WHAT DO K-3 CHILDREN KNOW AND WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CHINA? A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHINESE/ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AND THEIR PEERS[1]

Ping Liu
College of Education
California State University Long Beach

Developing an understanding of other cultures and languages through international education is essential in the 21st century. Language and culture are inseparable. Students exploring a target culture through language learning can be effective when such a component is included in the curriculum and is viewed as positive, useful, and valuable. Unfortunately, very few foreign language programs are offered in public schools, especially at the elementary level. For example, when this study was conducted, Asian languages were rarely taught at K-8 schools in the U.S. This curriculum exclusion no doubt has an impact on students' knowledge and understanding about any target Asian language and culture for both Asian American children and their peers of other ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

To maintain heritage language and culture, Asian American children are usually required by their parents to attend community-based language schools outside of the public school arena. The number of students who are enrolled in such weekend schools is significant. For instance, in the Los Angeles area alone, the number of Chinese schools reached 80 with an enrollment of 15,000 students in the late 1990s (Cheng, 1999); the number of Chinese schools exceeded 100 in 2007, according to the Southern California Council of Chinese Schools.

Despite the efforts of community-based language schools, studies (Hinton, 1999; Tse, 2001) have documented attrition of heritage languages of children from Asian (including Chinese) and other American families. It is difficult to maintain heritage languages when children grow up in the U.S. (Fishman, 1991; Hinton; Tse; Wong-Fillmore, 1991) where languages

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other than English are not valued in the mainstream society. This no doubt has an impact on how students and the public view the learning of heritage and foreign languages. Asian children usually attended community-based Asian language schools for two to three hours on weekends but often disliked attending such schools and did not feel that they benefited from them (Hinton). Several factors that may have contributed to this attitude toward community-based language schools include limited teaching hours, lack of teacher preparation and professional development, low student motivation, and disconnection between its curriculum and that of public schools (Liu, 2006).

In addition to studying at community-based language schools, whether satisfactory or not, Asian American children are also exposed to a home environment that can be connected to their home country and culture, and they interact with those who share the same heritage in the local community. With this much exposure, should these children know more about their home or ethnic language and culture than those from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds? Or are these students (and their families) strongly influenced by acculturation, "the process of adopting the dominant group's cultural patterns" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006, p. 29)? In this process, if what makes them unique in terms of language and culture is not appreciated or perceived as valuable, it would be a difficult task for children to maintain a heritage language/culture and stay connected to their home country. Is adoption of the mainstream a reflection of the status of Chinese American children (through their families) or is the impact from the home culture still significant, which sets these children apart from their peers in their awareness and understanding of their home country and culture?

At the elementary school level, two studies (Eicher, Piersma, & Wood, 1975; Liu 2004) were conducted to investigate school children's knowledge, perceptions, and understanding about China. Liu (2004) examined Chinese and U.S. second graders' awareness of or knowledge of the counterpart's country. Findings from the above study implied that the U.S. children's knowledge of China was predominantly related to their exposure to Chinatown or Chinese restaurants. Unlike their Chinese counterparts, they possessed little knowledge about geography, language, modern China, or U.S.-China relationships. It is interesting to note the similarities between the information provided by the U.S. children in this study and the results from the study by Eicher et al. in 1975. Both groups of students made comments that revealed their confusion of China with other countries, and both groups used the words "different," "similar," and "food" to describe their general impression of China.

However, in the above studies, no comparison was made by ethnic group (i.e., Chinese/Asian Americans and all other cultural groups such as Caucasian, Hispanic, Black, and others combined) in studying the children's awareness. Instead, all student participants were examined as one homogeneous group. Sharing the same curriculum, do students of different ethnic backgrounds possess similar understanding and awareness? This study, therefore, attempts to determine if there is any difference in what K-3 Chinese/Asian American (C/AA) children know and want to know about China compared to their peers. The research questions are: Do C/AA children know more about China compared to their non Chinese/Asian American (NC/AA) peers? Is there any difference between what the C/AA children and their peers want to know about China?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Participants

A total of 261 K-3 children from an elementary public school participated in this study. The participants were 61 kindergarteners, 60 first graders, 59 second graders, and 81 third graders. All of the K-2 students were enrolled in one of the three classes of the same grade, but there were four classes in the third grade. The average class size was about 20 students across all grades. In terms of ethnicity of these students, 72% were Caucasian, 23% were C/AA children, and the remaining 5% belonged to all other ethnic groups including Hispanic and Black. The vast majority of the students in the C/AA children group were Chinese, and the rest in this group either had one Chinese parent or attended Chinese community schools. This explains why the group was named C/AA.

The majority of the children at the school were from above average social-economic status families. In addition, the academic performance of these children on standardized tests was at the 87 to 97 percentile, significantly higher than national, state, and county averages. In regard to the school curriculum, there was no specific content on China (culture or language) except that the school occasionally organized multicultural activities in the form of a holiday celebration, such as Chinese New Year.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were different from the group of second graders in another study (Liu, 2004) in the total number (six times as many children), grade levels involved (K-3 vs. second grade only), socio-economic status (above average vs. low), academic performance (high vs. average to above average), and student ethnic background (predominantly Caucasian vs. predominantly Hispanic). These K-3 children were placed in a school environment with Chinese as a foreign lan-

guage program of 70 minutes per week of instruction time, which would be added to their curriculum. The Chinese language program started immediately after the children completed the survey.

Instruments

A survey (Appendix A) was developed to collect data for this study. This survey included a total of 10 items, with the first 8 items devoted to obtaining information about what the children *know* about China in relation to geography, people, modern China, language, their personal relationship with a Chinese friend, and other cultural aspects. These aspects were selected because they had been identified from the second graders' responses to the open-ended question:"What do you know about China?" in Liu's 2004 study. It was hoped that these specific questions would serve to measure children's awareness more accurately to reduce the level of possibility that children had knowledge or awareness that they were not prompted to reveal. The children were also encouraged to share any additional information when they responded to:"What *else* do you know about China?" Finally, the last survey item was an open-ended question to elicit information on what children *want to know* about China. Each of the question items was expected to generate a number of different responses.

Survey Administration

A teacher and an aide, who were proficient in the Chinese language, were primarily responsible for administering the survey to all students in grades 1-3. After the survey was distributed to each student of a class, the administrator read survey items aloud one at a time. When all students finished answering one question, the teacher/aide read the next item, paused for students to respond, and continued until all questions on the survey were answered. Other adults such as parents, the researcher, and school staff were also available to help students when they needed assistance in clarification or recording their responses. It took about 25 to 30 minutes to complete the survey for each class. The survey was completed in all classes in grades 1-3 within three days. For kindergarteners, survey administrators pulled out one child at a time to complete the survey. Each child provided an oral response that was recorded. It took about 10 minutes to complete the survey with each kindergartener.

Data Processing Methods

The children's responses to each of the survey question items were tallied and categorized. Four or more types of answers were generated for

each question item (except yes/no questions) from the responses provided by the children. The number of answers that belong to one category was tallied to reveal frequency. Due to an unequal number of participants in these two groups, the number of students in each group who contributed to each type of answers was converted into percentage to display responses from both groups. In some cases, when a few students provided more than one type of answer to a question, the total of responses can be slightly higher than one hundred percent. Finally, the category of "no response" means that there was no answer or that the response was "I don't know."

Results

A detailed analysis of the responses to each of the questions is provided below to present both qualitative and quantitative information. The analysis is presented by the order of the questions in the survey.

Q 1a&b: What Chinese holiday do you know? How do you describe it?

For all children who were able to provide a response, "Chinese New Year" was the choice for both groups except "Lantern Festival" from one C/AA student and "Christmas" from a NC/AA participant. C/AA children have a higher rate of knowing this holiday at 72% than their peers at 61%. However, the ratio of students from both groups, who were able to describe the holiday at all, is reduced to 68% for Chinese/Asian students and 47% for all other students respectively.

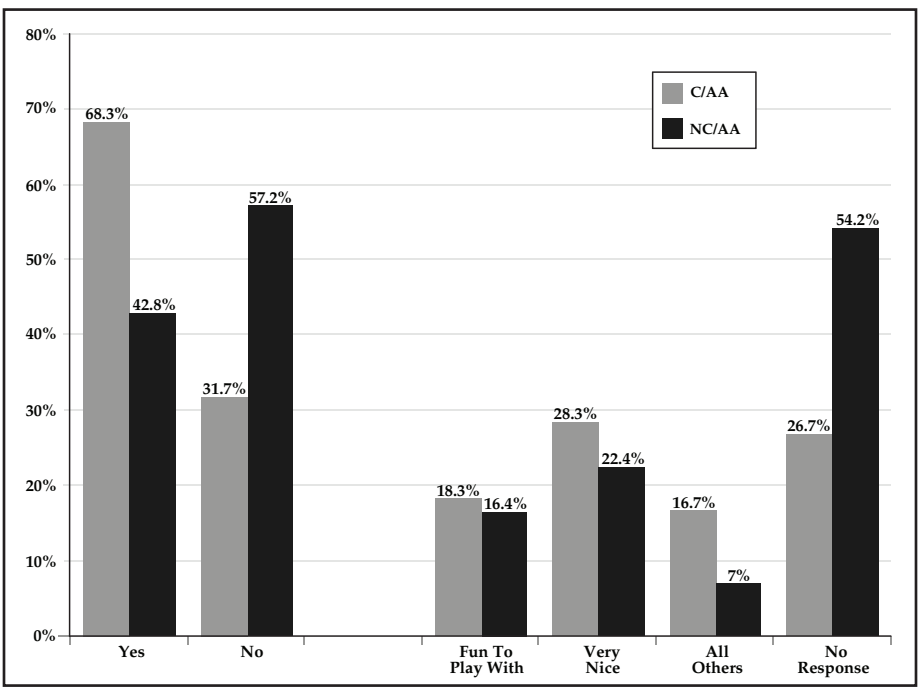
Although more C/AA children were able to offer a description of the holiday than their peers, the description of the Chinese New Year from the two groups is very similar, with keys words of "parades," "dragon/lion dances," and "red envelopes." Some NC/AA children provided a response that seems loosely related: "I have heard of it a lot," "I am the year of the rat," "It is like Christmas," or "U.S. and China start their years at different time."

Q 2a &b: Do you have a friend/friends whose native language is Chinese? If yes, what do you like about the friend/friends?

As Figure 1 shows, approximately 68% of the Chinese/Asian children reported having a friend who speaks Chinese. For all other children, about 43% of them claimed to have a Chinese friend. The reasons these children liked their Chinese friends were related to their personality, capability, language competency, location, or possessions. However, the two main reasons listed by both groups of children are exactly the same: "nice" and "fun to play with." The total number of children who depicted their friends using the above two describers are 106 (about 40% of all children), with

28 of them in the C/AA group and 78 of them from the other group. Some other examples of their descriptions are "likes to talk to me,""teach Chinese to me,""is in my Chinese School,""lets me go on her horses,""plays with me" or "had a lot of pets." One Asian/Chinese student commented: "My grandmother and grandfather (are) from China. They tell me how to speak in Chinese." Another one also shared, "My mom is from Taiwan." In these instances, their "friends" are actually family members.

Figure 1: Responses to Q. 2a (left side) & 2b (right side) – Chinese Friend(s)



Q. 3: Where is China?

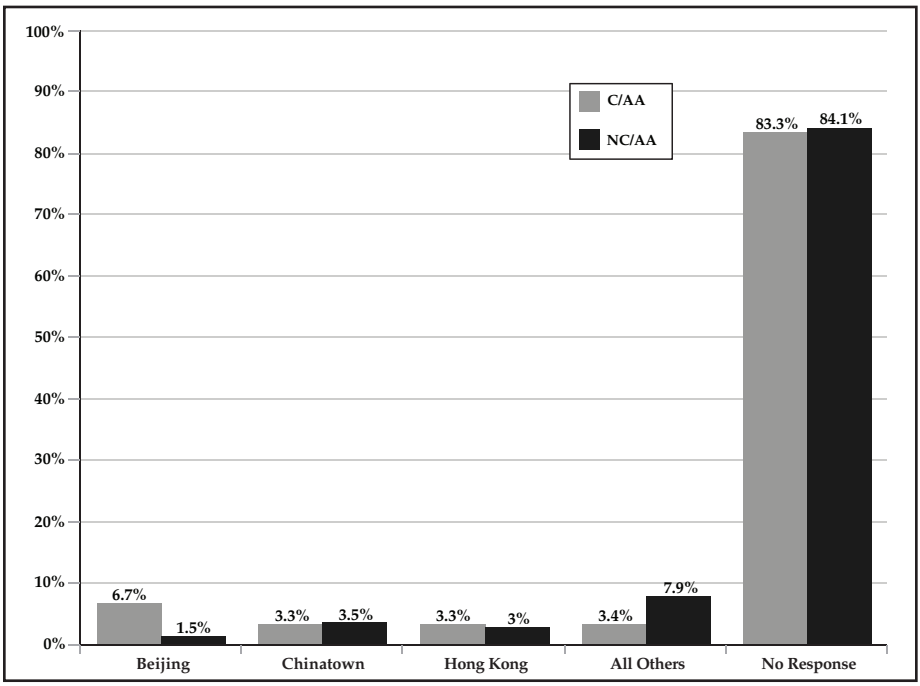
Interestingly, C/AA children (25%) and their peers (23%) showed a similar level in providing correct information for this question. The following answers were considered correct: in Asia (20% of both groups chose this answer), by Russia and Japan, under Russia, close to India, near Japan, and near Korea. Among C/AA children, 57% did not provide any response or admitted that they did not know, and the percentage for children in the other group, who had no response, was similar at 58%. The rest of the children responded with answers ranging from "in a city,""down there,""next

to California/Texas," to "close to/in the U.S.," and "close to Sweeden." One student claimed that China was "in Chinatown."

Q. 4a & b: What is the capital of China? Please name any other places in China.

Very few students in the two groups knew the capital of China; a total of four C/AA students and three NC/AA children reported Beijing as the capital of China (see Figure 2). The majority of the students (50 or 83% in the C/AA group and 169 or 84% of the NC/AA group) were not able to provide any response to this item. Other places that were thought to be the capital of China by the rest of the students in both groups included Taiwan, Downtown Chinatown, Hawaii, California, Washington, D.C., Mexico, Tokyo, and the Great Wall.

Figure 2: Responses to Q. 4 – Capital of China



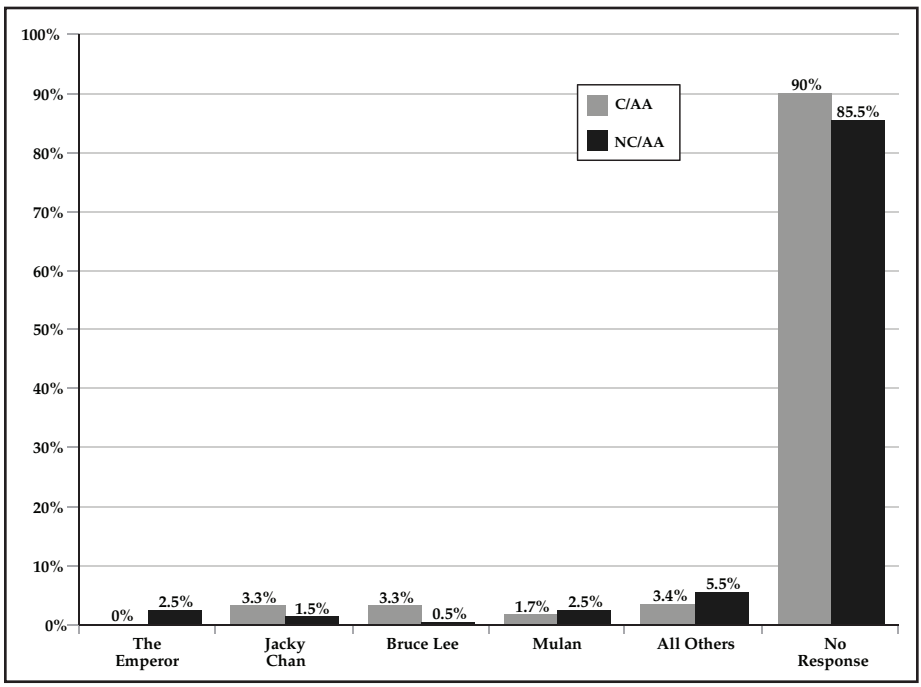
A total of five C/AA and NC/AA children were able to collectively name four other places (besides Beijing) in China: Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong (a special district of China since 1997), and Wolong Nature Reserve. Second to the largest subgroup of students who did not have an

answer to this item (55% for C/AA and 75% for NC/AA) is the subgroup with a selection of "Chinatown" as a place in China. As high as 15% for C/AA and 10% for NC/AA children believed Chinatown was actually in China. Still other children thought that each of the following places was located in China: Burma, Town Square, Hawaii, Korea, and Asia.

Q. 5: Who is/are well-known in China?

Very few students had an answer to this question. In fact, approximately 90% C/AA and 86% of NC/AA children had nothing to share in regard to this item (see Figure 3). The well-known Chinese named by the C/AA children are exclusively *kongfu* actors or fictional characters: Jacky Chen, Bruce Lee, Mulan, and Monkey King. Similarly, this pattern applies to the NC/AA children's responses except that they also listed "the president" and "the emperor" without giving any specific names. Other names provided by the rest of the students combined were Kaira, Meeko, George Honda, Mushu the Dragon, Kenso, and Mrs. Hsieh (a teacher at the school). Additionally, two students considered "Chicha and Pica" and "Sushi" as well-known Chinese people.

Figure 3: Responses to Q. 5 – Well-Known Chinese People



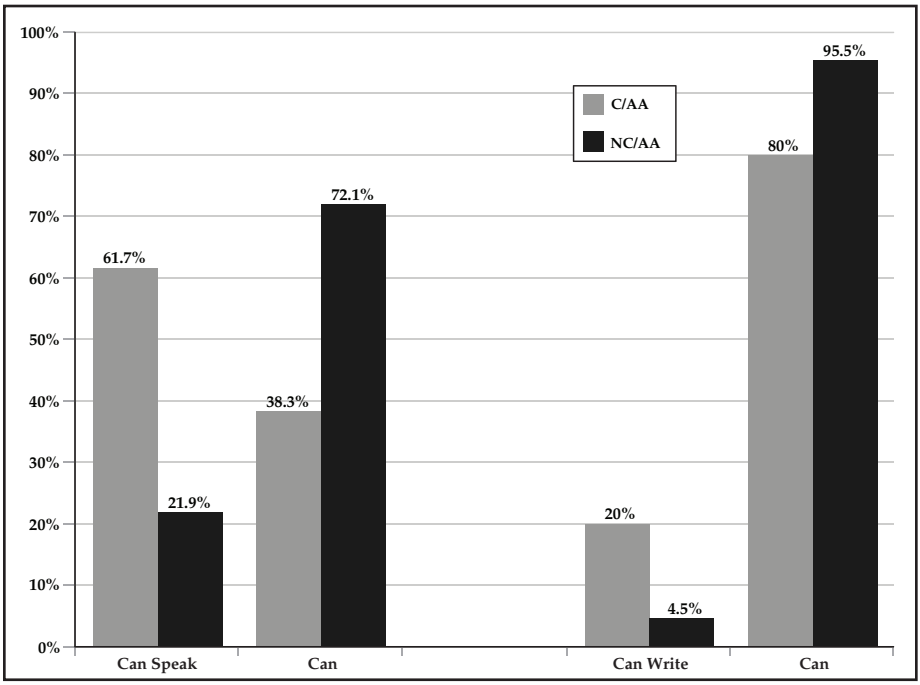
Q. 6: What is China famous for?

Both groups of children showed a general agreement on what they believed China is famous for: food, the Great Wall, toys/merchandise production, large population, dragon/Chinese New Year, and panda. Percentages of children who listed any of the above items were 40% for C/AA and 36% for NC/AA. The first three most selected items for both groups were the same except that their choices were in different orders. Specifically, C/AA children's most selected first three items were (a) toys/merchandise production (12%), (b) the Great Wall (8%), and (c) food (7%), while the NC/AA's most popular choices in order were (a) food (9%), (b) the Great Wall (8%), and (c) toys/merchandise production (6%). Other items on the list were Karate, the Olympics, diving, fishing, sushi, origami, snow cones, and Chinatown provided by both groups.

Q. 7: Can you speak Chinese? If yes, say something in Chinese.

Almost 2/3 (62%) of the C/AA children claimed to be able to speak Chinese, while over a quarter (28%) of NC/AA children offered the same self-evaluation (see Figure 4). However, in a close examination of students' demonstrations, most of them spelled or orally produced alphabetic sounds of Chinese characters, such as *ni hao* (hello), *lao shi* (teacher), and even Gong Hay Fat Choy (Happy New Year in Cantonese). Although several other students thought they had oral proficiency in Chinese, they only provided English names of things such as "shrimp dumplings" and "soy bean" without sounding out the equivalent Chinese words. The number of C/AA children with some oral proficiency in Chinese is much larger than that of their peer group.

Figure 4: Responses to Q. 7 (left side) and Q. 8 (right side): Chinese Language



Q. 8: Can you write any Chinese words? If yes, write something in Chinese.

In comparison to oral Chinese, a much smaller number of students in both groups (20% for C/AA and 4% for NC/AA) claimed and demonstrated that they had the ability to write Chinese characters (see Figure 4). Students' sample Chinese writing is predominantly about single numbers, and simple radicals (wood, big, and medium). Only a few C/AA students in third grade were able to write more complex Chinese single characters such as "bird,""pear,""beautiful,""flower," and two-character words such as "China" and "friend" in addition to simple radicals and numbers. Consequently, the majority of students in both groups (80% for C/AA and 95.5% for NC/AA) did not possess any competency in Chinese character writing.

Q. 9: What else do you know about China?

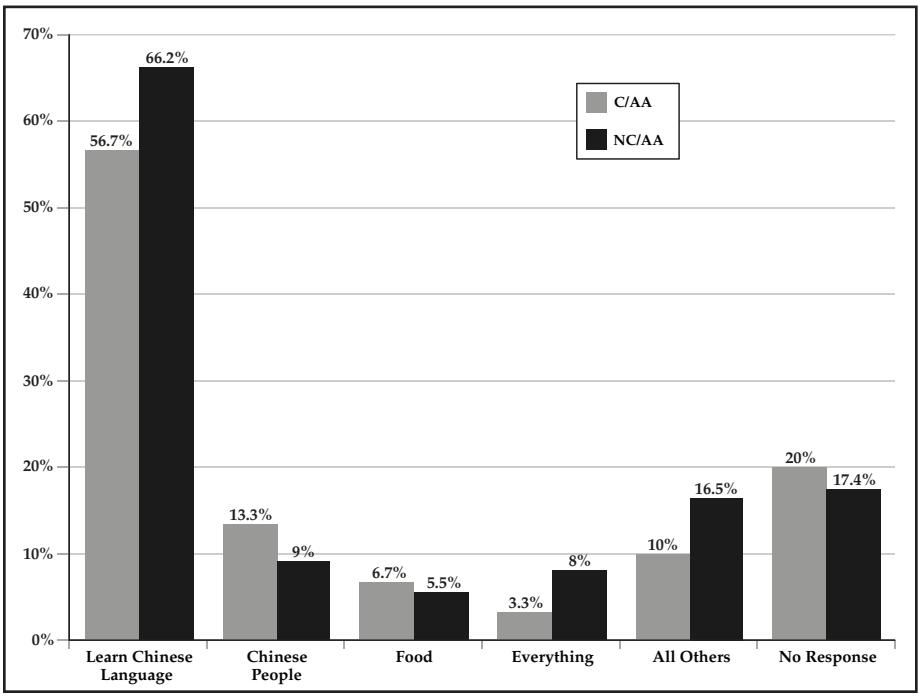
About two-thirds of the children in the C/AA (60%) and NC/AA (67%) groups did not have any additional information to share about their

knowledge or awareness of China. The rest of children offered a total of 24 items of what else they knew about China. Many of the items already appeared on the lists of their responses to Questions 1-8 such as food, language, the Great Wall, pandas, and Chinese New Year celebration. Other items either are not culturally specific ("Birds live in the snow"; "There are a lot of ships in China"; "A long time ago they did not have houses") or do not provide information about the differences ("They are different culture than us"; "They speak a different language"; "They have different holidays"). Still other students reported that "Mom is from China," "My Dad is Chinese, and I was born in Hong Kong," or "I was adopted in China." These responses are more personal information than information about the country. New information related to this item included "Their flag is red with yellow star," and "Two is a lucky number." Several students also commented on the Chinese language: "Chinese writing is hard. When you write things you put crosses and boxes around the letters," and "Two types of Chinese: Mandarin and Cantonese."

Q. 10: What do you want to know about China?

Figure 5 clearly indicates that most children from both groups shared very similar interests in getting to know China in two aspects: (a) learn to speak, read, and write the Chinese language and (b) know its people. The popularity of the above two interests is in exactly the same order for both groups, with Chinese language as the most popular *want to know*, although more NC/AA children (66%) than C/AA students (57%) expressed such an interest. However, more C/AA children (13%) are interested in knowing "its people" than their NC/AA peers (9%). The third most popular *want to know* for the C/AA children (6.7%) is "food" (ranked No. 4 on the list of NC/AA) but for the NC/AA students (8%) "everything" is the answer. Other things that children wanted to know include the Great Wall, festivals, dragon, panda, weather, rocket ships, the wars and biggest things in China. About one fifth of the children in both groups (20% for C/AA and 17% for NC/AA) did not provide any response to this item.

Figure 5: Responses to Q. 10 – Want to Know about China



DISCUSSION

From the children's responses to Questions 1-9 regarding what they *know* about China, there appear to be significantly more similarities than differences between the C/AA children and their NC/AA peers. In addition, when expressing what they *want to know* about China, children from both groups showed almost identical interests. Therefore, the findings in this study indicate the following:

1. More C/AA children knew a Chinese holiday, had a Chinese friend or had more exposure to the Chinese language (especially oral) than their peers, but there was little difference in their awareness of other aspects between these two groups.

2. In sharing what they want to know about China, children in both groups showed practically no difference.

In the following section, the differences between the two groups in their responses to Questions 1-9 will be discussed first, and the discussion of all identified similarities will follow.

Differences Between the Two Groups

A total of three differences are identified from the children's responses to the questions on what they knew about China. These differences are in (a) the awareness of the Chinese New Year celebration, (b) the number of the children who had a Chinese friend(s), and (c) the level of exposure to and competency (especially oral) in the Chinese language. All of these differences seem to be closely associated with families, ethnic communities where the children came from, or access to the media rather than the impact of the curriculum in public education.

One of the differences between the two groups was the children's awareness of Chinese New Year as an important Chinese holiday. More C/AA children were able to name this holiday than their peers. Also, the number of students in the C/AA group who were able to describe or share any details about this holiday was much higher. However, little difference was found in how the two groups of children described the holiday. As a result, the difference was in the number of students with awareness, not in the level of their understanding. Their description seems to be predominantly influenced by how the Chinese New Year is celebrated in Chinatown or via media featured by dragon dances and parades.

The second difference between the two groups was the number of children who claimed to have a Chinese friend; significantly more C/AA children had a Chinese friend than their NC/AA peers, discounting some students' naming family members as friends. This indicates more communication among the C/AA families and a possible connection between these families with their relatives in the home country. Although this community is not considered to be an "enclave" such as Chinatown, communication among people sharing the same ethnic background seems to be much more than those from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Finally, the third group difference was exposure to the Chinese language. Significantly more C/AA children were exposed to Chinese language than those in the NC/AA groups. Since the public school did not offer Chinese classes, children's exposure to Chinese written language should be closely associated with weekend/after school community-based Chinese schools or home support. Despite this difference, the vast majority of the C/AA children still did not have any literacy in Chinese, and over one third of them did not even have oral proficiency in Chinese. In comparison, at least 96% of the NC/AA students were not able to write Chinese characters and 72% of them had no oral proficiency in Chinese. However, the fact that more C/AA children were exposed to the Chinese language may not prevent heritage language attrition, since basic language exposure rather than proficiency level was examined in this study.

Major Similarities between the Two Groups

The two groups exhibited more similarities than differences in their responses to all questions in the survey. These similarities include the following: (a) image of China, (b) China and other Asian countries, (c) level of understanding, and (d) Chinatown and media.

Image of China. In the eyes of all these children, China remained famous for its food in addition to the Great Wall, Chinese New Year, and panda bears. The responses confirmed the results from the previous studies (Liu, 2004) on the U.S. second grade children's knowledge about China. However, new information provided by the children in this group was "toys or products made in China." This can result from the booming economy in China in recent years or be a reflection of the buying power of this group's families. The children were obviously exposed to this information when they received new toys and other products manufactured by China. Additionally, exposure to media reports on products made in China can be responsible for the children's awareness of this aspect.

China and other places. Many places around the world or items associated with other places, especially in Asia, were mistakenly linked to China. Sushi as a typical Japanese food was named as a well-known Chinese food or even a well-known Chinese person. Moreover, Korea, Japan, and Tokyo were believed to be cities of China. Places close to or in the U.S. such as Mexico, California, Washington, D.C., and Chinatown were reported to be the capital of China. In identifying the location of China, some students offered responses such as "in Southern Africa," "in Pennsylvania," "Close to Sweeden," "next to California/Texas/New York," or "by Los Angeles."

Besides the errors, when children revealed their knowledge about China, they seemed to focus on the target country as an independent entity that was "far away" with hardly any attention given to its international relationships with other countries. As a result, like the U.S. second graders but unlike the Chinese second graders (Liu, 2004), none of the children in this study mentioned any information about the international relationship between China and the U.S. or China and other countries. In preparing children for a global society, it is important for educators to guide them to understand other countries and people around the world in light of their own cultural, social, geographical, and other aspects. Discussion and knowledge about the international relationship between the two countries can better prepare students for the future as global citizens.

Level of understanding. The majority of the children, whether Chinese Americans or not, were aware of the Chinese New Year, or the Spring Festival as an important Chinese holiday. What the children knew about the

Chinese holiday seems to come from their observations of Chinese New Year celebration parades organized annually in Chinatown or on a Chinese culture day at a school site. One student's comment is a good representation of this group of children: "They [Chinese] have parades, dragons and little red packets" to celebrate New Year." Other children reported that Chinese people say "Gung Hay Fat Choy" (Happy New Year), which is also the title of a children's fiction book (Behrens, 1989). However, many children may not be aware that this expression is only used by Cantonese-speaking Chinese-Americans in Chinatown or elsewhere, and over 95% of Chinese do not speak Cantonese, which is one of many dialects in China.

Related to the Chinese New Year, other children were also aware of the Chinese zodiac, whether the exposure was related to the New Year celebration in Chinatown, a Chinese restaurant, or a multicultural activity organized at school. However, none of the students captured the theme of the Chinese New Year: family reunion with an important family dinner on New Year's eve (Ren, 2004). Nor did they know that the signature food to celebrate the Chinese New Year is dumplings (pronounced *jiao-zi* in Mandarin Chinese) because "it sounds the same as 'change of the year and the day' in Chinese" (Ren, p. 40). The celebration is not entirely complete until Chinese family members, young and old, get together to make and eat dumplings in celebration of the New Year. Therefore, the "dragon dances" and "parades" merely serve to add excitement to the family reunion to celebrate the transition between any two lunar years or the last day of the previous year and the first day of a new year, to be more accurate. The real purpose of this celebration obviously did not reach the radar of these children, whether C/AA or their peers.

Moreover, the responses from the children show that the international education they received is at the surface level of "food" and "festivals" (Walker, 2001). "There is nothing wrong with a costume day or food festival; both can be great fun and contribute to a positive school environment. But simply asking students to dress in their national costumes and join the parade around the school does not provide the learning experiences that develop rigorous thinking about international concerns" (Skelton, Wigford, Harper & Reeves, 2002, p. 54) or address high-level thinking in cross-cultural and international understanding. Apparently, a need arises to create opportunities for students to develop abilities that require thinking and questioning through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1984) in international education. For example, when children are introduced to a new culture or holiday, comparison and contrast can be used to challenge them to go above and beyond the surface level to gain a deeper

understanding of what they observe and to discuss why people do what they do. For students who are exposed to the Chinese New Year celebration, such as the group of students of this study, their learning can be moved to a higher level when they are asked to think about and discuss questions such as the following: Why do Chinese celebrate Chinese New Year or what is (are) the theme(s) of celebrating Chinese New Year? Which holiday in the U.S. is similar to the Chinese New Year? Why do you think they are comparable? To answer the above questions, students can start from data collection with library or online searches, museum visits, and an interview of first generation Chinese families about how and why they celebrate the Chinese New Year in their home country away from Chinatown. Follow-up activities in analysis and comparison between cultures can allow students to develop a better understanding of what is behind or at the root of cultural presentations.

Chinatown and media. Clearly, Chinatown had a special place in these children's minds. They brought up this word or place repeatedly in their responses to questions on the survey. Their responses indicated that they related China more with Chinatown, a Chinese-American community in the U.S., than the country in Asia. Some students even believed that Chinatown is the capital of China. This phenomenon can be a reflection of multicultural education that addresses issues related to cross-cultural understanding among different ethnic groups and promotes diversity in the U.S. (Banks & Banks, 2007; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006) when these children were exposed to one of the ethnic groups in the U.S. While it is very important to educate children to respect diversity within the U.S., a good understanding of other countries and the world not only is essential to global citizenship but can also serve to strengthen the quality of multicultural education. Therefore, Chinatown can certainly serve as a window for children in the U.S. to have a glimpse of the Chinese culture. There is a fundamental difference between Chinatown and China, the country located in Asia. Both China and Chinatown can be studied, but there needs to be a clear distinction between Chinatown as a Chinese American community in the U.S. and China as a country on the other side of the planet where many Chinese Americans originally came from.

Additionally, findings in this study suggest the impact of the media. The media, especially movies and TV, seem to play a major role in what these children knew about China. Martial arts or action movies, starring Jacky Chan and Bruce Lee, apparently were viewed by a large number of children. Similarly, Mulan, as a fictional character produced by Hollywood, was also regarded by the children as a famous Chinese person. The

fact that pandas showed up on the children's "know" list can be a result of visits to the zoo or perhaps news reports or other media. Wolong Nature Reserve, where major efforts are being made to preserve pandas, also became part of what the children knew about China. To effectively add an international component to the curriculum, children's learning can be strengthened if media producers and educators are able to collaborate to make learning more coherent and systematic.

CONCLUSION

Education and curriculum play a crucial role in children's learning and what they know and understand. Heritage language and culture alone do not guarantee that children such as those in the C/AA group would automatically learn more about their home country, culture, and language. Educators and policy makers can look into making sufficient use of the natural resources in culture, language, and other aspects available in the C/AA communities to help C/AA children maintain their heritage culture and language while helping NC/AA children develop a second language and culture in public schools. To include language and international education programs in public school curriculum can be a good beginning to show students that heritage or foreign languages are valued in the mainstream to improve the quality of international education.

Chinatown, a Chinese American community in the U.S., is no doubt very different from China, a country in East Asia. The impact of Chinatown on both C/AA and NC/AA children was significant, which can serve as a good foundation for educators to help children make a transition from "here" or understanding of Chinese American culture and community to "there" or understanding of past and present China and Chinese culture. Having a Chinese New Year celebration every year in the same way may not be helpful in advancing student learning in international understanding. More in-depth learning that requires critical thinking can be organized to add new information to the initial awareness that is based on a holiday celebration.

Children need opportunities to explore a target culture or country beyond the surface level. It is far from satisfactory if children can name only a few facts about food or holidays of a target country or culture. Children must be challenged with critical questions to develop a better understanding of who they are in relationship to others around the world and learn to read important messages underneath and beyond the surface level. To achieve the goal, collaboration between educators and media may be necessary to create meaningful and exciting learning opportunities that better prepare children in international education.

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APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY

1a & b: What Chinese holiday do you know? How do you describe it?

2a &b: Do you have a friend/friends whose native language is Chinese? If yes, what do you like about the friend/friends?

3: Where is China?

4a & b: What is the capital of China? Please name any other places in China.

5: Who is/are well-known in China?

6: What is China famous for?

7: Can you speak Chinese? If yes, say something in Chinese.

8: Can you write any Chinese words? If yes, write something in Chinese.

9: What else do you know about China/Chinese?

10: What do you want to know about China/Chinese?