their attitudes and skills.

Intercultural education develops the attitudes that strengthen cultural identity and negotiate multiple identities. The concept of intercultural willingness (Logan, Steel & Hunt, 2017; Roach and Olaniran, 2001) I described in chapter five presents how being tolerant and curious helped the Chinese teachers approach the dilemmas of identity negotiation. At the core of intercultural education is the development of the attitudes and skills with which to approach identity conflicts; on the other hand, intercultural education provides effective and practical skills regarding communication and interaction with people from different cultural groups. In this research, the Chinese teachers employed these methods to build an
intercultural dialogue and intercultural competence. Moreover, suggestions for teacher preparation and development program have been discussed.

Finally, intercultural education should not only be implemented between different countries, but should also be promoted within a society. Shi Kun mentioned how she felt it was difficult to interact with her students in a teacher-training program in China. While language was not a barrier, Shi Kun and her Chinese students still had communication problems. I mention this vignette because most research on intercultural education mainly focuses on study or teaching abroad activities. There is no doubt that these activities have grown to become a trend of globalization. The issues of intercultural education in this flat world, however, are increasingly related to people from different cultural groups within a shared society (Cantel, 2012). Accordingly, as Portera (2008) elaborated, “… the prefix ‘inter’ describes the relationship, the interaction, the exchange between two or more persons” (p. 486), and intercultural education is for people of all cultures.

**Beyond Stories: Insights and Explorations**

I have presented the narratives and stories of my five teacher participants, but they are more than just stories. The stories are the lived experiences of these Chinese teachers’ educational and career trajectories in China and the U.S.: how they conducted teaching practices in another culture, how they integrated into American society, and how they negotiated multiple and evolving identities. Their lived experiences were continuous, context-based, and related to the people around them. For a narrative inquirer like me, these stories are not static cases to be researched, but lived experiences to be understood and explored. The exploration of their lived experiences will never end. I believe that is the truth
of narrative inquiry that motivates every inquirer to continue reflecting and interpreting what s/he has understood.

This research offers many insights. First, my teacher participants’ behaviors and intercultural experiences align with the tenets or principles of interculturalism theory. Many tenets of the theory can be identified in Chinese culture and social values. For example, Ling and Fang Fang developed new pedagogies and teaching skills with the combination of Chinese and American ways to better integrate their American students’ experiences with the curriculum; or Mei attempted to participate and get involved into the local community activities. All their attitudes and practices present their high inclination to the concepts of integration and cohesion in interculturalism. However, there still exists the problem that my Chinese teacher participants retreat to their safe zone, or show unwillingness to communicate and interact. From these gaps, I argue for the necessity of improving their intercultural competence, as well as the need for more intercultural teachers. Second, narrative inquiry functions not only as an educational research methodology to help understand and interpret their lived experiences, but also as a tool to improve these intercultural teachers’ teaching practices and pedagogy. Finally, while teacher identity is fluid and dynamic, it closely adheres to one’s cultural roots and the landscape in which s/he is educated. This adhesion indicates the continuity of teacher identity.

For someone who is interested in or planning a program for intercultural teachers, my key recommendations include highlighting the intercultural teacher preparation and development programs, valuing their own cultures and lived experiences, and promoting narrative inquiry as an action-oriented method to reflect on teaching practices and pedagogy. Real intercultural teaching cases can be brought to the program to allow teachers to
experience the related issues. Support should be provided to all teachers, even those who have completed the program or taught interculturally. Teachers’ lived experiences should be prioritized when analyzing their identity development. In-service or pre-service teachers should also learn narrative inquiry and use it as an action research during their teaching.

My dissertation research has reached its conclusion, and I am now experiencing the narrative inquirer’s retreat from their qualitative research participants (Patton, 2014). I will keep touch with them and maintain these friendships. Recently, I contacted my participants and asked how their lives were. They still experienced both dilemmas and happiness, and were all engaged in intercultural education. Shi Kun was admitted to a post-doctoral program. She still worked as the Chinese teacher of immigrant children and a college-level ESL instructor. Last week, she posted a picture of her new students on WeChat and wrote that “This year I have all lovely little girls in my class. My heart is melting… I’m looking forward to this new life!”
Ling returned to Shanghai and worked as a college lecturer. She taught art classes to both Chinese undergraduates and international students. I often saw her posts of new paintings and artistic passion. Ling planned to pursue a Ph.D. so that she could become a tenured faculty member of her university.

Mei was on a holiday when I called her last month. She travelled to Florida and enjoyed the sunshine and beaches there. Mei said she plans to work for two more years as a
Chinese teacher in the U.S. She still considers intercultural teaching as her first professional option and believes it enriches her life.

Feng entered a doctoral program in a university located in the southwest and switched to a sociology major. He thought sociology could provide a new perspective on education. This is his first semester as a Ph.D. student in an American research-based university. He struggled with the overwhelming workload like I did during my first year. We discussed the concerns and pressures for an international doctoral student. When I asked about his plan after graduation, he mentioned that he still plans to become a university faculty member.

Fang Fang worked as a volunteer teacher of Chinese language in a community school. She agreed that this internship would help her to learn more about the local community and secure a job there. She told me she had students of different ages, including grandmothers and second graders. I could tell how proud she was of her teaching.

All my participants have promising lives and are pursuing their teaching passions. Our life trajectories are deeply influenced by our intercultural teaching and lived experiences. I have been in the U.S. for more than three years, and this experience has changed many of my beliefs about my culture and life. I can now stand at a different angle and reexamine myself and the occurrences of my everyday life as valuable treasures. The lived experiences of my teacher participants are far more than stories. They are attitudes, emotions, times, spaces, and interactions. They are endless. In conclusion, the purpose of this research is not to inform readers of these Chinese teachers’ lived experiences, but rather to invite readers to think and reflect. Inquiry is never-ending and there is always more to explore.
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APPENDIX A. INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewer:  __________  Data Record Number:  
Interview Date:  __________  Participant Location:

Interview Time Length:

1. Please tell me something about yourself.
   请介绍一下你自己。

2. Can you tell me something that have made you want to live in the U.S.?
   可以告诉我什么原因让你来到美国吗？

3. What was your expectation to the life here before coming to the U.S.?
   来美国之前您对于这里的生活有什么预想？

4. How does that expectation align with the reality?
   这种预想跟现实有差距吗？

5. Can you tell me something you think it unforgettable in your life here?
   可以告诉我一些您在这的难忘经历吗？

6. What do you think teaching here?
   你对于在这里教学怎么看？

7. What are the challenges you have had in teaching?
   在教学中，您遇到过哪些挑战？

8. How have you coped with those challenges?
   您怎么应对这些挑战？

9. What have made you choose to stay or leave here?
   什么使您决定留在或者离开这？
10. What is your plan in the future regarding with your life and career?

关于未来的生活和事业，您有什么打算？
APPENDIX B. FOLLOWING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewer: ____________ Data Record Number: 

Interview Date: ____________ Participant Location: 

Interview Time Length: 

1. Can you describe one of the classes you have taught in China and in the U.S.?

   您能讲讲一下您在中国和美国教过的一堂课吗？

2. In the first interview you talked about your dilemmas of teaching and living in the U.S., can you tell me more specific experiences related to those dilemmas?

   在第一次的访谈中，您说过一些您关于在美国生活和教学的难题活着困境，您能再说一些具体的相关经历吗？

3. After recalling your experiences teaching in China and in the U.S., can you tell me any reflections or new thoughts?

   在回想在中国和美国的经历后，您能跟我说说您有什么反思或者新的想法吗？

4. Questions based on the initial interview (different for each participant).