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Teaching international students from Confucian Heritage Culture countries: perspectives from three U.S. host campuses

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Abstract

U.S. host campuses face instructional challenges from increasing numbers of international students from Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) countries. Yet, the presence of CHC students offers learning opportunities for U.S. faculty in the context of internationalizing their higher education campuses. This study surveyed faculty at three U.S. host universities. It explored faculty understandings of Confucian culture, their perceptions of CHC countries' international student learning, strategies used by faculty when teaching CHC students, and value faculty recognized when learning from CHC students. Results showed that a majority of faculty recognized the core values of Confucian culture. Yet, they were not fully aware of the cultural impact on CHC students' learning, and the strategies they employed were mainly from the American perspectives. They did not integrate CHC students' cultural heritages in their teaching practices and only partially accommodated CHC learners in teaching. This study calls for consciousness to transform faculty mindsets understanding the importance of students' cultural differences in order to bring about a dramatic change in their teaching practices. Doing so may enhance the success of CHC students fomenting further internationalization at their host universities.

Keywords Confucian Cultural Heritage · Internationalization of education · Non-western perspective · Higher education teaching and learning · U.S. faculty · International students

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education has integrated an international, intercultural, and global dimension into teaching and learning goals displayed them as a dynamic process, introducing new aims, activities, and actors (Chen 2011; Knight 2004). U.S. higher education institutions make continuous efforts to retain global leadership in welcoming worldwide students, not only because it "is an essential contributor to America's economic competitiveness and national security" but more importantly "their diverse perspectives help enrich classroom learning for home students" (Open Doors 2017a, b para, 7 and 8). To achieve desirable goals, host faculty members are key, expanding their knowledge and skills, helping international and home students learn from each other, in various teaching and learning activities designed and delivered with cultural sensitivity for academic success.

Currently, 45% of international students studying in U.S. come from Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC): China, (32.5%), South Korea (5.4%), Vietnam (2.1%), Taiwan, (2%), Japan (1.7%), and Hong Kong, (0.7%). U.S. higher

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education institutions prioritize Asian countries for outreach and recruitment of international students. The top 10 include five CHC countries, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Japan (Open Doors 2017a, b). Although these societies have distinctive social and culture norms, they share common CHC values of harmony, collectivism, supporting hierarchy, underscoring family centeredness, and education (Sun 2013), which have developed unique ways of socializing, teaching, and learning that present instructional challenges to host faculty.

Internationalization of higher education helps foster faculty openness to broader views and alternative ways of teaching/learning from other cultures. Learning from non-North American and/or European cultures (Merriam & Associates 2007; Reagan 2018), such as CHC, becomes contextually necessary, leading faculty to become more culturally competent and culturally responsive teachers (Wlodkowski 2008). Research calls for internationalization of higher education to be undertaken at the individual skills level of host institutions' faculty members (Crisan-Mitra and Borza 2015; Gopal 2011). Understanding host faculty's perception of CHC international students' culture, their learning and teaching CHC students may facilitate host institutions, enhance faculty's cross-cultural teaching practice, and ultimately support their campus' educational internationalization (Niehaus and Williams 2016), and lead faculty to become culturally competent and responsive teachers (Wlodkowski 2008) with global mind (Aktas et al. 2017; Jorgenson and Shultz 2012).

Research shows that Confucian culture has a strong impact on CHC students' learning (Holmes 2005; Mortenson 2006; Roy 2013; Ryan and Louie 2007; Sun 2013). Numerous studies of CHC international students studying abroad in countries, like UK, Austria, and New Zealand, reflect how faculty members perceive the CHC international students' challenges and struggles encountered on their learning on campuses (Barron 2007; Gu and Maley 2008; Kingston and Forland 2008; Ryan et al. 2013), which may serve as resources for U.S. host faculty members. Studies conducted with CHC international student in the U.S. usually report student's learning experiences though a qualitative design from a single country such as China, Japan, or Korea or from a single campus (Dong and Chittooran 2012; Lee 2009; Kim 2006). Research also indirectly reveals faculty's understandings of CHC international student's campus experience (Henze and Zhu 2012; Tran 2013; Zhang 2013).

However, an understanding of faculty members' knowledge of CHC, and how they teach in classrooms consisting of CHC international students' presence, from multiple U.S. host campuses is desirable. Such research may provide new insights regrading faculty members' cultural competency and culturally responsive teaching strategies (Dewey and Duff 2009) towards CHC students. Prior research on single CHC students such as Chinese, or Korean, or Vietnamese, though helpful, may not fully reflect reality where classrooms may present more CHC students from several countries. Understanding how host faculty members teach and interact with these CHC international students provides opportunities for developing future effective practice and can enhance faculty's role in the internationalization of higher education (Stohl 2007; Urban and Palmer 2013).

Using survey questionnaires and open-ended questions, this study reported perspectives of faculty members from three participating U.S. mid-West public/State research universities on CHC, examined faculty members' teaching strategies applied to classroom consisting of CHC international students, and explored their stances on the value of CHC and their student brought to their instructional practice.

Four research questions were developed to inform the study:

1. What are faculty members' understandings of Confucian culture?
2. What are faculty members' perceptions of CHC countries' student learning?
3. What are the teaching strategies used by faculty members to either accommodate or not accommodate CHC students?
4. How do faculty members value learning opportunities and the resources these students may bring to them?

The study defines host faculty as those hired to teach (graduate and undergraduate courses), research, or perform service by these U.S. higher education institutions. Two participating research universities are land-granted public state universities, while one is a state-assisted public university. Acknowledging the study's limitation of only surveying three mid-West public US host campuses, we hope it may serve as a reference for other host institutions and for the future campus internationalization strategic plans adopted by other similar institutions.

Literature review

Understanding the impact of culture

Culture from the Latin *cultura* means to cultivate. It is a lens through which we view people's past and present, and we use it to make sense of the world. Culture plays a foundational role in constructing education of a society (Chan 2008; Tan and Chua 2015). Culture is essential in teaching and learning for development of both faculty members and learners. Culture becomes an active agent of internationalization of higher education. Improving cultural competency and becoming culturally responsive

teachers are examples of new goals for both teachers and learners in the globalized world.

Culture may be seen "as a heritage, as discourse, as worldview, as social position, as cognitive style, or as a byproduct of race and gender" (Wren 2015, p. 3). Culture also describes patterns of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and belief, as well as material artifacts produced by a human society and transmitted for one generation to another (Reagan 2018). However, culture is not a fixed objective fact. "Culture actually exists in a contextual framework that mediates between the universal aspects of human nature and the specific aspects of individuals personality, as well as between learned and inherited characteristics" (Reagan 2018, p. 19). Human beings constantly shape and are shaped by their culture, which is a continued historical, living, and changing construct. Just as the evolving human society, cultural understanding contains its own contradiction and contestation.

In this study, we use Jarvis' (2006) definition, "culture is all the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions that we, as human beings, have added to our biological base" (p. 55), which becomes "an inextricable and essential component of both individual and social identities" (Reagan 2018, p. 19). Cultural differences facilitate us to detect our own epistemological lenses and limitations to study and understand the others more effectively. A review of how teaching and learning are influenced by different cultural traditions (CHC societies/US society) follows. We understand that language on Confucian/US distinction on teaching and learning presented below can be argued, may reflect bias, or even be a false dichotomy (Ryan and Louie 2007). However, Reagan (2018), contends that "what begins as a false dichotomy can emerge as an effective way of challenging …ethnocentric assumptions and bias" (p. 10).

Impact of Confucian culture on teaching and learning

Historically, Confucianism had strongly shaped education, teaching, and learning in many East Asian countries (Huang and Brown 2009; Sun 2013; Tan and Chua 2015; Thanh 2012), "Confucian" in Chinese means "*The Way of the Cultivated Person*." *Ren*, as the backbone of Confucian philosophy centers human beings to manifest their true nature and the Confucian education is learning to be a true human being (Merriam, S., & Associates 2007; Sun 2011). Other Confucian key concepts include *Yi* (justice), *Li* (ritual/proper human behavior), and *Filial Piety* (respecting and obeying parents), which have also been the historical and cultural roots valued by CHC communities for educating young generations. Virtue, social order, and harmony generally considered as the Confucian core are still valued and have continuously influenced people's way of life in general and in teaching and learning particularly in many CHC countries (Nguyen et al. 2009; Roy 2013).

Confucian tradition values that human beings co-exist in social contexts and emphasizes that people's relationships should fall into correct place and order through *Li* for appropriate behaviors (Zhang et al. 2005). *Wu Lu (the Five Code of Ethics*), based on the Confucian five basic human relationships, has been established and practiced throughout history. Individuals learn to follow *Wulun* for proper interactions and social behaviors. In turn, harmonizing social order and valuing collectivism ultimately keep human beings living peacefully together (Wenh-In Ng 2000; Yum 2007). CHC emphasizes self-efforts on learning and lifelong practice towards moral and ethical being. Hard work, willpower, or doing one's best (*the Analects*, Book VII, Chap. 1, 25) is much more important than ability in the lifelong learning process. Learner's aptitude and attitude towards recognizing, amending wrongdoings, and correcting errors (*the Analects,* Book XIII, Chap. 13) is underscored, preventing future mistakes.

Influenced by Confucian traditional culture, CHC countries, such as China, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Taiwan, explicitly value ethical human behavior, moral decision-making, hierarchy, social order, and harmonious relationships among individuals and towards others in social contexts (O'Dwyer 2017; Romar 2004). CHC countries' educators often receive high honor and are considered as authorities and experts to pass on their "processed" information and bring knowledge and skills to learners. Teaching from CHC characterizes transmission, apprenticeship, and teacher/authority-centered, largely didactic and text-bound with little time for discussion or questioning (Holmes 2005; Sun 2013). Students usually listen attentively, learn from the teacher, and follow their instructions carefully. CHC classroom teaching features collective learning, underscores discipline, and values conformity (Smith and Hu 2013).

The emphasis on conformity and submission enables CHC students to be mindful and modest, "quick in action but cautious in speech" (*the Analects*, Book 1, Chap. 4). Students are expected to respond only when asked by the teacher as a way of testing their understanding of what has been learned (Thanh 2012). Hierarchy is to be respected to the extent that a student should not complain (Gorry 2011). Further, the current highly competitive national entrance exams of CHC countries have led CHC students to receive an education that applies more feeding, competition oriented, and authority-centered approaches, which leaves no room for collaboration, creativity, or communication among students (Holmes 2005; Thanh 2012). Some researchers also found CHC international students desire to fit in, resulted in them being reserved verbally and to eschew attention. Further, using the class time to talk about one's own issues or questions is seen as selfish (Hodkinson and Poropat 2014;

O'Dwyer 2017). Therefore, students feel more comfortable following the traditional way of seeking alternative guidance via their same-culture students' peers rather raising an issue openly (Gu and Maley 2008; Sun 2013).

Impact of American culture on teaching and learning

Contemporary U.S. society has increasingly challenged the nature and content of liberal education. Promoting scientific and technological innovations and practical applications, valuing individualism, human rights, and equality, advocating for social justice, democracy, and free market have required content changes and extensions to goals of liberal education (Reagan 2018). In the U.S., different philosophical orientations also prevail (Elias and Merriam 2007) that have influenced the goals and practice of education, for example, the philosophy of Dewey's pragmatism and progressive education has guided American education practice for almost a century (Sun and Kang 2015). Students learn by interacting with the environment, through experience, learning by doing, engaging in problem-solving and using inquiry in classroom discussion, and group work/projects/discussion (Smith and Hu 2013). Articulation of personal understanding or hypotheses, a willingness to complete work independently, and work collaboratively are adopted by students when learning (Gorry 2011; Hodkinson and Poropat 2014; Thanh 2012).

Using Hofstede's cultural model (2004), the United States may be characterized as individualistic cultural society. Its higher education cultural norms include many students that have been trained to present personal learning and articulate individual perspectives via the communicative requirements of the dialogic model, to question and give answers, and debate since kindergarten classrooms (Nisbett 2003). It is not uncommon to see in many American classrooms that students are provided considerable opportunities for asking questions, engaging in critical thinking, and participating in a dialogue with professors (Smith and Hu 2013). In these learning environments, students learn to think independently, contradict teachers' knowledge, or question their authority (Hodkinson and Poropat 2014) and are expected to draw their own conclusions. Therefore, teachers and students tend to share their power and experience, and knowledge emerges through sharing discussion, group collaborations, connectivity, and creativity among students and the teacher in the classroom. Having independent, creative thinking, and critical analysis are skills many U.S. faculty expect of their students (Smith and Hu 2013).

Different perspectives on teaching and learning

CHC teaching and learning perspectives differ from those in the U.S. (Nisbett 2003; Straker 2016). Viewed through the American lens, CHC learning is considered odd, passive, non-critical, teacher dependent (Barron 2007), and prone to plagiarism (Ryan and Louie 2007). Tan and Chua (2015) argue that this is because CHC international students face different culture and education ideologies and unfamiliar concepts and strategies, such as dialogue, group interaction, participative learning, and exploration discovery in teaching and learning. Consequently, CHC international students who do not meet expectations based on the American classroom cultural are attributed a deficit identity (Straker 2016).

Stereotypes of CHC students' problems, such as being passive, surface learners are challenged by Biggs (1996). Biggs pointed out that CHC student are academically reflective and competitive learners. Some scholars had a more nuanced understanding of the impact of culture and the historical enriched and multi-dimensional Confucianism (Sun 2013). Ryan and Louie (2007) provide more detailed review and commentaries with caution on binary views of deficit or surplus on students from CHC. Additionally, scholars suggest different approaches such "small culture" vis "large culture" for developing a new culture in classrooms (Holliday 1999). Straker's review (2016) also confirms that "Culture of origin is the defining factor shaping the experience of international students" (p. 309) and therefore it calls for an intercultural approach for a culturally inclusive pedagogy.

Values of non-North American/European perspectives for U.S. faculty and campus educational internationalization

Manifestly, internationalization of education has broadened "our perspective on the history of educational thought and practice" and challenges "both our own ethnocentrism and the ethnocentrism of others" (Reagan 2018, p. 4). Thus, it is necessary to study the lived issues and experiences from CHC countries' international students. Doing so helps "expand our understanding of education, broadly conceived, through the examination and study of other approaches to educational thought and practice" (Reagan 2018, p. 4). Globalization makes other perspectives, such as CHC, crucial for educators to understand, expand, and possibly apply as alternatives to address global learner's needs. Merriam and Associates (2007) argue that "by becoming acquainted with other ways of learning and knowing, we enrich our understanding of learning" (p. 12). CHC international students and U.S. faculty bring their own beliefs and expectations in terms of teaching and learning, which present challenges for host faculty's teaching, yet it also provides opportunities for host faculty to transform their thinking about their teaching.

Research method

This study, through survey questionnaire with open-ended questions, explored three participating universities faculty members' understandings of Confucian culture, perceptions of CHC international student learning, teaching strategies they used in classrooms containing CHC students, and the value CHC students brought for their future teaching. It gathered numerical data, analyzed using SPSS software, from participants of a questionnaire implemented by the authors, and contributed to address the gap in previous studies, as many studies addressing CHC-related topics were qualitative in nature (Zhang 2013; Tran 2013; Henze and Zhu 2012; Lee 2009).

Participants and procedure

Participants from three mid-West public land-grant universities participated in our survey. University One enrolls approximately 13,500 students from 50 states, and 90 other countries (among which about 715 are international students) and with study abroad program to 50 countries each year. University Two's annual enrollment approximately is 23,000 among which over 1600 are international students. University Three enrolls approximately 22,000 students annually, with more than 17,000 attending on campus among which 450 international students from 55 countries. The percentage of international students on these campuses on average reflects about the national rate, which is five percent among students enrolled in U.S. higher education (Open Doors 2017a, b).

Data collection included three phases: (1) International and registrars' offices at the three universities were initially contacted to identify possible survey participants, which helped learn about international students' origins, programs admitted, and classes enrolled; (2) faculty, programs, departments, or colleges were then identified based on the fact that there are international students from CHC countries who have been currently and/or historically admitted by and enrolled in their colleges, departments, and programs; (3) an invitation email detailing the purpose of our research project, its procedures, the Institutional Review Board approval letter, and a hyperlink to access the survey instrument was sent to faculty members within the identified colleges, departments, programs that currently and or historically enrolled by CHC students; and (4) two additional email reminders of survey participation invitations with the survey link were sent again to remind faculty from all colleges to participate in this research.

Seventy-nine faculty members responded to the online survey from the three participating universities with 33 from University One (U-1), 23 from University Two (U-2), and 23 from University Three (U-3), respectively. The survey return rates for the three universities were 42% for U-1, 23% for U-2, and 29% for U-3. 52.8% ($N=50$) of respondents indicated that they were between the ages of 31 and 60. Their experiences of teaching international students from Confucian culture ranged from "< 3 years" to "more than 11 years" (almost equally distributed among the predefined categories: "< 3 years," "4–6 years," "7–10 years," "more than 11 years"). More than half of the faculty participants were from European countries, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (57.1%), 24.1% were from Asian countries, and the rest were from other parts of the world. Within these three universities, about 27.7% of the faculty participants were from Arts & Sciences, 20% were from Education, 16.8% from Engineering, 11.2% from Health Science, 9.7% from Technology and Aviation, and the rest (14.6%) from all other colleges of the three participating universities. The faculty participants also indicated that they mainly interacted with international students from Confucian culture as follows: teaching (67.9%), research and lab work (50.9%), and advising and campus activities (43.8%). About half (47.3%) of the participants interact with international students at the undergraduate level and 49.1% at the graduate level.

Instrument

The development of our survey was based on our research questions and literature review. We centered on themes influenced by Confucian traditional cultures/values such as harmony, social hierarchy, collectivistic, family-centeredness–learners' support system, ways of socializing, and learning and teaching. Survey questions focused on three aspects: (1) understanding US faculty perceptions of Confucian culture; (2) students' socializing/learning styles/strategies, and faculty own teaching strategies or preferences; and (3) understanding values that Confucian education practices may offer. To further seek faculty members' experiences and comments and suggestions, we also offered open-ended questions and encouraged additional sharing.

Our survey consisted of total of 19 questions (see Table 1 for more details): among which seven questions asked about faculty perceptions, eleven questions asked for participants' demographic information, and the last open-ended question sought for participants' additional comments and experience. Survey questions (SQ) number One and Two were correlated with the Research Question (RQ) 1: What are faculty's perceptions of Confucian Heritage Culture? SQ number Three responded to RQ2: What are faculty's perceptions of CHC students' learning characteristics? SQs number Four, Five, and Six answered RQ3: What are the strategies used by the faculty to accommodate (or not) CHC students? SQ number Seven was

Table 1 Research and survey questions and some survey results

Research questions (RQ)	Survey questions (SQ) responding to research questions	Faculty members		Results
		M	*SD*	
RQ1 What are faculty's perceptions of Confucian Heritage Culture?	SQ1: Have you ever heard, read or discussed about any of the key concepts of Confucian cultural tradition values	1.37	0.39	Recognizing the core values of Confucian culture, without being fully aware of the impact of some core values on CHC students' learning
	SQ2: I have also heard, read or discussed about other key concepts of Confucian cultural tradition values…	1.89	0.32	
QR2 What are faculty's perceptions of CHC students' learning characteristics?	SQ3: In my impression, students from Confucian countries…	3.47	0.45	Recognizing CHC students' structured and authority-oriented learning, not the impact of the cultural ramifications on students from different CHC countries
RQ3 What are the strategies used by the faculty to accommodate (or not) CHC students?	SQ4: I adjust my teaching strategies to accommodate the learning needs of international students from Confucian culture	1.49	0.50	Using some strategies to accommodate CHC students mainly from the western perspective, without integrating the CHC students' cultural heritages into the western teaching practice
	SQ5: I have applied the following teaching strategies with students from Confucian cultures	3.28	0.60	
	SQ6: I also use other teaching strategies not mentioned on this survey to accommodate students from Confucian culture	1.88	0.33	
RQ4 How do faculty members perceive value and learning opportunities these students bring to them?	SQ7: In terms of their contribution to the western way of learning and teaching, I think that students from Confucian culture…	3.60	0.54	Recognizing the value and contribution of CHC perspective and necessity of considering the cultural differences in teaching practice
Demographic data	SQ 8 to SQ 18			
Open—ended questions: asking for additional comments and general understandings of CHC students	SQ 19: Participants' observations of distinctive characteristics of CHC students, their teaching strategies for CHC students, and difficulties/struggles they experienced in the teaching CHC students			See other tables in the paper

directly linked to RQ4: How do faculty members perceive value and learning opportunities these students bring to them? SQs number Eight to 18 were collecting demographic data. SQ 19 were open-ended questions, asking additional comments and general understandings regarding participants' observations of (1) distinctive characteristics this group of learners displayed; (2) teaching strategies that are beneficial to CHC international students; and (3) difficulties/struggles they experienced in the teaching and learning transaction. Survey questions were aligned with a five-point Likert scale.

A pilot study was tested with a number of faculty members to ensure readability and ease of use for participants. Three external faculty members provided input and suggestions for revision. The survey instrument was finalized after modifications recommended by faculty members tested. Lastly, all survey items were tested for internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha (Overall impression $a = .861$; Perceptions $a = .662$; Teaching strategy adjustments $a = .851$; Learning contributions $a = .777$), indicating that the instrument had high internal consistency.

Data analysis

Descriptive analyses were performed to provide an overall picture of the survey items, as well as demographic characteristics such as age and time spent at a university. Once descriptive analyses were complete, frequency analyses were run in accordance with our study's four research questions. All questions concerning knowledge of CHC and its international student group means were then determined.

Pros and cons of using survey method and perceptions of faculty data

Although questionnaires (including online questionnaires) are acknowledged as one of the most useful, cost-effective methods to help collect large amounts of data, we recognized some of the pros and cons of the online survey method we applied, and the faculty perceptions collected and analyzed for our study. Even data exhibiting fairly vigorous evidence, when good validations are in use, are not without weaknesses (Santos and Horta 2018). McDonald (2008) contends one weakness, which may represent a limitation of this method, can be respondent bias, especially regarding socially desirable response bias—people often respond in a way that presents them in a more socially favorable light, even if these responses do not reflect how they actually think or behave (Paulhus 1991). Similarly, Kagan (2007) questions whether questionnaires are as objectively accurate as behavioral measures, but he does recognize that self-reports are the only way to get personal notions. Further, Moskowitz (1986) argues that this is a concern, which can be mitigated by improving on the questionnaire construction and that the instructions given to participants can help reduce these biases. To help reduce these biases, the questionnaires used in this study were modified after being tested in a pilot study.

Perception data generally refer to respondents' interpretation of a phenomenon, rested upon their frame of reference that are usually shaped by a personal believe system, point of views, and efforts of meaning making of their experience (Mezirow 1991; Santos and Horta 2018). In fact, "interpretations are articulations of meaning schemes and involves assumptions that adults in modern society find necessary to validate" (Mezirow 1991, p. 31). In other words, "the way individuals interpret phenomenon aligns not with reality as it is but rather with a realty as they construct it" (Santos and Horta 2018, p. 657), as reality is constituted by perceptions through experience (Mezirow 1991, p. 21). Our study rested upon the stance that Santos and Horta (2018) take, that is methodologically this may present a drawback, yet it is "mitigated according to a literature that describes self-perceptions as powerful influences defining human action…. Self -perceptions are found to be compelling

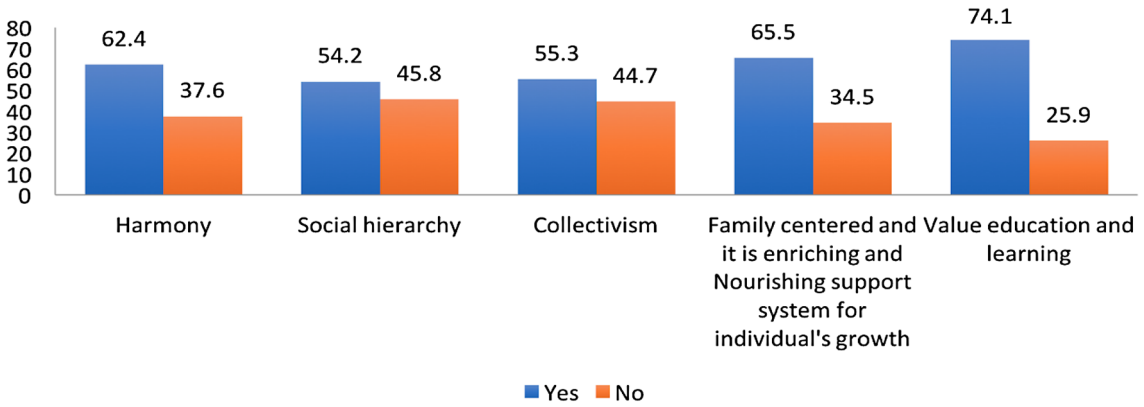

Fig. 1 Participants' overall understandings about Confucian culture tradition

Table 2 Faculty's perception of the learning characteristics of students from CHC

Learning characteristics	Valid *N*	MIN	MAX	*M*	SD
Are quiet	79	1	5	3.68	0.78
Rarely challenge others	79	1	5	3.48	0.89
Are willing to accept information given by authority	79	1	5	3.89	0.76
Rely on readings	79	1	5	3.78	0.95
Speak up when asked	79	2	5	3.53	0.93
Willing to participate small group discussions	79	1	5	3.34	0.86
Do not want to take leadership	79	1	5	3.20	0.83
Nod heads even when not understanding	79	2	5	3.44	0.76
Issue with academic writing	79	1	5	3.15	0.89
Use literature without understanding the need to cite original sources	79	1	5	3.28	1.07

Table 3 I adjust my teaching strategies to accommodate the learning needs of CHC international student

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid				
Yes	40	35.7	50.6	50.6
No	39	34.8	49.4	100.0
Total	79	70.5	100.0	
Missing				
System	33	29.5		
Total	112	100.0		

influences of behaviors and action in higher education settings" (p. 657).

Results

Faculty's understanding of CHC

Aggregated frequency analysis (average percentage of the combined five core value constructs) indicates that 62.3% of those who answered "Yes" participants had some overall understanding of the Confucian culture tradition, and 37.7% did not and answered "No." Besides, 8% of the participants were able to list examples or attributes of Confucian culture including "support of elders," "balance," "connectedness with nature," "peacemaking," "pacifism," "do not do to others what you would not have them do to you," "structured learning," "ritual driven," and "respect others." These were observed through activities indicated in the open-ended questions, such as *collaborating when planning events, travel, student organizations, social activities/social settings, business groups, and attending professional conferences,* which faculty had with the CHC students.

Faculty's perceptions of CHC international students' learning characteristics

The majority (about two-thirds) of the participants have some general knowledge of Confucian cultural tradition. However, the percentage of distinctive traditional CHC values regarding *Social Hierarchy* (54.2% and 45.8%) and *Collectivism* (55.3% and 44.7) as being relatively close between the answers of Yes and No, which gives new insights (see Fig. 1). Participants were asked to rate ten learning characteristics/behaviors of CHC students identified in the literature, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) based on their experiences shown in Table 2.

Further, responses from the open-ended questions' section regarding distinctive characteristics of CHC students were categorized into (1) learning attitude: examples include that they perceive CHC international students as "hardworking," "respectful," "good listeners"; (2) reactions to social/cultural interactions, learning preference, such as "good at memorizing the rules," "very disciplined," "great work ethic," "learn better from the structured materials and written assignments"; (3) motivation and general impression of CHC international students, for instance, they seem to be "inactive in group discussions and group work" and "relatively weak in independent work." They "seek out like

Table 4 Strategies applied in teaching, ranked by participants (Likert scales 1–5 from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Rank	Strategies	Category	Percentage
1	Use office hours for homework clarification and guidance	Agree	55.8
2	Summarize main points by the end of the unit learning	Agree	52.6
3	Ask them to share learning and contribute to their peers' learning	Agree	50
4	Ask them to read and share their perspectives	Agree	45.5
5	Use group/team projects to evaluate their learning	Agree	44.2
6	Give more structured lecture/handouts	Agree	38.5
7	Ask them questions in front of the class	Agree	36.8
8	Give supplementary readings	Neutral	36.4
8	Provide examples and materials from previous students from Confucian culture	Disagree	36.4
9	Encourage them to participate in class discussion or group discussion without informing them ahead of time	Agree	35.1
10	Ask their learning preference	Neutral	34.2
11	Give them longer time for written assignments and allow them to revise and resubmit their assignments	Disagree	33.8
12	Direct them to appropriate offices to receive academic support (learning center/writing center, library, etc.)	Agree	27.7

students with which to connect and study." All these identified characteristics may have reflected the influences by the CHC and their previous education experiences.

Teaching strategies faculty used or not used to accommodate CHC students

In terms of whether or not the host faculty adjusted teaching strategies to accommodate learning needs of CHC international students, responses were similar (see Table 3).

The results regrading strategies applied in faculty teaching indicate that the top three teaching strategies are *using office hours for homework clarification and guidance*, *summarizing main points by the end of the unit learnin*g, and *asking them to share learning and contributing to their peers' learning*. The two strategies most respondents did not apply when teaching students from CHC were *providing examples from previous students' work and materials from Confucian culture, and giving them longer time for written assignments and allow them to revise and resubmit*. Two strategies participants did not think would benefit CHC international students included *asking their learning preference, and give them longer time for written assignments and allow them to revise and resubmit their assignments* (see Table 4).

Regarding difficulties/struggles, respondents replied in the open-ended questions with some additional teaching and learning strategies applied, which covered two broad areas that positively show being culturally responsible. The first area is how to encourage CHC students to engage in group discussion and collaborative work:

- "It's better to mix with American students and students from other cultural backgrounds to improve their spontaneous responses to the discussion questions and collaborative work,"
- "ask these students to respond if they are not active in discussions,"
- "advocate for them when other students speak over them or don't ask their opinions,"

The second area is how to cope with CHC student's learning preferences, such as "provide the structured and written

Table 5 Possible contributions of CHC international students' cultures to western teaching and learning

Contributions	Valid *N*	MIN	MAX	*M*	SD
Offer us lived experience, diversify our ways of learning and knowing	78	2	5	4.06	0.73
Remind me of using examples/materials from their cultural context in my teaching	78	1	5	3.51	0.86
Teach me to view and think from another perspective	78	2	5	3.77	0.80
Give me new insights about teaching and learning	78	1	5	3.60	0.84
Present opportunities that help transform my teaching and improve their learning	78	1	5	3.64	0.90
Contribute to class learning especially by helping domestic students become more culturally responsive and competent	78	2	5	3.68	0.85
Have equally important valuable knowledge we should learn from to better our own selves	78	2	5	3.88	0.76

materials" and "discuss writing styles with Instructor in the office."

Faculty's perceived value and learning opportunities from CHC international students

Seven specific contributions identified in the literature that participants were asked to rate from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Frequency analysis indicates that 67.95% of the participants selected "agree" or "strongly agree." As shown in Table 5, a majority of participants acknowledged CHC international students' contributions to the American classroom. Yet, only about half indicated that they may adjust their teaching for CHC students, which prompts the question what caused the gap. Three international participants (originating from Middle East, the Pacific Islands, and Russia) particularly mentioned in the open-ended responses that their cultural backgrounds and religions have strongly influenced how they teach. This may imply that being international they are more sensitive and understanding of other cultures.

In summary, the findings show a majority of participants hold a general understanding of CHC. More than half of the participants indicated an awareness of learning characteristics/behaviors of CHC students that reflected researchers/literature. Besides, several faculty members observed additional distinctive characteristics from CHC international students. Some participants shared other teaching strategies they had used, indicating adjustments made when working with CHC international students. It is interesting to note that participants were almost equally divided into three groups (yes, no, and no answer) regarding the adjustment of their teaching strategies to accommodate learning needs. Overall, more than half of the participants conceptually recognized the value of this non-North American and/or European culture and its educational perspective that CHC international students brought to them.

Discussion and implications

The results, though limited to three participating universities, reveal some U.S. faculty members' understanding of CHC, which is identified as both "deficit and surplus" (Ryan and Louie 2007). The results mirror literature that emphasizes on cultural differences with CHC/U. S. as the parameters (Straker 2016). While discussing the following themes from our findings, we call attention to issues of reviewing and assessing the *Others* at an epistemological ethnocentrism level (Reagan 2018). We finally argue for transforming the mindset of faculty members for conscious understanding of cultural differences and bring teaching and learning into a whole new dimension for sustained internationalization of higher education.

Recognizing the CHC values, yet not making connection to cultural impact on CHC students' learning

The majority of participants (62.3%) have basic understandings of Confucian general culture values. More specifically, faculty recognize the listed core values: education and learning (74.1%), family centered and support for individual growth (65.6%), harmony (62.4%), collectivism (55.3%), and social hierarchy (54.2%). U.S. faculty's understanding of Confucian core values is consistent to the literature reviewed. As high as 74.1% of the participants recognized that CHC value education and learning, which is echoed by the fact that more CHC international students pursue their higher education abroad, as 45% among all international students study in U.S (Open Doors 2017a, b).

Some participants perceived *support of elders, pacifism, structured learning, quiet, and respect others* as parts of CHC, which to a certain degree are extensions or applications of the core values. The commonly accepted views of CHC are respecting authorities and orders (Xu 2006), which characterize the CHC international students as being hard-working, conscientious, self-disciplined, good at listening, and having the willpower to pursue the best towards self-realization (Analects, VII, I, 25).

Most faculty have some general understanding of cultural differences and they do recognize some core CHC values. Yet, they are not fully aware of the impact of the cultural elements of CHC on the preference of students' learning in the U.S. These cultural elements include obeying authorities, viewing knowledge from the authorities, or the authorized readings as the legitimated knowledge, and viewing teachers as the main information source (Smith and Hu 2013; Thanh 2012). It is important to provide faculty members with some general knowledge about how culture can impact/hinder the CHC students' learning, and how to adjust to different teaching expectations based on students' cultural backgrounds (Tan and Chua 2015).

Some faculty members observed that CHC core values such as hierarchy and collectivism influenced CHC students' classroom behaviors, such as respecting a teacher and listening attentively, as well as seldom taking class time for personal questions to avoid wasting other people's time. This may indicate that CHC as factors still impact these students' learning behaviors compared with local students. In practice, faculty members should be aware that CHC international students are usually reserved verbally and avoiding

attention (Hodkinson and Poropat 2014; Liu 2001). As the participants in this study recommended, instead of asking students' opinions in classroom, discussing questions in instructor's office or less public settings will help CHC students' learning.

Interestingly, 45.8% and 44.7% of participants did not select *social hierarchy* and *collectivism*, respectively, as core components of CHC, despite them being considered featured Confucian culture (Romar 2004). This may indicate that the CHC culture is changing with the influences of the social, economic, and educational reforms in CHC societies. Tan and Chua (2015) stated that "the current curriculum reform in China reflects neo-liberal education policies and practices such as decentralization, school autonomy, students-centered teaching, critical and innovative thinking, and real-life applications… borrowed from the "West" (p. 692). The current generation CHC learners are becoming increasingly similar to their American peers (Kingston and Forland 2008). It is not surprising to notice that culture is no longer monolithic, rather it becomes interconnected and it influences one another through constant contact (Ryan et al. 2013).

Recognizing the impact of Confucian culture on CHC students' learning preference, yet not the impact of the cultural ramifications on students

Participants' perceived that CHC international students preferred structured learning, internalizing, and memorizing materials gained (Chen and Bennett 2012). They were inactive in group work or group discussion, conversation, and dialogue-type learning comparing with their American classmates. This contradicts the co-learner relationship of American learning environment that is intended to reduce the power hierarchy between students and instructors, and students are encouraged to take the lead for further inquiry and are praised for constructing new knowledge (Liberman 1994). Confucian culture differs from American culture, which emphasizes the role of the relationships in learning environments (Kang and Chang 2016). Students from CHC follow order to ensure that appropriate behaviors are performed (Zhang et al. 2005).

Group-oriented behaviors actually are highly valued in CHC (Chuang 2012). Such group-oriented learning performs differently in Confucian context. Confucian education emphasized dialogues and interactions between learners. Learning in CHC is viewed as a reflective and socially interactive activity (Elliott and Tsai 2008). Research shows that CHC students such as Chinese students usually perform group work and collaborative learning outside of the classroom with the same cultural peers (Gu and Maley 2008).

Some American faculty members were aware of the Confucius culture, recognized CHC students' structured and authority-oriented learning preferences, but did not recognize the cultural ramifications and how they impact students' learning. The strategies they used were mainly from the American perspective, without integrating CHC students' cultural heritages into their teaching practices. Understanding the purpose of participation-related teaching activities in different cultural contexts becomes critical. Thanh (2012) explained that CHC students preferred structured learning due to memorization-based teaching and learning for highly competitive national exams in CHC countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Ryan et al. (2013) observed that Chinese teachers faced practical hurdles implementing Socratic teaching and training students' critical thinking in classroom time, for the same reason. These are the practical reasons which influenced CHC students' way of learning. Confucius culture also developed its different traditions in different Confucius-influenced countries. In practice, faculty members can integrate CHC students' cultural heritages into their teaching practices by recognizing not just the impact of the core Confucius value on students' learning, but also the ramifications of Confucius value reflected differently on students coming from different countries.

Partially accommodating CHC learners in teaching, and more actions needed for integrating other cultural perspectives in teaching practice

It is promising to see that half of the respondents adjusted their teaching strategies to accommodate CHC learners. *Mixing students from other cultures with American students* was one example to improve class discussion and collaborative work. In group discussions, to value students' different cultural backgrounds, instructors, as culturally responsive educators (Wlodkowski's 2008), can ask students to share something unique or from their own cultural experience and to integrate that into what is learned/discussed.

However, more actions are needed to increase faculty members' awareness of culture differences among students from different countries. For example, providing examples is widely used in teaching in CHC since it is one of the favorite teaching methods used by Confucian. However, some respondents specified that they would not "*provide examples from western students to show CHC students*." Most participants did not use *"ask learning preference*" nor "*using examples from CHC student cultural contexts"* to help meet CHC student's learning needs. Faculty members expect CHC learners to learn from the American teaching yet without being given references that U.S. host institutions expect to have. Learning is socially situated, and it is

often associated with learner's prior learning, cultural contexts, and experiences (Jarvis 2006; Merriam and Bierma 2014). Offering some examples from American students is helpful for CHC students, especially the newly enrolled students who lack American cultural and context knowledge to internalize the specific learning expectations in American context.

Values and contribution of CHC perspectives

US campus internationalization of education requires attention to other non-American/European perspectives. This study found that two-thirds of the participants recognized the values that CHC international students could bring to enrich American teaching and learning. Specifically, they believed that teaching CHC students reminded them to use examples/materials from the CHC cultural tradition (see Table 5), yet they have not shown actions in their teaching.

A continuing concern is that half of the participants had not considered making changes to assist CHC learners. This may imply the lack of intercultural competency among American faculty members (Gopal 2011). Such issues urge host institutions to develop faculty workshop to address. If properly facilitated and motivated by campus internationalization efforts, U.S. faculty members may grow more attention to CHC international students, which is necessary considering that CHC students who have an increasing impact on higher education institutions across the U.S. Simultaneously, CHC offers benefits such as exposure to international perspectives to US faculty's professional development. Institutionally, it helps enhance American student's cultural competency for global careers, as well as fostering longer-term worldwide networks and relationships for manifold future opportunities (Open Doors 2017a, b).

To sustain these benefits, U.S. faculty have a significant role in the teaching and learning transactions that help ensure the success of students' learning. Central to this is that host faculty need to understand how the cultural dimension impacts ways of learning. Learning to transform faculty's "habit of mind" and/or "point of view" (Mezirow 1991) in the teaching and learning processes becomes a new task in educational internationalization. In practice, these American faculty members can be informed through various academic activities, such as campus-wide workshops, new faculty orientations, regular faculty development and training, guest lectures and presentations, new innovative for teaching, co-teaching with scholars or graduate students from other cultures, and exemplar showcase, to name a few. One other way of taking advantage of learning American perspectives is to use campus lived experience through the teaching and research assistants (GTA/GRA), especially the high number of international students in STEM fields who daily support the faculty across host campuses. Their diverse perspectives help enrich classroom learning for U.S. students. Efforts to promote non-American/European ways of teaching and learning can also be implemented in final course evaluations to provide appropriate feedback for faculty.

Limitation of the study and significance

This study provides insight on CHC from faculty members of the three public research universities where the survey was conducted. The size of the participants could be expanded to fully reflect U.S. faculty's perceptions; therefore, it only offers limited explanations of U.S. faculty's perceptions about CHC, whether or not they adjusted their teaching approaches to help CHC students, and how they measured their progress.

Understanding teaching is a cultural activity. This survey with open-ended questions presented a limited yet a multilevel investigation, both theoretically and practically. Further research is needed to deepen and broaden our understanding of host faculty's perspectives not only on Confucian cultural tradition in general, but also the changes of the CHC and how such changes impact students' learning. This study mainly focuses on the general ideas of CHC and how they influence students from the CHC countries. However, each CHC country is different in terms of maintaining the traditional Confucian values. In our study, we did not address the variations in terms of changes in Confucian values to fit into the local practical needs, and how these new values impact the international students. This will be a worthy research topic for future researchers. Additionally, research needs to be conducted with regard to the role host faculty could actively play towards enhancing educational internationalization on campus, and how the students' own cultural values and traditions bring alternatives to effective teaching and learning that are equally invaluable in the more globalized world.

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