Increasing the Number of African American Students in Undergraduate Level Classes of Chinese: A Call to Action

Huiwen Li

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INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL CLASSES OF CHINESE: A CALL TO ACTION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Huiwen Li

May 2016
INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN
UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL CLASSES OF CHINESE: A CALL TO ACTION

By

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ABSTRACT

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL CLASSES OF CHINESE: A CALL TO ACTION

By

Huiwen Li

May 2016

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Connie Moss

Chinese language is the only ideographic language remaining in the world (Osaka, 1976). It conveys affluent Chinese culture and has great influences on the East Asian countries (Miyake, 2013). In the economic globalization of the world, China’s economy and international influence are expanding. For these reasons and many more the Chinese language is widely accepted as one of the major world languages. It makes sense then Chinese language classes are experiencing popularity and growth with United States undergraduates. Despite this growth, however, the enrollment of African American students is constantly low in college Chinese language classrooms (Li, Wen, & Xie, 2014). This call to action argues that this low representation of African American students lies on a course promotion system that denies African American students a preliminary learning opportunity that systematically limits their representation in Chinese language classrooms from the beginning.
This call for action examines systematic avenues for creating early opportunities. First the study explores the utility of offering African American students an informational workshop introducing the features of the language and the potential benefits of learning it. Next the study examines the leverage that could be gained by providing direct feedback and assessing student interest to explore whether students are more inclined to enroll in Chinese language courses following the information workshop. Such a process could lead to suggested policy changes that might close the enrollment gap between the African American students and their peers. This call for action considers the reality that even a well-designed action plan may not always produce positive consequences. Therefore, an impact evaluation is explored along with suggested instruments and uses. Finally, possible outcomes of an impact evaluation are described.

To ground this call for action, a set of foundational theories are employed that mainly include networked improvement communities, leadership and teamwork, and critical theories. The call for action strongly suggests the iterative cycle of Plan, Design, Study, and Act (PDSA) of the NIC improvement science (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011) in the change process beginning with the examination of a local four-year university Chinese Studies Program.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, my wife, and my daughter, who have been accompanying and supporting me through good and bad times.
I would like to thank first my Committee Chair Dr. Connie Moss, who helped me overcome so a lot of difficulties and inspire my self-confidence and potential. I will never forget that there were so many times that I had lost heart. With Dr. Moss’s continuous encouragement, countless guidance, and strong support, this work has been completed successfully.

I also want to thank my committee members Dr. Gibbs Kanyongo and Dr. Yueming Yu. What I have learned from you covers not only the techniques of dissertation writing, but also the fundamental and practical way to address the educational issues as an educational practitioner with strong leadership. This has helped this dissertation study to be well-situated, clearly-focused, carefully designed, and social justice issue well-considered.

Special thanks to my family and my best friends, Mrs. Eva George and Mr. Jeff George, who have been accompanying and supporting me. Your unchanged love is my corner stone. Without you I would never have finished this work.

Last but not least, I would thank Dr. McCown, Dr. Generett, Dr. Dostillio, and other professors. You have given me strong and critical support in so many ways. The completion of my dissertation and the four year study would never have been possible without any of you. Your encouragement and help will stay in my brain forever.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| ABSTRACT | ........................................................................................................... iv |
| DEDICATION | ........................................................................................................... vi |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | ........................................................................................................... vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ........................................................................................................... x |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION | ........................................................................................................... 1 |
| 1.1 General Overview | ........................................................................................................... 1 |
| 1.2 Problem of Practice | ........................................................................................................... 3 |
| 1.3 What to Do in the Local Context | ........................................................................................................... 4 |
| 1.4 Roadmap of This Dissertation Study | ........................................................................................................... 5 |
| CHAPTER 2 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE | ........................................................................................................... 7 |
| 2.1 Introduction of the Chinese language | ........................................................................................................... 7 |
| 2.2 The Chinese language as a bridge and vehicle to Chinese culture | ........................................................................................................... 13 |
| 2.3 Chinese as a Top Influential Language | ........................................................................................................... 15 |
| 2.4 Importance of the Chinese Language in the Globalization Era | ........................................................................................................... 16 |
| 2.4.1 Globalization | ........................................................................................................... 16 |
| 2.4.2 Globalization and the Importance of Foreign Language Education | ........................................................................................................... 17 |
| 2.4.3 China as a New Global Power | ........................................................................................................... 20 |
| 2.4.4 Importance of China and Chinese Language Education for the U.S | ........................................................................................................... 21 |
| 2.5 Importance for African American Students to Study Chinese | ........................................................................................................... 25 |
| 2.5.1 For Black-White Economic Gap Closing | ........................................................................................................... 25 |
| 2.5.2 For Employee Competitiveness | ........................................................................................................... 29 |
| 2.6 The Current Context of This Study | ........................................................................................................... 30 |
| 2.7 Implications of the Problem of Practice | ........................................................................................................... 34 |
| 2.8 What Is the Problem | ........................................................................................................... 36 |
| 2.9 Consequences or Improvement | ........................................................................................................... 39 |
| CHAPTER 3 DESIGN FOR ACTION | ........................................................................................................... 41 |
| 3.1 Overview | ........................................................................................................... 41 |
| 3.2 Theoretical Foundations for Systematic Changes | ........................................................................................................... 42 |
| 3.2.1 The Six Core Principles of Improvement | ........................................................................................................... 43 |
| 3.2.2 PDSA Cycles and Five Research Stages | ........................................................................................................... 44 |
| 3.3 Team Building | ........................................................................................................... 45 |
| 3.3.1 Overview | ........................................................................................................... 45 |
| 3.3.2 Membership and Roles of Team Members | ........................................................................................................... 46 |
| 3.4 Intervenational Workshop | ........................................................................................................... 48 |
| 3.4.1 Research Questions | ........................................................................................................... 48 |
| 3.4.2 Hypotheses | ........................................................................................................... 49 |
| 3.4.3 Survey Questionnaire | ........................................................................................................... 49 |
| 3.4.4 Participants and Sampling | ........................................................................................................... 51 |
| 3.4.5 Workshop | ........................................................................................................... 53 |
| 3.4.6 Confidentiality of Responses | ........................................................................................................... 54 |
| 3.5 Data Analysis | ........................................................................................................... 54 |
| 3.6 Result and Conclusion | ........................................................................................................... 57 |
3.7 Policy and System Changes.................................................................58
  3.7.1 Policy Change ........................................................................58
  3.7.2 Chinese Language Promotional Program Initiative ....................59
CHAPTER 4 GENERATIVE IMPACT EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION........61
  4.1 Theoretical Framework.............................................................61
  4.2 Suggestions on Generative Impact Evaluation.................................62
    4.2.1 Causal Relationship and Suggestion of Counterfactual Analysis........62
    4.2.2 Generative Impact and Suggestion of Involvement of People ............63
    4.2.3 General Principles and Methodology Adoption.............................63
  4.3 Discussion................................................................................65
  4.4 Limitations................................................................................66
References ..........................................................................................68
Appendix A: Feedback Questionnaire on the Workshop ...........................87
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>US college enrollments in Chinese language courses, 1980-2013</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sample of Chinese pictographic characters</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two Neolithic earthenware vessels unearthed in China</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Average family wealth disparities among the biggest three races, 1983-2010</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Income disparities among the biggest races, 1968-2012</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Median annual earnings of full-time year-round workers ages 25-34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Number of AP Chinese test takers, 2007-2014</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Five stages of design for action to increase African American students’ enrollment in Chinese classes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Overview

The Chinese language is a largely used world language (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014). It has the biggest number of first language (L1) speakers in the world and also a large number of second language (L2) users (Ethnologue, 2010). With the economic development of China and the globalization, China has become the second largest economy in the world (The World Bank, 2015), and the Chinese language is regarded as a core world language among others that need learning (Gomes de Motos, 2011).

The Chinese language is also one of the fastest growing languages in higher education in the United States. According to Modern Languages Association (MLA), the world’s largest scholarly association of modern language teaching and research, the growth rates of undergraduate-level Chinese language class enrollments between 2002-2006 and 2006-2009 were 51.0% and 18.3% respectively—both well above the average growth rates of all non-English languages (12.9% and 6.6%) (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010). The MLA report also notes that in 1980 there were only around 11,300 college students taking Chinese language courses, but in 2013 the enrollment number increased to 61,055 (see Figure 1 for the enrollment growth) (Goldberg, Looney, & Lusin, 2015). This rapid development of the Chinese language education reflects the increasing popularity and the desire for Chinese language learning in US higher education.

Even though the increased enrollment in Chinese language classes has been cherished, evidence shows that the enrollment of undergraduate African American students in the Chinese language classes is disproportionally low in comparison with that of other major ethnic groups at
ABC University\textsuperscript{1}, the primary institution explored in this study. The ABC University is an urban, northeastern research university. In its Department of Modern Languages are eight undergraduate level language programs, including a Chinese Studies Program that was established in the early 1990’s. Through the two decades of its development, the Chinese Studies program became one of the biggest in the Department of Modern Languages. The average semester enrollment in Chinese classes between 2005 and 2010 was about 340 students, an enrollment number that was much larger than that in other language classes such as German, French, and Spanish.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{enrollments.png}
\caption{US college enrollments in Chinese language courses, 1980-2013. Adapted from Enrollments in languages other than English in United States institutions of higher education, Fall 2013, by D. Goldberg, D. Looney, and N. Lusin, 2015, Modern Language Association.}
\end{figure}

However, in the Chinese language classes, the enrollment of African American students was found to be extremely low. During the most recent five-year period, African American students represented only 0.5\% of the total students enrolled in Chinese language classes on

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} ABC University is a pseudonym.}
average — much lower than students who were Asian, White, or Latino. Compared with the percentage of African American students enrolled at ABC University, 5.6%, the percentage of African American students taking Chinese language classes is extremely low. It is clear that African American students are disproportionally represented in number in the ABC University Chinese language classes when compared with other major ethnic groups of students.

### 1.2 Problem of Practice

This underrepresentation of African American students learning the Chinese language is not an isolated issue. The study by Li, Wen, and Xie (2014) indicates that, in North America, the enrollment of undergraduate African American students in Chinese language classes is disproportionally low in comparison with that of other major ethnic groups. Thus, the problem of practice explored in this study is defined as the underrepresentation of African American students in Chinese language classes.

Preliminary examinations of the policies and course offering system at ABC University identified some critical issues. It was found that there was no specific policy or program that advocated for social equity in foreign language education or policies that encouraged more enrollments of African American students in the local university. Clearly, the opportunity of Chinese language learning is not equally available to this group of students, like any other learning opportunities that belong to the dominant ethnicities “by default”.

The well-known achievement gap between African American students and the Whites is regarded as a learning opportunity gap, as an example. According to the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015), Black students’ achievement scores have remained significantly lower than their white peers across grades over the past decades. Numerous studies show that the No Child Left
Behind (NCLB) Act failed to close the gap (Hursh, 2007). Educators (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Silva, Huguley, Kakli, & Rao, 2007; Welner & Carter, 2013) argue that the African American students are not given equal learning opportunities. In other words, these students lack of the access to quality schools and the resources such as early childhood education, highly prepared and effective teachers, college preparatory curricula, and equitable instructional resources that are needed for academic success (National Opportunity to Learn Campaign, 2011).

In foreign language education, the opportunity gap between the minority and the majority highlights the condition of social exclusion. Silver (2007) defined social exclusion as “a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live” (p. 15). The social exclusion conflicts with equality of opportunity often in that it leads to unequal educational, occupational and political opportunities (Agulnik, 2002; Brownlee, 2013). Arguably, low African American enrollment in foreign languages can be traced to social exclusion, another crucial reason to take steps to fight against it.

1.3 What to Do in the Local Context

What are the underlying causes of this problem? Is there any reason behind it? If there is a reason, is there a systematic way to deal with the issue? With these concerns, this study first intends to explore the critical factors that account for the African American students’ low enrollment in Chinese language courses. And then, based on the outcomes of those explorations, the study proposes a set of strategies to cope with the issue in a systematic way.

The literature review of this study uncovered a very small number of articles with a focus on African American students and their foreign language learning. And only a few of those
already scarce studies touch on Chinese as a foreign language. The reason that, historically, studies of foreign language learning have focused mainly on white learners and whiteness (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Speiller, 1988). The purpose of this call to action, supported by the literature review, is mainly to explore the critical reasons for of the underrepresentation of African American students enrolled in Chinese language courses, to begin identifying designs for action and to provide support for similar endeavors on advancing Chinese language education more broadly throughout the United States in the future.

1.4 Roadmap of This Dissertation Study

This present chapter provides a brief introduction to the problem of practice by examining the status quo, and the crucial need to address it. Chapter 2 examines the contributing factors including what they are, how the problem is framed, and the consequences and impact of the lack of action. To frame the problem of practice, this chapter both reviews the literature and employs relevant theories. A claim is then made that the contributing factors may rest with an opportunity gap—current higher education practices do not offer an equal opportunity of Chinese language learning to African American students comparing to their white peers. Then, Chapter 2 continues to argue that if this problem is not addressed systematically and successfully, African American students will remain underrepresented in Chinese language education, which will deprive them of the benefits of learning Chinese language.

Chapter 3 discusses the design for action. Theories used to develop the design are introduced including Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011), Teamwork and Leadership theories (Tuckman, 1965; Smith, 2005), and Critical Theories (Banks, 1991; Giroux, 1983; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Pinar, 1991). Rooted in these theories, the design for action consists of a set of teambuilding initiatives: a presentation with an aim of
informing and recruiting prospective students, and a series of meetings for team building, working agenda development, African American student recruitment strategies and activity design, and research methodology determination.

Then, still in this chapter, the study introduces the interventional workshop and the feedback questionnaire aimed to provide African American students with an early learning opportunity to learn more about the Chinese language, Chinese language course offered, and the potential benefits of learning the Chinese language. Firstly, articulated are the workshop purpose, presentations on the language, relevant courses, and the merits, and guided training on course registration. The feedback questionnaire to be given at the end of the workshop is to test if this interventional program increases the likelihood that the students will enroll in Chinese language courses in the future. Details of the questionnaire are given next including the question items developed, the question formats, the rationale of each of the questions, and methods of data analyses. The procedure introduced then covers the sampling, data collection and management, and result report.

For the researchers to assess the expected and the unexpected consequences, there is a need to launch an impact evaluation on social programs. Chapter 4 focuses on the assessment of the impact that this interventional program might produce on the local program system. Methodology is discussed and a long-term research and development agenda is also explored. Also included in this chapter are the limitations of the design and suggestions made accordingly.
CHAPTER 2
PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The Chinese language is a time-honored language with affluent cultural values and profound historical influence in the world. With the rapid economic growth of China and the globalization of the world economy during the recent decades, the importance of the Chinese language has been recognized worldwide.

2.1 Introduction of the Chinese language

The languages of the world can be divided into a number of families based on their linguistic relationship. According to Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014), there are six major language families with a total of 7,106 living languages currently in the world. These six language families are Afro-Asiatic, Austronesian, Indo-European, Niger-Congo, Sino-Tibetan, and Trans-New Guinea. The Chinese language is one branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. In terms of the size of first-language speaker populations, Chinese ranks first among all the world languages, making it almost three times as big as the Spanish speaking population, which ranks second in first-language speaker populations (Ethnologue, 2010). To better understand the language spoken by the largest world population, it is crucial to understand the special features of the Chinese language.

Tonal Language in pronunciation

As a unique language, Chinese is quite different from many other world languages in both pronunciation and writing systems. The first special feature of the Chinese language is “its suprasegmental phonemes: the tones” (DeFrancis, 1986, p. 45). In the Chinese phonetic system, there are four basic tones: ˉ, ’, ˇ, and ˋ, and a neutral tone (i.e., toneless). The tone is written on the vowel of each syllable. Except for the homophones and homographs, different tones specify different characters. For example, to mean “teacher”, the
Chinese language uses the word 老师. In standard Chinese, this word is pronounced lăoshī — the third tone, ˇ, for lao 老, and the first tone, ˉ, for shì 師. With different tones, same syllables will mean different things. lăoshí and lăoshī, for example, mean “honest/honesty” and “to tire troops”, respectively. Therefore, correct tonal pronunciation is essential for Chinese language understanding (Surendran & Levow, 2004; Tsai, 2011).

Because of the tones, the Chinese language shares some commonalities with music, which makes speaking this language like singing. Research indicates that Chinese language ability is positively associated with music capability such as perfect pitch identification (Deutsch, 1999; Muir, 2009), pitch glide perception (Gottfried, Staby, & Riester, 2000), and perfect pitch in enunciating words (Deutsch, Henthorn, & Dolson, 2004). Researchers (Deutsch et al., 2006) suggest that potential for acquiring absolute pitch may be universal, and learning tonal languages early could help realize the potential.

Knowing the tones well does not guarantee understanding for all spoken Chinese. In the Chinese language family, there are eight major dialects. These dialects can be wildly different from one another, so some dialect speakers may not be able to understand what other dialect speakers say (DeFrancis, 1986; Ramsey, 1987). To help with communications between different dialects speakers, the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC, full name for Mainland China or China in this study) began to promote Mandarin Chinese both nationally and then internationally beginning in the 1950’s (e.g., Guo, 2004). In Mainland China, the standard form of the Chinese language is called Pǔtōnghuà referring to the official norm developed on the basis of the Beijing dialect (DeFrancis, 1986). Through decades of efforts, Pǔtōnghuà has been commonly accepted and used nationally. Now almost all Chinese dialect speakers worldwide can understand and use this standard spoken form.
**Ideographic Language in Writing**  Although the Chinese language has different dialects, there is only one form of writing, and these Chinese characters have been in existence for at least 3,300 years (Yin & Zhao, 2006). In appearance, the written form of Chinese characters is drastically different from alphabetic languages such as English, French, German, and Spanish. The modern standard form versus ancient forms or handwritten styles of Chinese characters is square-shaped (Wieger, 1965; Xing, Shu, & Li, 2004). For example, the Chinese written form of Duquesne University is 杜肯大学, where 杜肯 is a pronunciation-based translation of the word Duquesne and 大学 means university. All four individual characters are similar in both size and shape, and each of them can be fit into a square: 杜肯大学. This square-shape is the first characteristic of the Chinese language that differentiates it from many other languages.

*Figure 2. Sample of Chinese pictographic characters. From Imgkid, retrieved from http://imgkid.com/chinese-pictographs.shtml.*

Another specialty of the Chinese writing system is related to the characters’ internal structure or formation. The characters incorporate unique symbols to record or transmit meanings (Edgerton, 1941). Shen Xu, a famous linguist of the Han Dynasty of China who lived between 58 and 147 AD, classified Chinese characters into four types: pictographs, indicatives,
logical-aggregate characters, and semantic-phonetic characters (Lam, 2006). Pictographs, the first type, were developed from images of real objects including both living and non-living things (Lee, Tsai, Su, Tzeng, & Hung, 2005). Figure 2 shows the pictures of four objects (the left-side column), oracle-bone scripts (the earliest form of pictographic characters carved on animal bones) (the middle column), and their respective modern characters used today (the right-side column). The oracle-bone scripts are the outline of the objects, so they are simplified pictures. On the contrary, the modern characters are squared scripts of the oracle-bone characters, and their appearance has changed radically from the earliest picture-like script form. Nonetheless, with the help of the oldest version pictographs, we can still roughly see the resemblance of the original objects through their modern characters to. In the modern Chinese language, there are 364 pictographs as such (around 4% in estimation in the Chinese character population) being used in total (Luo, 2005; Shen, 2008).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Pictograph</th>
<th>Indicative Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>旦 dawn</td>
<td>⊙ sun</td>
<td>The bottom stroke ⊥ indicates the horizon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>本 root; foundation</td>
<td>木 wood; tree</td>
<td>The lower stroke − indicates the roots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>刃 blade</td>
<td>刀 knife</td>
<td>The left-side stroke ‘ indicates the edge on the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>夕 night (no moon)</td>
<td>月 moon</td>
<td>Removal of a stroke − from 月 means pure darkness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second type of characters is indicative. Characters of this type are structured in two ways. The first is to change a pictograph by adding an indicative stroke or removing a part of it. Table 1 exemplifies the logics for indicative character creation. An additional bar or dot, technically called character strokes, are used on each of the first three pictographs to make the
new corresponding characters by either creating a reference (一 put under the sun, 日, as horizon) or indicating a part (一 put on the root of a tree, 木, ‘put on the side of a knife, 刀). The fourth character, 夕, is made by removing a 一 from the moon, 月. There are some other indicatives that do not use pictographs but are made by putting strokes together in other ways such as the Chinese basic numerals 一 (one), 二 (two), 三 (ten), 十 (ten), and 千 (thousand). This is the second way of creating indicative characters. Different from pictographs that merely depict objects, indicatives and the next two types incorporate abstract ideas. Indicatives constitute a little more than 1% of the total Chinese characters (Luo, 2005).

Compared with the small percentages of pictographs and indicatives, the next two types of characters comprise the remaining 95% of the Chinese character population (Luo, 2005). The logical-aggregate characters, the third type, show more complexity than indicatives. These characters are created by simply combining two or more pictographs and/or indicatives (Luo, 2005). For example, 明 is the combination of 日 (sun) and 月 (moon) and gives the meaning “bright”, 林 and 森 uses 木 (tree) two and three times respectively to mean woods and forest, and 灭 is made of 一 (cover) and 火 (fire) to mean “to extinguish”.

A semantic-phonetic character, the last type, consists of two components: a semantic radical and a phonetic part. The semantic radical of a character is the original or changed form of a pictograph, indicative, or logical-aggregate. In total, there are around 200 radicals and these radicals are mostly related to nature, culture, and life (Li & Zhou, 2007). Examples of these radicals include 日 (sun), 山 (mountain), 水 (water), 木 (wood), and 石 (stone)—nature-related radicals; 示 (sacrificial; spiritual), 寸 (criterion), 女 (kneeling woman), and 家 (home; family)—culture-related radicals; and 口 mouth, 手 hand, 食 (food; to eat), 米 (rice), and 車 (vehicle)—
life-related radicals. These radicals serve as both indicators of character meaning and semantic classifiers for the majority of Chinese characters (Ho, Ng, & Ng, 2003). For example, there are around 1,000 characters with 木 as the radical to mean different types of trees such as 桃 (peach tree) and 松 (pine tree), wood products such as 板 (wood board) and 柱 (wood column), and parts of a tree such as 桩 (trunk) and 枝 (branch). With the help of radicals, learners can roughly tell the general meaning of a semantic-phonetic character.

In contrast to the semantic radical, a character’s phonetic component functions mainly to give the pronunciation. For example, character 想 (to think; to miss) is a semantic-phonetic character. While the bottom 心 (heart) is the semantic radical, the top 相 (mutual) serves as the phonetic part. Sometimes the phonetic component also conveys meaning. For example, the phonetic component 刃 (blade) in character 忍 (to endure, tolerate, to persist) is a sound indicator, and also contributes to the character’s meaning semantically, that is, to leave a sharp knife on a heart makes endurance. Therefore, all the four types of characters as a whole are more likely to be connected with meaning rather than pronunciation.

In addition, a large number of individual characters are even culturally informative. First, many characters are rich with cultural perceptions of social status, human relationship, and social activities. For example, 女 (women), a pictograph, depicts a kneeling woman, and 男 (man), a logical-aggregate, consists of a 田 (field) and a 力 (plow). These two characters reveal the historical social status of females, i.e., housekeepers, and males, i.e., outdoor laborers. 姓 (last name) consists of 女 (woman) and 生 (to give birth to), which indicates that last names went by mothers’ as an early historical convention in the matriarchal society. 好 (good) uses the relationship between 女 (woman; mother) and 子 (child) to conceptualize being good. The
information revealed by these example characters vividly symbolizes the Chinese traditional culture and way of thinking.

In conclusion, according to the construction of characters, all four character types either directly or indirectly point to character meaning, rather than the pronunciation. Even if we can guess the vowel with the help of the phonetic part of a character, the tone is still difficult to tell correctly. Therefore, Chinese characters function as public conventions of meaning, and because of this, Chinese is basically an “ideographic” language in its written form (Hansen, 1993).

2.2 The Chinese language as a bridge and vehicle to Chinese culture

China is an old nation with a brilliant culture. It “was once the superior civilization of the world” (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 2). Over the expanse of several thousand years, scholars, scientists, artists, philosophers, heroes, and every day people together created the unique, splendid Chinese culture in literature, philosophy, arts, architecture, ceramics, instruments, and cuisine. For a long historical period in ancient China, “no comparison of agricultural productivity, industrial skill, commercial complexity, urban wealth, or standard of living (not to mention bureaucratic sophistication and cultural achievement) would place Europe on a par with the Chinese empire” (Ropp, 1990, p. 235).

Charcoal-tempered Black Earthenware

Colored Earthenware Jar

Figure 3. Two Neolithic earthenware vessels unearthed in China. From *Chinese Ceramics: Introduction to Chinese Culture*, by L. Fang, 2011, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
The history of Chinese ceramics, for example, is estimated to cover ten thousand years (Fang, 2011). Figure 3 shows a black earthenware basin and a colored earthenware pot made approximately 7,000 and 5,000 years ago, respectively. These two artifacts and many other decorative and usable vessels, show that the pottery-making techniques as well as the decorative design rules such as symmetry, balance, and harmony had already reached an advanced level before many other civilizations even acquired this skill in a rudimentary form (Fang, 2011). During the following thousands of years, ceramic arts were more fully developed in China. At the end of Han dynasty (25-250 AD) Chinese began to use porcelain, which contrasts with the Europeans who did not learn to make porcelain until the 18th century (Fang, 2011). “Compared with it in age, the European porcelain is but a thing of yesterday” (Hobson, 1915). The Chinese ceramic collection in the Metropolitan Museum includes 4,500 objects that range from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century (Valenstein, 1988). However, those, together with all other pieces collected in the world, are only a small proportion of Chinese ceramics in the world, with more remains yet uncovered (Hobson, 1915).

Like ceramics, many other Chinese cultural elements have produced significant impacts on the civilization of China and other nations. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, for example, are evident in influencing beliefs, attitudes, and social behaviors of people in East Asia (Chang, 2010; Leung, 1988; Wong, 2002). Yin-Yang harmony, advocated by Taoism, is regarded as the cardinal value of Chinese culture and has been accepted as a principle for various level conflict management (Chen & Ma, 2002). The great inventions of printing, gunpowder, and compass, for example, have changed the whole face and state of the world in literature, warfare, and navigation (Bacon, 1878), so “we must look more closely at her prehistory, rice economy,
family system, Inner Asian invader, classical thought, and many other features of high civilization” (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 3).

In modern societies language is a major carrier of culture (Jiang, 2000; Moran & Lu, 2001; Shanahan, 1997). If a person cannot read and write, their depth of learning will be severely limited (Norris & Phillips, 2003). In fact, interest in foreign culture can motivate foreign language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Anecdotal evidence from my own teaching shows that many students take Chinese courses because they are interested in some aspect(s) of Chinese culture: Chinese architecture, history, philosophy, food, landscape, painting, and so on. Researchers (i.e. Kramsch, 1993) even suggest that culture should be an objective of language learning. The Chinese language can be the bridge and vehicle to Chinese culture since this language keeps records of the culture (Edkins, 1876). Educators should motivate students to explore foreign culture through language learning (Dörnyei, 1994).

2.3 Chinese as a Top Influential Language

The Chinese language is one of the top influential languages in the world (Webb, 1999). This is mainly because of the nature of the language aforementioned and the changing role of China in the world.

Chinese is a largely used world language (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014). It has the biggest number of L1 speakers in the world. According to the estimation of Ethnologue (2010), there are around 1,197 million users of L1 Chinese in total, compared with the second largest L1 population—414 million of English speakers, and the third—335 million Spanish speakers. In addition, there are a large number of L2 Chinese speakers. Also according to Ethnologue (2010), this number is around 178 million.
Chinese is also a widely used regional language in Asian areas. It is spoken in many Asian countries and regions including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Mongolia, and Chinese communities around the world. In Taiwan, Chinese is used as the only official language and is one of the four official languages in Singapore. For a long historical period, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam adopted the Chinese character script to write their languages, and a number of Chinese characters are still used today to write in Japanese and Korean (Taylor & Taylor, 1995). In Japan and Korea, Chinese character writing is a required skill for school students (Bernard, 1999).

In recent years, the Chinese language has expanded rapidly through other parts of the world such as Africa (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Wang, 2013), Europe (Starr, 2009), and Latin America (Ellis, 2011). Because of its historical influence and current rapid expansion in the world, the Chinese language has become a major world language challenging the dominance of English in some regions (Graddol, 2006).

2.4 Importance of the Chinese Language in the Globalization Era

Since the end of the 20th century, globalization has taken place in the world. This trend has produced large worldwide impacts that support a call for rethinking our purpose for higher education and redesign our role in this new world-wide climate.

2.4.1 Globalization

Globalization, as a business activity, has been in existence since the early period of human civilization (Frank, 1998), yet, it is during the last decades of the 20th century that globalization began producing real global influences. Globalization refers to the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006). It is a process by which the people of the
world are unified into a single society and function together. This integration can involve activities broadly in the fields of economics, military cooperation, environmental protection (Bernstein & Cashore, 2000), cultural exchange (Keohane, 2000), and education (McCabe, 2001). As a trend, globalization is believed to be inevitable and irreversible (Hirst & Thompson, 1992; Marquardt & Berger, 2003; Steger, 2002). Thus, all involved or to be involved must consider ways to perform successfully to achieve maximum benefits from this globalized game. The first consideration is to rethink roles and behaviors according to the new game rules that accompany globalization.

2.4.2 Globalization and the Importance of Foreign Language Education

A general mission of higher education is to provide “knowledge for the sake of serving society and for the sake of serving social demands” (Gutmann, 1999, p. 188). A question that arises with globalization is “what knowledge is needed specifically in this new era?”. Smetanka (2012) believes that mere knowledge of subject areas and technical skills are no longer sufficient. In contrast, what is crucial is that students should get training on general problem solving abilities (GPSAs) in order to face new complex problems related to globalization. Smetanka’s emphasis on GPSAs, while important, does not specify what GPSAs are important. The explanation of such knowledge made by Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007) are more specific: knowledge of human cultures and the natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibilities, and integrative learning. However, this explanation is still too general. This call to action argues that in the globalization context, a qualified citizen and worker would benefit from knowing the major world languages. A person in a local society could do well if he or she has the local language skill. However, to communicate well with other people and cultures, a person must be able to use their languages or
at least a common language. Rather than expect that translators will be involved in each of our
daily worldwide communicative activities—a condition that is unrealistic—we would benefit
from a larger proportion of our college students being able to speak the major foreign
language(s). This is not an unreachable target. Other countries have achieved this ahead of the
U.S. Most European countries are bilingual or multilingual, which is linked to their national
strategies on foreign language education. For example, Australia recently launched promotional
policies on foreign language learning (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

China’s rapid economic growth also benefited from foreign language education
enhancement. In the late 1980’s, China adopted an obligatory foreign language (mainly English)
education policy that all students of Grade 3 and higher must take English language courses
(Cheng & Curtis, 2010; Hu, 2007). According to the national policy and international practice,
China’s higher education has placed a major emphasis on changing the training models, revising
the national curriculum, and updating textbooks (Chang, 2006). English has become a core
course for all secondary and postsecondary level students and a major skill for employment
(Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2002). In this process, the government plays the role of a proactive strategy-
maker and schools made positive response to government’s directions. This, together with
parents’ active involvement and students’ hard work, can explain, to a great extent, why China
keeps being ranked much higher than the U.S. in English reading (Jerrim, 2014). Although there
is no way to spot a causal relationship between English language education and economic
development, a common understanding adopted in China is that for many individuals and for the
country itself, English has been playing a role as a bridge to the future (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002).

In contrast to these countries’ proactively embracing foreign languages, the United States
has adopted a more passive stance in regard to the national need for foreign languages that rests
on its traditional common sense notion of a melting pot that limits other cultures. For example, while still a British settlement, the eighteenth century Pennsylvania Assembly passed a law requiring all male German immigrants to swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, for fear that the culture and language of the settlers would become German (Spring, 2013). To maintain the English culture and to suppress the expansion of German culture, English-language schools were established and recognized language learning as one means of maintaining a dominant culture (Spring, 2013).

The English Only movement in late nineteenth century and the Anglo-American Protestant Culture wars in the late twentieth century also reflect the “centuries-old effort to make English and Anglo-American protestant culture the unifying language and culture of the United States” — “a sense of racial and cultural superiority” (Spring, 2013, p. 410) and stoked fears of multiculturalism. Even today, some leading organizations in the U.S. still reject pluralism and diversity. ProEnglish, for example, advocates that “in pluralistic nation such as ours, the function of government should be to foster and support the similarities that unite us, rather than institutionalize the differences that divide us” (see https://www.proenglish.org/about-us/mission.html).

To combat these embedded biases, colleges should promote a positive attitude toward foreign language education by assuming the responsibility to train college students in foreign languages to better prepare graduates for entering a globalized society. To fulfill this new goal, higher education should make structural and curricular changes to make itself internationally relevant (Hahn & Teichler, 2005). Regarding the organizational role of language programs, Johnson (1997) advocates that, rather than trying to shield themselves from organizational
change, language departments should take the leading role to streamline the campus to their advantage, particularly in regard to the internationalization of the curriculum.

2.4.3 China as a New Global Power

Great changes have happened to China’s economy within the past six decades. During the Mao administration (1949-1976), China employed a central planning model that required all organizations and companies’ service and production to follow the direction of the Central Government Planning Commission (Chow, 2011). The Chinese economy was not significantly improved from the establishment of People’s Republic of China (Naughton, 1993). Beginning in the late 1970’s, Deng Xiaoping and his successors launched a series of economic reforms with an aim to shift the central planning model to a market based economy (Naughton, 1993). These initiatives included opening-up policy, agricultural reform, decentralization of the government, increase of the non-state sector, state-owned enterprise reform, financial reform, and market economy adoption (Tung, 2005).

Among the reforms China conducted, the opening-up policy proved to be an outstanding strategy that significantly helped China become more internationally competitive. Major opening-up strategies included reforming the foreign trade regime, importing high technology, increasing exports, assimilating foreign managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and attracting foreign investment (Tung, 2005). In fact, the number of foreign trade companies increased from less than 1,200 in 1986 to more than 35,000 in 2001. In December 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure further opening of its markets to foreign competition and accessing foreign markets for its local enterprises (Lardy, 2004).

Evidently, China’s new strategies have successfully advanced China’s goals. The economic system has been successfully transformed, and the Chinese economy has experienced
rapid growth (Naughton, 1996). China’s GDP growth averages about 10 percent a year between 1979 and 2014 (Morrison, 2015). According to the China Overview by the World Bank (2015), China has become the second largest economy and is increasingly playing an important and influential role in the global economy. Chinese, therefore, is an important new era world language for all countries that need to partner with China.

2.4.4 Importance of China and Chinese Language Education for the U.S.

(1) China has become one of the biggest business partners of the U.S.

China’s opening-up policy and economic growth facilitated the improvement and development of the China-U.S. business relationship. In 1979, the two nations reestablished diplomatic relations and signed a bilateral trade agreement. Since then, U.S.-China trade has been experiencing a continuous increase. According to Morrison (2014), in 1979, the total export and import trade with the U.S. was $2 billion, only a very small part of business for the U.S., but in 2013, the total bilateral trade increased to $562 billion, making China the second-largest U.S. trading partner. Morrison also notes that as one of the fastest-growing U.S. export and markets, China will continue showing its growing importance for the U.S.

In response to China’s economic growth, there has been increased criticism regarding United States trade with China, especially with regard to importation (Blecken, 2007; Dyer, 2007; Kabadayi & Lerman, 2011; Roberts, 2007). For a long time made-in-China was synonymous with low quality (Huang, 2013). Daily products made in China such as consumer electronics, kitchen gear, tools, etc. were treated as pieces of junk (James, 2010). Children’s toys were found to be coated with lead-laced paint, and medicines and pet foods were discovered to contain toxins. These unchecked practices drastically degraded China’s reputation as the world’s factory floor (Deodhar, 2012).
However, since the end of the 20th century, China has begun to turn a corner and improve its exportation reputation. According to Cai (2013), China has experienced three upgrades. The first one happened in 1986, when the export of textiles and clothing exceeded crude oil in 1986; the second one happened in 1995, when export of machinery and electronics exceeded textiles and clothing; and the third one happened when China joined the WTO in 2001, when high-tech exports grew rapidly and product sophistication was increased. In 2007, the export ratio of electrical appliances reached 47.5% of the total GDP of China, while the ratio of textiles went down to 12.6% (Yu & Wang, 2015). In addition to increased exports, the quality of made-in-China has increased significantly. Pula and Santabárbara (2011) studied the quality of products from different countries by looking at both prices and information on market shares to derive quality. They concluded that the quality of Chinese export products is relatively high compared to many competitors. Although not many reports were found on the Chinese product quality, a recent article published online by the U.S. Department of Commerce (n.d.) is still telling. The article reports that, while there has been a sharp rise in goods imported from China to the United States, the recall counts of Chinese-made consumer goods decreased significantly from 2007 to 2014. Clearly, China has climbed the quality ladder with its exports.

The growth of the business relationship between China and the U.S. has created other benefits and opportunities for the United States (Bergsten, Freeman, Lardy, & Mitchell, 2008). Chinese foreign direct investment in the United States, while manufacturing products or providing services in the U.S, created new jobs for U.S. workers. The foreign investments and companies, especially the high-tech companies in China including those from the U.S., also greatly increased (Buckley, Wang, & Clegg, 2007; Meredith, 2008). The China Business Handbook released by the U.S. Commercial Service (2013) reports the development of bilateral
business relationship and predicts great opportunities in many fields. According to this report, as one of the largest buyer of American goods, China is creating opportunities for U.S. companies that provide a wide range of consumer products and services. In addition, China’s on-going infrastructure development, investment in healthcare reform, and booming urban populations will drive the demand for U.S. exports in energy, chemicals, transportation, medical equipment, construction, machinery and a range of other services. The report concludes by stating that, with the growing numbers of Chinese traveling abroad for education and leisure purposes, “China’s contribution to U.S. educational institutions and the tourism industry is increasingly important as well” (p. 10).

(2) China-U.S. bilateral relationship is critically important for the maintenance of international peace and security.

China and the United States, as two permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, are critical in maintaining international peace and security. According to the Charter of the United Nations Chapter V, the U.N. Security Council is the primary organ of the United Nations that is able to invoke sanctions, apply military action, and recommend the appointment of the United Nations. There are 15 seats on the Security Council. While 10 of them will be elected for a term of two years, the remaining five are permanent members (P5): China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Nine votes cast in favor of a resolution are required for a resolution to pass, including the concurring votes of the P5 in substantive matters, and each of the P5 has the power to veto a resolution. Because there are different or contradictory international interests between China and the US, the ability for each to successfully negotiate with one another to reach consensuses on major international issues is
critically important (Cirincione, 2000; Lampton, 2001). Friedberg (2005) details the importance of the relationship between the two countries:

If tensions between the two Pacific powers worsen, the whole of Eastern Eurasia could become divided in a new cold war, and the prospects for confrontation and conflict would seem certain to rise. On the other hand, a deepening U.S.-China entente could bring with it increased possibilities for sustained worldwide economic growth, the peaceful resolution of outstanding regional disputes, and the successful management of pressing global problems, including terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Whether for good or ill, the most significant bilateral international relationship over the course of the next several decades is likely to be that between the United States and the PRC. (p. 8)

Therefore, building and maintaining a good relationship between the two countries is a must. As reported by the U.S.-China Relations Task Force Report (Hills, Blair, & Jannuzi, 2007), “No relationship will be as important to the twenty-first century as the one between the United States, the world’s great power, and China, the world’s rising power” (p. xi).

(3) It is also very important to promote studies of China and Chinese language for national benefits of the United States

There are disputes in the United States about China’s rapid growth as a new international power. In some Americans’ eyes, China is a potential threat to the power and leadership of the United States in international issues (Buzan, 2010). Others even view China as “the most serious long-term national security challenge to the United States’ security” (Gertz, 2013, p. 1980). Other researchers (e.g., Gallagher, 2005; Ross, 1997; Segal, 1999) disagree with these points. They think China’s rise is only aimed to maintain its own domestic peace, and as such presents a
great opportunity for the U.S. to gain benefits by negotiating, being engaged, and collaborating with China. In fact, according to Asia Society (2006), an international nonprofit organization located in New York dedicated to strengthening relationships and deepening understanding among the peoples of Asia and the United States, China’s political importance in the Asia-Pacific region is broadly acknowledged and, particularly since 9/11, its help has been sought on difficult issues like U.S.-North Korea relations and terrorism. Asia Society continues to claim that collaboration with China is increasingly deemed essential for solving a range of global issues, from nuclear proliferation to the environment, from currency exchange to trade law. I agree with Asia Society that China is more like a multi-field partner than a horrible enemy and suggest that higher education seize the opportunity to prepare graduates who are well equipped with the Chinese language and culture to strengthen the global partnerships and reduce biases.

Naturally, therefore, higher education should promote Chinese language education in our whole education system. Regarding the role of colleges in maintaining the U.S.-China relationship, the U.S. Commercial Service (2013) expects that education should enhance its ability to influence China by educating Americans in Chinese studies and expanding America’s educational exchange programs with China. It suggests that the US “[f]und a comprehensive national educational plan designed to train a new generation of Americans about China’s language, history, economy, politics, and culture” (p. 93). In this to-do list, training in Chinese language and culture is at the core (Gomes de Motos, 2011).

2.5 Importance for African American Students to Study Chinese

2.5.1 For Black-White Economic Gap Closing

The largest three racial population groups in present day United States are Caucasians or whites (63.7% of the total population), Hispanics (16.3%), and African Americans or blacks
(12.6%) (U.S. Census, 2010). Between the whites and each of the two minority groups there exist large economic gaps. Of all the minority groups, African Americans are constantly at the lowest levels of wealth (Figure 4) and income (Figure 5), which has attracted substantial social and political attention (Keister & Moller, 2000; Levy, 1995; Neal, 2006).

Recently, researchers (e.g., Barsky, Bound, Charles, & Lupton, 2002; Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener, 1993; Keister & Moller, 2000; Neal, 2006; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013) have begun to conduct empirical investigations on these issues. Shapiro, Meschede, and Osoro (2013) analyzed the data of nearly 1,700 working-age households from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), a nationally representative longitudinal study that began in 1968. In order to determine how different factors affect the widening racial wealth gap, they tested a wide range of possible explanations including family, labor market, demographic, and wealth

![Figure 4](image_url)  


characteristics during the period of 1984 through 2009. Their investigation identified the five biggest drivers related to the gap: (1) years of homeownership, (2) household income, (3) unemployment, (4) college education, and (5) inheritance, financial supports by families or friends, and preexisting homeownership accounts for 27% of the difference in relative wealth growth between white and African-American families, which is the largest portion of the growing wealth gap. More researchers (e.g., Barsky, Bound, Charles, & Lupton, 2002; Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener, 1993; and Neal, 2006) also conducted longitudinal studies on the same issues. While their results support these five contributive factors identified, these researchers do not agree with the claim about the major influence of the number of years of homeownership made by Shapiro, Meschede, and Osoro (2013). Rather, they believe that labor income (or, wages) more reliably explains the majority of the racial wealth gap.
Furthermore, research also establishes the important connection between education attainment and labor income. Regarding the role of education in general, researchers (e.g., Couch & Daly, 2002; Maxwell, 1994; Turner, Tamura, Mulholland, & Baier, 2007) found that education is one of the most influential determinants of wage to the labor income. Campbell and Kaufman (2006) explained the logics that underlie the claim that education affects wages—education allows access to occupations of higher status that offer greater earnings. However, these researchers could not reach an agreement on the specific attributes of education that best explain the labor income. Maxwell (1994) claims that a main source of the racial income disparity is education quality not quantity, which signifies that a key strategy for gap closing is to develop Black students’ learning of skills rather than quantity of schooling (year and level of education). Turner, Tamura, Mulholland, and Baier (2007) disagree and found the opposite result pointing out that the years of schooling does count and should not be neglected. I agree with Maxwell on the importance of students’ skills because skills determine one’s competency for a job. On the other hand, I also believe that we should not ignore the positive correlation between students’ education attainment and level of income (see Figure 6).

Despite little early research conducted on the income difference due to L2 speaking (Saiz & Zoido, 2002), there is still evidence showing wage increase due to L2 speaking. Altonji (1992) studied the association between foreign language courses taken in high school and the wage earned from the work. His results show that foreign language courses have higher returns than courses in mathematics, science, and verbal skills. Other researchers (e.g., Dustmann, 2001; Saiz & Zoido, 2002) also found similar results: the earnings of those who speak a foreign language are much higher than the earnings of those who do not. More recently, Görg, Strobl, and Walsh (2007) reported that foreign-owned firms have consistently been found to pay higher
wages than domestic firms pay to what appear to be equally productive workers. L2 Chinese speakers could have a better chance to have better earnings than other foreign language speakers. A 2007 survey conducted by the American Translators Association (ATA) (Six, 2008) shows that professional translators who hold certification through the ATA earn a higher salary overall than those who are not certified: $72,261 vs. $53,632 per year. And among all classifications of different translation-related jobs, those who owned their own translating and interpretation companies earned the most per year - an average of $67,559. The best-paying language translation combinations by hourly rates were English into Chinese at $74.92, and Chinese into English, at $65.79. Based on these factors, therefore, learning the Chinese language has the potential to bring African American students considerable benefits and increased earnings.

2.5.2 For Employee Competitiveness

Another benefit of learning the Chinese language is on students’ future career. Knowledge of foreign languages is perceived by employers as one of the top five basic
knowledge and applied skills critical for new entrants’ success in the 21st century U.S. workforce, and its increasing importance will be more and more felt, more than any other basic skill (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). International businesses prefer to hire people who speak more than one language. China has become a huge market, and business leaders are looking for people who can speak Chinese and operate successfully in a Chinese cultural context. Knowing Chinese may give students an edge when competing for an important position. This is especially critical for African Americans who currently deal with unemployment that is twice as large as their white peers (Fletcher, 2012).

It is safe to predict that China will play a major role in world affairs in the future. The Chinese language is increasingly important to our current and future dialogue with China. According to the Asia Society, “The rise of China presents new economic, political and social realities that demand greater U.S. engagement at every level. As the foundation of that engagement, we urgently need to raise the number of Americans who can demonstrate a functional proficiency in Chinese” (see http://www.asiasociety.org/education-learning/chinese-language-initiatives/why-chinese).

2.6 The Current Context of This Study

ABC University, the primary institution used in this research, is a private four-year university founded in 1900. As a global research institution, ABC University consists of seven schools and colleges with more than 12,000 students, 95,000 alumni, and 5,000 faculty and staff. The total enrollment in 2014 was 1474 with 30% of that population being White, 4.3% of Blacks, 31% Asians, and 17.8% international students.

Its Department of Modern Languages consists of eight undergraduate level language programs with Chinese Studies as one of them. The Chinese Studies Program was established in
the early 1990’s. Through two decades of development, the program became one of the biggest of the department. The average semester class enrollment between 2005 and 2010 was around 340, one to two times more than some other languages’ such as German, French, and Spanish.

However, since 2011, the ABC University Chinese Studies program has been experiencing an enrollment decline at all levels of classes. Between 2007 and 2009, the total yearly number of students taking Chinese classes on average was around 400. However, the numbers went down to 345, 352, 296, and 246 in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively. The department decided to cancel some classes that did not reach the required student number.

Class cancellation brought considerable negative impacts on students, faculty, and the Chinese Studies program. First, a certain number of students lost the learning opportunity because of the class cancellation. Normally, in the classes cancelled, there are some students already registered although the student number is smaller than the minimally required eight for the undergraduate level classes. Most students register for classes because these classes are required for their degree(s). Once they lose this opportunity, their plan has to be temporarily or permanently terminated because many Chinese courses are offered only once a year. Failure to take a lower level class will often mean at least a year-long wait until the same required course is offered in another course cycle. For those who wanted to major or minor in Chinese, more semesters will be needed to fulfill the degree requirement. Based on the current program policy, a Chinese major or minor student must complete at least six core Chinese language courses that have to be taken from the lowest level to the highest in order. Students will need three consecutive years to complete these required core courses. Therefore, the students who are unable to take the lower level Chinese classes are likely to choose another major or minor, rather
than extend their years at the university. This will reduce the number of students majoring or minoring Chinese in the long run.

Moreover, around half of the Chinese language teachers are part-time faculty hired on the basis of class availability. When class cancellation occurs, the part-time faculty often must leave ABC University for better more secure teaching jobs. Therefore, class cancellation often prevents the involved teachers from making consistent commitment at ABC University thus impacting the stability of the Chinese language teaching team.

The ABC University Chinese Studies Program has had several meetings intended to find out the reasons for, and possible solutions to, the reduced enrollment. The first agreement was reached that the 2007-2009 recession is the major factor that accounts for the student number decrease. In the past, roughly 20% students taking Chinese language classes major or minor in Chinese. The other 80% are from other majors or minors most of which are related to computer science, architecture, and engineering, i.e., non-humanity and social science. Through the discussions, the Chinese language program faculty also concluded that students in non-Chinese majors or minors had to reduce their tuition costs by eliminating non-major/minor courses. This conclusion was shared by faculty from other language programs who are experiencing the same issue.

Another causal factor, the rapid development of high school Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese Language and Culture courses, is also a major consideration. This course is commonly offered by the College Board as a part of the Advanced Placement Program in the United States. It requires proficiencies throughout the intermediate range as described in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL, 2012) and measured by the AP Chinese test. The first AP Chinese test was administered in 2007, when
there were only 3,261 test takers. Since then, the number of students taking the AP Chinese test has dramatically increased. In 2014, the number reached 10,728, which represents a 229% over the number of test takers in 2007 (Figure 7). Additionally, from 2010 to 2013 70% of the test takers scored a 5, the highest level score. These students, according to the policy of the Chinese Studies Program at ABC University, can skip most of the lower level Chinese courses and can take intermediate high and advanced level courses. It is estimated that around 20% of the students taking Chinese language classes each semester has received the score of 5 on the AP Chinese test. Therefore, this factor partly explains the decrease of ABC University students taking the Chinese language classes offered by Chinese Studies Program.

![Number of Test Takers](image)

*Figure 7. Number of AP Chinese test takers, 2007-2014. Data from College Board AP Program participation and performance, 2014, retrieved from http://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/participation/ap-2014*

Based on these findings, I decided to further investigate the system for any possible inherent problems so as to inform a call for action to change the status quo. The examination of the student makeup in Chinese classes produced a telling result, based on the ABC University data between 2010 and 2015 (ABC University Factbooks, 2015). Over the past five year period, on average, African American students account for only 0.5% of the total students enrolled in Chinese language courses, much lower than Asians, Whites, and Latinos. Compared with their
5.6% percent of the total ABC University student population, African American students taking Chinese language classes is extremely low.

Actually, the low African American students’ enrollment in Chinese classes at ABC University is not an isolated occurrence. Similar situations were found in some other colleges also. In one public university, for example, out of the 5.5% African American students, only around 2% of students of Chinese are African American students. Similarly, in a private university with 9.7% African American students, only 3% of them were found taking Chinese. Although little information is available about the racial makeup in statewide Chinese classes, a large number of researchers (Brigman & Jacobs, 1981; Davis & Markham, 1991; Kubota, Austin, & Saito-Abbott, 2003; Moore, 2005) reported the low enrollments of African American students in all foreign language programs across campuses. This is evidenced by information on other language program enrollment at ABC University. In the fall semester of 2014, the African American student enrollment in two popular language programs, Japanese and Spanish, were represented only 2-4% in their language classes, smaller than the usual 6-7%. Compared with the typical 5.6% of African American students in the whole ABC University student body, this minority group is clearly underrepresented in the classrooms of Chinese language and other foreign languages.

2.7 Implications of the Problem of Practice

The information presented thus far from the examination of the literature and the contexts of the problem of practice appear to indicate that Chinese language learning might provide important benefits for African American students. However, the low African American students’ enrollment prevents these students from accessing Chinese language classes. Other theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain causal factors for the low enrollment issue.
The first factor identified by researchers is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the core concept of Albert Bandura (1995). Bandura theorized that the belief that individuals have about their capabilities to complete a particular task successfully determines their motivation to engage in that particular task. “Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). In general, people with high self-efficacy for a specific task—that is, those who believe they can perform well at that task—are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided (Bandura, 1986). And, the stronger the perception of self-efficacy is, the more active the person’s efforts will be (Bandura, 1977).

Debates exist around the responsibility of self-efficacy for explaining African American students’ low enrollment in foreign language classes. Moore (2005) claims that African American students’ low self-efficacy for foreign language acquisition is one of the most important factors. According to the survey response in Moore’s study, African American students are unconfident regarding their success for foreign language learning, and this low self-efficacy tends to decrease African American students’ intention to take foreign language courses. Hughes and Demo (1989) admit that African American students are likely to have low self-efficacy, and agree that the perceived low self-efficacy weakens African American students’ motivation to take foreign language courses.

However, little convincing evidence is available in literature to show whether African American students truly lack foreign language potential. The only research available is Brigman and Jacobs’ (1981) comparative study at Indiana University, the result of which shows that African American students taking the same number of foreign language courses as their non-African-American peers were not performing as well. However, the authors did not clarify
whether the African American students were less able to perform well with foreign languages. My informal communications with teachers of German, French, and Chinese at ABC University gave different evidence: almost all the teachers reported African American students are performing as well as, and even better than, their non-African-American peers. This anecdotal information implies that African American students do not necessarily lack the potential to succeed in foreign language learning.

Other factors were also thought to explain the low enrollment, but they are disproved. Research excluded environmental factors, for example. Ford (1993) examined 148 elementary African American students’ perception of their family achievement orientation (parental beliefs regarding education) and the influence of these perceptions on the students’ achievement orientation. One of the main results shows that family demographic variables contribute little to achievement orientation. In Moore’s (2005) study of low African American students’ enrollment in foreign language classes, over half of participants’ siblings or parents had studied a foreign language at high school level, and all students had experienced the two-year compulsory program at high school. However, the fact did not seem to significantly influence or motivate the students to enroll in foreign language classes at the university level.

In conclusion, and based on the aforementioned information I would argue that the claim of low self-efficacy or lack of environmental influence as the reasons for the low foreign language class enrollment is largely based on uncertainty. Therefore, these negative views on African American students failed to convincingly account for the fact that African American students are less likely to take foreign language courses.

2.8 What Is the Problem?
Substantial research has found that the essential reason for the African American students’ low enrollment in foreign language classes is that these students are not given equal learning opportunity. According to Gee (2008), learning opportunity (also called opportunity to learn) is defined as equitable conditions or circumstances within the school or classroom that promote learning for all students. Making learning opportunities available and accessible involves ongoing efforts, innovations, and reforms that begin to remove barriers to learning for the students (Sanchez-Lopez, 2013). The first step to take is to discover the barriers, which are often hard to detect. This is because many of these barriers hidden and constructed in tactic ways.

First, there exists a “hidden curriculum” in foreign languages that keeps African American students away from the courses. In general, school curriculum is accepted as an explicit, conscious, formally planned course with specific objectives (Kentli, 2009). While the regular curricula are implemented daily on campus, there is a special type of prevailing “curriculum”—hidden curriculum—attracting a great deal of attention from researchers and educators (i.e. Akbar, 1998; Giroux, 1983; Pinar, 1991; Watkins, 2001). By definition, a hidden curriculum refers to certain unwritten and unofficial lessons, values, and perspectives that institutions also expect students to learn (Giroux & Penna, 1979). This type of curriculum can be reflected through various aspects in education such as internal culture, institutional values, and teaching strategies. Regarding the curricular topics in higher education, teachers or curriculum developers may choose content areas that convey preferable ideological, cultural, or ethical messages.

A widely accepted viewpoint in the US is that current curricula are Eurocentric and the hidden curriculum behind the visible one only allows students exposed to the Eurocentric curriculum. Banks (1991) pointed out that the Eurocentric curriculum “reinforces the status quo,
makes students passive and content, and encourages them to acquiescently accept the dominant ideologies, political and economic arrangements, and prevailing myths and paradigms used to rationalize and justify the current social and political structure” (p. 130). Pinar (1991) argues that the absence of African-American knowledge in curriculum represents academic racism. In multiple studies (Davis & Markham, 1991; Peters, 1994), African American students lack the interests in foreign languages partly because the current foreign language curricula are irrelevant with regard to African culture.

Secondly, through course placement in colleges, African American students are excluded from foreign language classes. Placements can be biased by negative stereotypes regarding African American students’ academic ability. Stereotype is a social psychology concept. It is defined as a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002). These thoughts or beliefs are subject to partiality to some degree (Cox, Abramson, Devine, & Hollon, 2012; Judd & Park, 1993). There clearly exists a negative stereotype on African American students’ cognitive abilities and academic potential in the society, and teachers tend to reinforce their stereotypical biases by projecting low expectations for achievement. As a result, many African-American students come to believe that they cannot perform well in academic subjects (Perry & Locke, 1985). Steele (1997) argues that negative stereotypes also affect others’ judgments or self-actions. A good example is that many academic advisors do not recommend that African American students take foreign language classes because the advisors believe these courses are too difficult for them (Moore, 2005).

Furthermore, there is insufficient political or organizational effort focused on changing this resulting status quo of low African American enrollment in foreign language courses.
Currently, few promotional activities or policies are in place to encourage African American students to register for foreign language classes locally and broadly. Currently, researchers and educators (e.g., Banks & Banks, 1995; Kubota, 2004; Lee, 2006; Sleeter, 1991) advocate that higher education should promote multiculturalism, or multicultural education, so that students from diverse backgrounds receive equal learning opportunities for quality education.

Currently in the Chinese Studies program at ABC University, one more important barrier was detected: there is no early policy or strategy for Chinese language and Chinese language course promotion. As a consequence, the African American students, who tend to be placed by the academic advisors into “easy and practical” classes, are prevented from learning about and eventually taking the Chinese language courses. This call for action proposes to develop strategies to deal with the issue in a systematic way. In addition, it suggests instruments designed to assess the impact of the strategies.

2.9 Consequences or Improvement

If the African American students’ lack of Chinese language learning opportunity is not successfully addressed, social equality will go neglected and the benefits of this foreign language acquisition will continue to be denied to the African American student population, a decidedly social justice issue. In addition, the overall enrollment in Chinese classes may not increase significantly, and the teaching team stability will not be guaranteed which is another social justice issue.

If this issue is successfully addressed, African American students’ enrollment should increase, and more and more African American students will have systematic opportunities to learn about the Chinese language and other languages resulting in increased benefits such as more job opportunities, and higher salaries and income. The faculty team, freed from the worry
about low enrollment, will be more concentrated on teaching and learning and be comprised of high-quality, experienced teachers.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN FOR ACTION

3.1 Overview

As the previous chapters indicate, the Chinese language is critically important as a world treasure since it promotes a rich ancient Chinese culture and provides a tool to reduce the white-black economic and academic achievement differences. But the low enrollment in Chinese language classes has prevented African American students from receiving the benefits connected to Chinese language learning. Multiple factors were thought to be possibly responsible for this problem including the difficulty of the Chinese language and lack of early foreign language influence in the families or the environments of African American students. However, none of these claims are fundamentally supported. Rather, the low African American students’ enrollment in Chinese language classes reflects a learning opportunity gap that has systematically excluded this group of students.

An opportunity gap may have different meanings. Regarding the Chinese language learning opportunity, it can refer to present condition that courses are only promoted to a certain group of people with another group excluded. However, this is a superficial learning gap as it only reveals the end of the story. The opportunity gap that is the focus of this study is the early or deep part of issue. Thus, the main attention of this dissertation is focused on early learning opportunities offered to African American students.

To address this type of opportunity gap in a systematic way, this study calls for building coping strategies and design actions on a solid theoretical foundation. This chapter, then, first introduces theories of systematic change and team building to lay a solid foundation for the call to action and design for action. The six principles of systematic change and the PDSA
improvement cycle are employed. In addition, team building opportunities are designed suggested according to the frameworks proposed by Tuckman (1965), Tuckman and Jensen (1977), and Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow (2011).

On this foundational basis, then the chapter first details an intervention—a workshop to introduce the Chinese language and the Chinese courses available at ABC University. One aim of this intervention is to offer an opportunity to the target students so they are introduced to the features of the Chinese language and the benefits of learning it. In addition, the workshop would inform the students about how to register for the Chinese courses. Thus, with all other conditions unchanged, we can learn if the students who attend the workshop are more willing to register for any courses of the Chinese language because of this intervention. If the intervention proves immediately effective, that is, a significantly larger percentage of African American students are willing to take the courses and the change in percentage is due to the intervention, we will expand to the other five stages articulated later in this chapter. The suggested tools to be used for gauging effectiveness of the workshop are one questionnaire probing the likelihood of students registering for Chinese language courses and one interview protocol examining if the likelihood is associated with the intervention.

3.2 Theoretical Foundations for Systematic Changes

The ultimate goal of the study is aimed at investigating the problems in the current system and launching a systematic effort to increase the representation of African American students in the Chinese language education by offering them specific learning opportunities. The study emphasizes a systematic effort to make steady, sustainable, fundamental, and generative changes (Fullan & Miles, 1992).
Although there is no definition in literature, a systematic effort should consist of a strong team with a clear goal and a well-designed strategic plan, collective sufficiency-focused action, and supportive networks. The theories used in this call and design for action mainly include team building, networked communities, and improvement science principles and PDSA work style developed by Carnegie Foundation for Teaching Advancement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011).

3.2.1 The Six Core Principles of Improvement

Each of the six core principles of improvement are represented below by a principle statement and described briefly in turn.

(1) Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.

It starts with a single question about what specifically is the problem we are trying to solve. It enlivens a co-development orientation: engage key participants early and often.

(2) Variation in performance is the core problem to address.

The critical issue is not what works, but rather what works, for whom and under what set of conditions. Aim to advance efficacy reliably at scale.

(3) See the system that produces the current outcomes.

It is hard to improve what you do not fully understand. Go and see how local conditions shape work processes. Make your hypotheses for change public and clear.

(4) We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.

Embed measure of key outcomes and processes to track if change is an improvement. We intervene in complex organizations. Anticipate unintended consequences and measure these too.

(5) Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.
Engage rapid cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) to learn fast, fail fast, and improve quickly. That failures may occur is not the problem; that we fail to learn from them is.

(6) Accelerate improvements through networked communities.

Embrace the wisdom of crowds. We can accomplish more together than even the best of us can accomplish alone.

3.2.2 PDSA Cycles and Five Research Stages

Multiple iterative PDSA cycles (Langley et al., 2009) are suggested in the design for action. PDSA stands for Plan, Do, Study, and Act respectively. Plan answers questions related to who, where, when, what, and how, Do means to carry out the plan, Study refers to learning from the test, and Act is to take action on the basis of the learning. Whereas these four components in order form a complete cycle of steps to address a research-for-development task, a more complicated study may involve multiple cycles of this.

Figure 8. Five stages of design for action to increase African American students’ enrollment in Chinese classes

The long-term design for action consists of five stages (Figure 8) with each stage containing one or more PDSA cycles. This call for action proposes that the first stage of the five
be conducted at ABC University. This first-stage will inform the other stages and the following expansion efforts to other language programs and institutions in the future. Thus, the assessment of the process and impacts at each lower stage is critically important.

3.3 Team Building

3.3.1 Overview

A team is a small number of people who have complementary skills and are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Good teamwork can bring about a lot of benefits such as increasing efficiency, improving performance, leading to innovation, reducing stress and waste, building unity, morale, trust, and competency, and satisfying personal needs for knowledge, career, and emotion (Levi, 2013). In light of this, the design for action starts with building a strong team with faithful followers and strong leaders, and developing a set of operational team rules and regulations.

On team building, Bruce Tuckman (1965) proposed a theoretical but also practical four-consecutive-stage model consisting of forming, storming, norming and performing. In 1977, Tuckman and Jensen proposed a fifth stage, “Adjourning”, describing the process for terminating group roles, task completion, and the reduction of dependencies. Because the initial four stages are the most commonly used parts of the process (Smith, 2005), this design for action will focus on these first four stages, and follow the basic tasks for each stage developed by Catalyst Consulting Team (2002) (Table 2).

In addition, Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) proposed by the Carnegie Foundations are regarded as effective and efficient ways to organize improvement efforts (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). As an intentionally designed social organization, a NIC features a
colleagueship of expertise building on the hard work and creativity of many, and organizational rules on roles, responsibilities, and norms for membership.

Table 2

*Tasks for Each of the Four Consecutive Stages of Team Building Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forming</td>
<td>This stage includes building a common purpose, understanding personal expectations and interests, clarifying accountability, recognition and rewards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storming</td>
<td>The storming stage gets the team focused on goals, managing processes, conflict-resolution procedures, integrating everyone in the team and building good relationships between team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norming</td>
<td>At this stage, team members begin to work towards consensus on issues and develop the processes for information sharing and feedback. Team members are given more opportunities to lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing</td>
<td>Team members seek to improve tasks and relationships, test for better methods and approaches, and celebrate successes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teambuilding in this design for action will be accomplished by following the theoretical guidelines of NICs. In detail, the team will have a well-specified common aim; it will be guided by a deep understanding of the problem, the systems that produce it, and a shared working theory to improve it. The team will be guided by the methods of improvement research to develop, test, and refine interventions, organized to accelerate interventions into the field to effectively integrate them into varied educational contexts.

3.3.2 *Membership and Roles of Team Members*

Predetermined according by the research on suggested team size (Kreitner, Kinicki, & Cole, 2007), the research team will consist of four members at the beginning stage, with more
members to be involved based on future needs. These members should include one higher education assessment expert, one Chinese Studies program leader, one teacher of Chinese language, and one graduate student of educational policy.

Every member has unique areas of expertise that will allow individuals to contribute to one or more parts of the first stage of the design for action. The assessment expert, i.e., the principal researcher and the team leader at this stage, will focus on study design, survey analysis, program design, and program evaluation. The language teacher from the Chinese Studies program will lead data collection from classrooms, and describe and interpret that classroom level information to the team. The Chinese Studies program leader will focus on policy examination, system capacity, and policy making.

The reason for engaging graduate student in educational policy as the fourth team member is due to the relatively flexible action research agenda in the design for action. The principal researcher will send recruiting emails to the education program of the university to recruit the ideal graduate student through interviews and regular communications with the applicants, their advisors and the education program.

The principal researcher will be in charge of research guidance and coordination along with increasing certainty of the project among other team members, other members’ expertise, future working style, and consensus of goal and responsibilities. In addition, the team will focus on building trust and cooperation in its early stages. Thus, the principal researcher must play a direct role to bring members on board, help to communicate a shared vision that will be strengthened by the active and meaningful work of the team. This does not mean that a leader should always be directive. Tuckman’s (1965) model explains, as the team develops maturity and ability, relationships establish, and the leader shifts leadership style. This means that a cycle
of leadership style begins with a directing style, moves through coaching, then participating, and finally shifts to delegating. And, following this cycle, a successor leader might provide leadership to address another task with the team. Obviously, this task-based leadership style prevents the team or group from being bound to one leader, so each member can be the leader for one task and for one period of time as conditions dictate. It is actually the team that runs the work so that it will not significantly affect the team’s work if one member leaves and a new member joins.

3.4 Interventional Workshop

The main purposes of this interventional workshop are to provide a learning opportunity to African American students and to learn if this opportunity can increase students’ willingness to take Chinese courses. The rationale being that if the workshop opportunity increases willingness to take Chinese language courses, the team will continue to refine, expand and test the intervention until it produces such a consistently positive effect that it becomes built in the program policy. If, on the contrary, there is no significant change in enrollment willingness, the team will explore other factors directly responsible or co-responsible with the lack of learning opportunity.

3.4.1 Research Questions

The following research questions will frame this design for action.

(1) How willing are African American students to take Chinese language courses following the completion of an informational workshop on the Chinese language and Chinese language courses?

(2) How important is it to give the workshop regularly to increase the enrollment of African American students in Chinese language classes?
(3) How necessary is it for the Chinese Studies program to build this type of promotional strategy into the current policy for African American students’ Chinese class enrollment?

3.4.2 Hypotheses

The design for action rests on the following hypotheses.

(1) The students who have completed the workshop on the Chinese language and Chinese language courses will be much more willing to take Chinese language courses.

(2) Most African American students will indicate that it is very important for the workshop to be given regularly to increase the enrollment of African American students in Chinese language classes.

(3) Most African American students will indicate that it is necessary for the Chinese Studies program to include this type of promotional strategy in their current policy.

3.4.3 Survey Questionnaire

This survey questionnaire that will be used to collect information utilizes admixed response format with both close-ended and open-ended question to better collect the participants’ perceptions of the workshop (see Appendix A). These two types of questions will allow the team to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The small number of questions is sufficient to answer the research questions and increases the potential for a high response rate. The survey questions follow:

**Question 1:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the nature of the Chinese language?

a. A lot; b. A little more than expected; c. Not much

**Question 2:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the potential benefits of learning the Chinese language?

a. A lot; b. A little more than expected; c. Not much
**Question 3:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the Chinese language course offerings at ABC University?

a. A lot;  
b. A little more than expected;  
c. Not much

**Question 4(1):** Are you willing to take some Chinese language course in the future?

a. Yes;  
b. Don’t know;  
c. No

**Question 4(2):** If you answered “Yes” to Question 4(1), how did this workshop contribute to your decision to be willing to take a Chinese language course?

**Question 4(3):** If you answered “Don’t know” or “No” to Question 4(1), what are the major concerns/obstacles that prevent you from considering enrolling in a Chinese language course? Please list three concerns/obstacles.

**Question 5:** How important is it for the workshop to be given regularly to increase the enrollment of African American students in Chinese language classes?

a. Very important;  
b. Somewhat important;  
c. Not important

Please explain your answer.

The first three close-ended questions are used to examine the African American students’ perceptions of increased knowledge following the workshop about the nature of the Chinese language (Question 1), the benefit of learning the Chinese language (Question 2), and the course offering at the local university respectively (Question 3). The questionnaire assumes, for reasons explained in previous sections of this call to action, that African American students had little knowledge of the topics mentioned and would therefore benefit from the information provided during the workshop.

The new information received from the workshop, especially information regarding the many benefits inherent in learning the Chinese language, should increase African American student interest in the Chinese language and encourage the students to register for some Chinese language classes. Their willingness is then examined with Question 4(1). Question 4(2) and Question 4(3) check for how much the workshop, as the only one intervention factor, contributes
to their willingness to take a Chinese language course. It is hypothesized that the target students who have completed the workshop on the Chinese language and Chinese language courses will be much more willing to take Chinese language courses. However, this hypothesis may not prove to be true. If this is the case, there must be other factors that impede the African American students’ Chinese course taking. Question 4(3) is used to find out other major concerns and barrier factors that may reveal other issues that should be included in the next phase of the design for action.

The focus of Question 5 is the students’ perceptions on the importance of such intervention for the bigger group of the African American students. If the students’ responses indicate that workshop promotional activity is important, this will mean that the intervention should not be a one-time only event. Rather, it would indicate a need to systematize the relevant effort by institutionalizing the language and course promotion, for instance.

3.4.4 Participants and Sampling

ABC University is a global research university consisting of both undergraduate and graduate programs. The university currently has three campuses: Pittsburgh, Washington, and Qatar. Pittsburgh represents the main campus, with more than 13,285 students, 98,000 alumni, and 5,000 faculty and staff members, and is the context for this call and design for action. The average fall semester enrollment number of first year undergraduates on the main campus between 2010 and 2014 is around 1,450 students. In the fall of 2014, the headcounts of undergraduate students on the main campus were 6,237 total students with 286 African American students (N=286). This design for action targets at the entire African American student population on the Pittsburgh campus.
For this interventional workshop study, we will engage a sample of around twenty African American undergraduates (n=20) through purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique is a non-probability method often used in qualitative research. It is described as the deliberate choice of informants due to the qualities the informants possess (Tongco, 2007; Palys, 2008). One must meet four criteria to be selected as a participant—an undergraduate AA student at ABC University, having little to none knowledge of the Chinese language and its merits, having no plan to take any Chinese language course during the undergraduate period, and willing to involve in the study as a participant.

The target population for the sample will be recruited in multiple ways. First, a month before the workshop is given we will distribute promotional flyers announcing the nature of the workshop, time and location, and target participants. In addition, the flyer will contain contact information and one team member is responsible for communications with the students of interest. A full list of the students will be created connecting the students of interest through emails. These students will get prompt updates of the workshop to be held and will be asked for their input of ideas. Also, they will be encouraged to invite other African American graduates who may also be interested participating in the workshop.

Second, we will contact the AA student association at ABC (AASA) for help to recruit participants. AASA is the African-American awareness organization at ABC University. There are approximately 250 undergraduate student members in AASA. Because the committee has a full list of these members, the AASA’s support on this study is critically important for us to secure a sufficient number of workshop participants. Therefore, we will communicate with them to schedule a meeting. At the meeting we will introduce the nature and significance of the study to the leaders of AASA and request their help in distributing the flyer and other information to
their members. We will also request that they encourage potential participants to email us so that they can get information updates of the workshop and seat reservations.

Furthermore, each of the team members will play an important role in participant recruitment. They will be asked to pass out the flyers and other information to the target students and collect their contact information. It is expected that we can reach the sample size by relying on this multi-pronged approach. The team will send out reminders regarding the workshop time and location to potential participants to avoid absences and ensure workshop attendance.

3.4.5 Workshop

The workshop will be organized by the team. The principal researcher will be the key presenter, and other group members will assist in the workshop and help with the equipment setup, on-spot registration, and questionnaire distribution.

At the beginning of the workshop, principal researcher will share the big ideas of the Chinese language. Major content areas will include the key basic features of the Chinese language such as the tonality, square shape of characters, and Pinyin system, and the population and countries of the Chinese language. Then, information will be shared about the merits of the Chinese language and the advantages of learning this language. These merits and advantages include (1) increased academic competitiveness; (2) narrowing the achievement gaps between whites and African American students; (3) the potential to lead to high-salary jobs; and (4) closing the wealth gap between whites and African Americans after graduation.

Following this information section of the workshop, a team member who is specialized in curriculum and course registration will introduce the Chinese language course offerings and the registration system. The part will include both an introduction and also hands-on course registration practice. The team member will guide the participants through the whole procedure
starting with course selection to course registration and then to higher level course thinking. Course requirements for the Chinese major or minor will also be discussed. Finally, the specialist will depict the current situation of Chinese language learning in the global context with an effort to direct students’ attention to the importance of the Chinese language in the new era of globalization. Students’ questions will be collected and answered at the end of the workshop. Before the participants leave, they will be given the questionnaire to complete during last 15 minutes of the workshop. This will ensure almost a 100% response rate.

3.4.6 Confidentiality of Responses

By design, this survey is anonymous and the confidentiality will be strictly enforced. The team will follow the rules for confidentiality established by ABC university Institutional Review board and proceed accordingly.

3.5 Data Analysis

We will begin the data analysis session with a data screening. Two team members will work together to identify any invalid responses including blank or incomplete questionnaires, and careless responses. To reduce the number of unusable responses, we will both explain to the participants the nature and benefits of the study prior to passing out the surveys at the end of the workshop.

The second type of invalid response is careless response. Careless response refers to those responses that provide the raw data do not accurately represent respondents’ true levels of the constructs being measured without regard to the item content (Meade & Craig, 2012). Researchers (such as Schmitt & Stults, 1985; Woods, 2006) warn that 10% of careless responses could significantly bias the factors to be measured. Therefore, we need to minimize the careless response rate in order to make sure the research result is reflective of the nature of the population.
In terms of data analysis, the questionnaire responses will be summarized and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. There are two types of data to be collected in this study, one ordinal and one qualitative. The first 3 items are multiple choice questions. Respondents only need to choose one categorical choice. Frequencies and percentage will be the major ways of data summarization. An example of data summary is listed as below and also depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Frequency and Percentage of Responses of the Amount of Learning from This Workshop*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A little more than expected</th>
<th>Not much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  Amount learned about the nature of the Chinese language</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Amount learned about the potential benefits of learning the Chinese language</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Amount learned about Chinese language course offering at ABC University</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) For Question 1, 15 (75%) out of total 20 respondents think they have learned a lot from this workshop about the nature of the Chinese language. Another 2 (10%) and 3 (15%) think they have learned a little more than expected or not much, respectively.

(2) For Question 2, 17 (85%) out of 20 respondents think they have learned a lot from this workshop about the potential benefits of learning the Chinese language. Another 2 (10%) and 1 (5%) think they have learned a little more than expected or not much, respectively.
(3) For Question 3, 13 (65%) out of 20 respondents think they have learned a lot from this workshop about the Chinese language course offering at ABC University. Another 4 (20%) and 3 (15%) think they have learned a little more than expected or not much, respectively.

Question 4 consists of a set of questions. The first element, Question 4(1), helps us know what proportion of the total sample has the intention to take some Chinese language course(s) in the future. Similar to the answers to the first three questions, the responses to this multiple-choice question will be summarized, for example, 19 (95%) out of 20 respondents are willing to take some Chinese language course in the future and only one (0.5%) will not. Question 4(2) and Question 4(3) are two follow-up questions intended to examine the causal relationship between the interventional workshop and the “Yes” or “No” answers the respondents made to 4(1).

Question 4(2) is a detector of the causal relationship between the interventional workshop and its effect. The causal relationship in this design for action does not refer to the type of causality in strict causal research. A strict causal study in research methodology is a type of quantitative research involving strict sampling, grouping, experimenting, and statistics (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963). In this study, the participants’ responses will only indicate how much the workshop increased perceptions of willingness. In fact, this relationship is a perceived cause and result connection in respondents’ mind. Although not equal to the concepts in strict causal research, this descriptive relationship can still reveal much of the effect of the intervention because response conveys the perceived cause-and-effect connection more vividly than statistics in quantitative research. In addition, Question 4(2) also tries to include individual respondents’ other motivation(s) for the course taking intention, which is achieved through the word “contribute”. Respondents must take all possible contributive factors into account before they isolate the effect of the workshop itself.
Question 5 asks for the importance of regular Chinese language promotional activities given by the program. It is aimed at a policy change in the future if the importance is highly recognized by the students. The responses from the participants will be summarized into frequencies of the three importance category answer. A sample result showed can be made as that 70% of the African American students think it is very important for the workshop to be given regularly to increase their enrollment in Chinese language classes, another 20% think that it is somewhat important to do this, and only 10% think it unimportant (Table 4).

Table 4

*Frequency of the Importance Answer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important is it for the workshop to be given regularly to increase the enrollment of African American students in Chinese language classes?</td>
<td>14 70%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Result and Conclusion

A result report is quite necessary to conclude the design for action. The report should describe what African American students learned from the workshop about the Chinese language and the benefits of learning it. This would indicate if the workshop is effective in delivering relevant information to the target participants and if they are motivated to take the Chinese language courses. In addition, report should make a case for the importance of institutionalizing the course promotional activities.
3.7 Policy and System Changes

According to the PDCA improvement cycle, the interventional workshop and the feedback study will be reviewed and revised by the team. After revision informed by the earlier phase workshop study, a refined workshop will be conducted during another semester. Based on the results of this phase of the study, a suggestion on policy and system changes will be proposed. These changes mainly include the policy change and a Chinese language course promotion initiative. The proposed system with the changes should be monitored and evaluated to help achieve sustainable development and generative impact.

3.7.1 Policy Change The problem of practice of this call and design for action focuses on equal Chinese language learning opportunity for African American undergraduates. Therefore, any suggested policy change should be made within the Chinese Studies program. An executive report will be given to the program director.

The report will first articulate the problem of practice, study intention, and study procedure. And then, result will be provided in detail with the questionnaire items used to collect the participants’ feedback and perceptions. Finally, based on the study result, this report will list suggestions for program policy change and a rationale for each suggestion. The main points on policy change might include but are not limited to:

(1) The program policy and the program mission should clearly describe the social equity connections of Chinese language education at ABC University.

(2) To enlist African American students, as well as students from other ethnic minorities, as the major sub-population of concern, and the program’s promotional activities should be designed and held regularly for these students to gain equal access to Chinese language learning opportunities.
3.7.2 Chinese Language Promotional Program Initiative To fulfill the program’s newly revised mission, the Chinese Studies program may wish to create a Chinese Language Promotional Program Initiative (CLPPI) with the aim of providing sufficient information on Chinese language course offerings and the Chinese language to the African American undergraduates in particular and other underrepresented populations at ABC University before course registration each semester. A team will be formed to advance the operation of the CLPPI. Procedures will be developed for the team to follow while the team is working.

The core team members should come from the Chinese Studies program. The program supervisor will act as the first year team leader in charge of the team building and first-year CLPPI planning. The supervisor will also monitor and evaluate the operation of the initiative. Other core team members should include Chinese language instructors. They will be responsible for the material design, activity design, workshop hosting, and feedback data collection. Also, some members will be given the role as course consultants who will help students understand the curriculum, register for classes, and answer questions. The core team members will meet regularly to coordinate with the team leader to collect questions, check situations, and develop improvement plans. The team leader will prepare a report to share both at the kickoff meeting and also at the end meeting on course promotion, registration, and summarization.

In addition to the core members, the CLPPI will also engage people from different communities. These communities include the Department of Modern Languages, College of Humanities and Social Science, Admission and Enrollment Office, Student Affairs, the Undergraduate Student Senate, and the African American Student Association. At least one person from each of these departments should be invited. They will be engaged for the purpose of building networked improvement communities (NICs) (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011).
These members will receive monthly newsletters from the core team. They will be invited to pose questions, comments, and suggestions through emails, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings. Also, the team will encourage these non-core-members to attend the semester kickoff and end meetings for information update and exchange.

Starting from the second year of operation, CLPPI will elect a team leader from the core members. Team vision, mission, strategies, regulations, and plans will be reviewed and revised on a yearly basis. Non-core-members’ involvement and contribution will also be evaluated by the team. Based on the evaluation, the team will replace old members with new ones to be invited to join in.
CHAPTER 4

GENERATIVE IMPACT EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

After the outcome of the proposed program is obtained, an evaluation of the program’s impacts should follow to assess the expected and the unexpected consequences as well as the causes for the consequences. This process is called the impact evaluation. Based on the theoretical foundations and/or other research this chapter provides some general recommendations on how to conduct the impact evaluation.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

Early research efforts on impact evaluation were perceived as unsystematic due to their lack of supportive theories (Chen, 1990). Recently, a large number of researchers (i.e. Becker, 2001; Khandker, Koolwal, & Samad, 2010; Kreber, Brook, & Policy, 2001; Mohr, 1995; Scriven, 2008; White, 2009) have made significant contributions to solidify the foundations for impact evaluation practices.

Kreber, Brook, and Policy (2001), for example, developed eight important questions for impact evaluators to answer when they develop the evaluation framework. These questions are:

1. What is the intended impact?
2. Why evaluate?
3. When to evaluate?
4. Who evaluates?
5. How to evaluate?
6. Is the actual impact the same as the intended impact and is the actual impact desirable?
7. Who should receive the results of the evaluation? And,
8. What will happen as a consequence?
These guiding questions emphasize the importance of both evaluation methodology and human subjects involved in the evaluation. They should serve as theoretical foundations for the proposed impact evaluation.

4.2 Suggestions on Generative Impact Evaluation

4.2.1 Causal Relationship and Suggestion of Counterfactual Analysis

Social programs are all intended to bring about positive consequences, but not every program can fulfill this intention. Impact evaluation aims to assess the long-term changes, to determine whether the desired effects is present, and to evaluate whether those effects are attributable to the program intervention (Baker, 2000; Gertler, Martinez, Premand, Rawlings, & Vermeersch, 2011; Hunter, 2014; Khandker, Koolwal, & Samad, 2010). Researchers coined the concept of counterfactual analysis to refer to the not directly observable but the most plausible consequence of the absence of intervention. Since impact evaluations seek to answer cause-and-effect questions, determining the counterfactual is regarded as the core of the evaluation design (Baker, 2000). Therefore, it is suggested that this impact evaluation should be conducted in, but not limited to, the following ways:

- Randomly select comparison groups such as similar external institutes without any intervention programs;
- Before changes take place record the baselines of the indicative factors to identify such as African American students’ attitude toward the importance of the Chinese language;
- Carefully design the questions in the instruments of this impact study to measure what would have happened without the intervention. One sample question to measure this is as follows:
What importance of the Chinese language to you have you realized as a result of the program? (Giving this question to the participants at different times or to different groups will help isolate the possible outcome without the intervention program.)

4.2.2 Generative Impact and Suggestion of Involvement of People

Langley et al. (2009) reinforced the evaluation of people in the evaluation procedure because the researchers believed that most social change cannot happen without the support of people. They continued to warn that focusing only on the changes themselves but not on the effect of changes on people will doom improvement efforts.

A program that bears generative impact, according to Duquesne University Doctorate in Educational Leadership (2012) Dissertation in Practice Guidelines, is one that satisfies two criteria—(1) the program generates significant learning; (2) the learning is achieved by educational leadership practitioners through using, testing, and improving the changes. This statement urges the proposed impact evaluation for this design for action to not only focus on its immediate beneficiaries such as the students, teachers, and academic programs, but to also involve the external critical peers who are the potential beneficiaries of the program. With this taken into consideration, the generative impact evaluation should include a certain number of Chinese program leaders, teachers of Chinese language or even other foreign languages, social justice officers, policymakers, and undergraduate advising board members of other higher educational institutions.

4.2.3 General Principles and Methodology Adoption

To help evaluators design sound research approaches, White (2009) identified six important principles. These principles are:
(1) map out the causal chain (program theory);
(2) understand context;
(3) anticipate heterogeneity;
(4) rigorous evaluation of impact using a credible counterfactual;
(5) rigorous factual analysis; and
(6) use mixed methods.

These principles summarize the practical methodology for the proposed impact evaluation. It is suggested that the evaluation follow these guidelines and include information on research type and impact indicators of this study.

Research Types Regarding the data type, there are two major research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data are anything that can be expressed as a number, or quantified. Qualitative data cannot be expressed as a number. Although only quantitative data can be analyzed statistically, and allow for more rigorous assessments of the data, both types are valid types of measurement, and both are used in education journals. The proposed design for action should employ both types of data so that the impact can be depicted from different aspects with diverse types of indicators.

Indicators of Impact The purpose of the proposed impact evaluation would be to examine if the newly designed Chinese language promotional program and the changed policy are systematically and sustainably effective. The indicators should include multiple dimensions that describe the impact such as policy and regulation improvement, long-term enrollment pattern, teamwork effectiveness, system operation successfulness, and equal learning opportunity availability. Some of these traits, such as the policy and regulation improvement and long-term enrollment pattern, can be examined through simple observations, but evaluating some others
may require more complicated tools and procedures. This design for action suggests that the first impact study focus on the evaluation of perceived equal learning opportunity since this is the fundamental issue addressed in this call for action. Therefore, focusing on two indicators is strongly advised: (1) sustainable policy and system change, and, (2) African American students’ and critical others’ perceptions of Chinese language importance and opportunity equality.

To measure these indicators, approaches should be developed to include a policy analysis, an operation evaluation, and interview study. The policy analysis and the operation evaluation should be used to measure the first indicator, i.e., sustainable policy and system change, by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. And the interview study should focus on collecting qualitative information to answer if the Chinese language learning opportunity has been given equally to the underrepresented students, in this case, African American students.

4.3 Discussion

This call and design for action is situated in ABC University with the preliminary aim of increasing the enrollment of undergraduate African American students in Chinese language classes. Looking more deeply into this enrollment issue the study revealed a fundamental critical problem—African American students maybe underrepresented in the Chinese classes because they are systematically excluded from the system. In other words, they are not given an equal learning opportunity. To address this issue systematically, this study proposed an action plan to provide equal opportunity to the African American students by introducing the intervention program and applying improvement science and other relevant theories in the process. If this program proves effective, then the Chinese language classes will see increased African American enrollments and more African American students enjoying the benefits of learning Chinese.

More importantly, the proposed efforts can inspire an awareness of the social equality issue in
and even beyond the Chinese language teaching programs. By engaging significant others such as the policymakers, administrators, and other influential parties, this endeavor may produce bigger effects and impacts.

4.4 Limitations

Several limitations exist in this design because of the nature of the study. These limitations are identifiable in multiple aspects and stages. First, without any accomplished example or template to follow, this study will be impacted by numerous unexpected variables during the program design, administration, and evaluation procedures. These variables may be confounding or mixed with the actual intentional interventions. The team will need to take into consideration of how to filter out those variables and how to explain those that remain to better isolate actual program impacts.

In addition, team building and stability also faces challenges. This study is intended to employ volunteer team members because there is no funding available based on the design. All members then have to contribute their free time for the proposed improvement effort. It may be difficult for team members to become fully committed. Some of the team members may drop out of the study for temporary or permanent reasons such as academic conferences, new job interviews, or relocation. The principal researchers and the team leaders must be very cautious with task assignment. A general rule is not to rely too heavily on individual members but focus on reinforcing the teamwork spirit and collective effort. To avoid the limitations and the potential negative impact brought about by individual specialties, group learning should be encouraged and formalized throughout the improvement effort. That way, we can keep the team running well no matter who is in it.

Other limitations are also predictable. Below is a list of them, which is never exclusive.
• The study is context-based, so the findings may not be easily generalizable;
• The researcher is biased toward increasing the enrollment in the Chinese language programs that is the source of his employment. In addition, the population of the African American students of the ABC University is small, and may not be able to produce the expected increase in enrollment.
• The study has not examined other global languages such as Spanish and languages from the Middle East that may also provide benefits.
• The study did not explore other underrepresented groups such as Hispanic and Middle Eastern populations in Chinese language classes.

The equal opportunity issue is a social problem, so changing this small, isolated part of the social system may not produce any impact to the big social system. Future researchers may need to design studies from a bigger social system perspective and involve more powerful social departments and all levels and aspects of education. Proactive intervention should be launched in primary and secondary schools, for example, so that the issue could be dealt with more efficiently. And, to attract more African American students, the Chinese language curriculum developers must avoid the traditional Eurocentrism but make the Chinese language and culture courses more Afrocentric. Their involvement in the changes may bring about significantly bigger effects.
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Appendix A

Feedback Questionnaire on the Workshop

**Question 1:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the nature of the Chinese language?

a. A lot;  b. A little more than expected;  c. Not much

**Question 2:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the potential benefits of learning the Chinese language?

a. A lot;  b. A little more than expected;  c. Not much

**Question 3:** How much new information have you learned from this workshop about the Chinese language course offering at ABC University?

a. A lot;  b. A little more than expected;  c. Not much

**Question 4(1):** Are you willing to take some Chinese language course in the future?

a. Yes;  b. Don’t know;  c. No

**Question 4(2):** If you answered “Yes” to Question 4(1), how did this workshop contribute to your decision to be willing to take the Chinese language course?

**Question 4(3):** If you answered “Don’t know” or “No” to Question 4(1), what are the major concerns that prevent you from making a decision to any Chinese language course? Please list three.

**Question 5:** How important is it for the workshop to be given regularly to increase the enrollment of African American students in Chinese language classes?

a. Very important;  b. Somewhat important;  c. Not important