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Personality Traits of Effective Teachers:

A Comparison of American and Chinese Secondary Teacher Candidates' Narratives

Dr. Minghui Gao
Dr. Mark McJunkin

Background

❑ Gao (2011, 2012)

- Six common categories of effective teacher attributes in America and China: teacher knowledge, professional attitude, classroom performance, rapport establishing, student motivating, and personality.
- In personality, American subjects showed significantly less concern with teacher personality compared to their Chinese counterparts.
- Personality, like other categories in the study, is a composite variable composed of various personality traits

❑ A further step to look closely into potential cross-cultural difference in componential personality traits.

Rationale

- ❑ **Teacher Effectiveness**
 - **Essential to student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010), and**
 - **Enhancing student learning more than any other aspect of schooling (Marzano, 2006).**
- ❑ **Since 1920s, looming interests in factors for teacher effectiveness brought about a wide range of studies.**

Effective Teacher Personality Traits

- Adapt instruction to student needs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005)**
- Show high expectations for student success (Malikow, 2005-2006)**
- Make learning fun (James, 2007)**
- Come to class prepared (Zhang, 2004)**
- Demonstrate enthusiasm about teaching (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2003)**
- Connect with students (Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 2000): friendly, respectful, agreeable.**
- Care (Noddings, 2004; Baumann, 2006-2007)**
- Fairness (Minor et al., 2002)**

Rationale

□ Important questions unanswered:

- **Effective teacher personality attributes: universal or culturally specific?**
- **To what extent would effective teacher personality attributes valued or emphasized in one culture still hold true in another culture?**

Cross-Cultural Studies

- ❑ Liu and Meng (2009):
 - First explored Chinese perceptions of effective teacher attributes, and
 - Then went on to check whether these attributes were consistent with those that other researchers had reported of effective teachers in America.
 - Concluded that high **consistency** exists between Chinese and American perceptions of effective teacher attributes.
- ❑ Consistency \neq homogeneity. Both Americans and Chinese may emphasize teachers' personality traits such as caring and sense of humor, but their emphases may significantly differ in magnitude.
- ❑ Differences between American and Chinese education are many.

Same Concept, Different Cultures

American classroom

- Multiple instructional models
- Student-centered instruction
- Teachers-students as equal participants in ed. processes
- Students encouraged to think critically, question the authority of teachers (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Minor et al., 2002).

Chinese classroom

- Teacher-centered instruction
- Lecture as major form of content delivery.
- Hierarchical teacher-student interaction (Chan & Chan, 2005).
- Students seldom question the authority of teachers (Biggs, 1996; Bond, 1991).

A Narrative Approach

- ❑ **Current literature emphasizes ideal teachers**
 - ❖ **Ideal teachers ≠ actual effective teachers (Wei, den Brok, & Zhou, 2009).**
- ❑ **Narrative produces a true picture of actual effective teachers:**
 - ❖ **Exists in the recollection of life events (Nash, 1994)**
 - ❖ **Involves representation of the multiple constructions of events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).**
 - ❖ **Ascribes a coherent order to discrete events (Gao, 2010)**
 - ❖ **Helps make meaning of the “subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture, and a social system” (Behar, 1990, p. 225).**

Research Questions

- 1. What, if any, common personality traits of effective teachers are represented in the narratives of American and Chinese preservice teachers?**
- 2. Does culture have an effect on preservice teachers' perceptions of personality traits of effective teachers? If yes, what specific trait(s) does it affect?**
- 3. Does gender have an effect on preservice teachers' perceptions of personality traits of effective teacher? If yes, what specific trait(s) does it affect?**

Participants

- 155 participants, including 80 American and 75 Chinese secondary teacher candidates

Country	USA	China	N
Gender			
Male	36	24	70
Female	44	51	95
N	80	75	155

- Chinese participants: $\chi^2 (1, N=75) = 9.72, p = .002$.
- American participants: $\chi^2 (1, N=80) = 0.80, p > .05$.

Data Collection

- ❑ **Semi-structured, Open-ended Survey in which participants write a two-scenario essay**
 - 1) **Establish the mental imagery: Who the teacher was, What kind of person he/she was, and What was most impressive about him/her**
 - 2) **Elicit story-telling about a real-life classroom event: What happened, What the teacher did, How he/she conducted as a teacher, and What made him/her do so**

Data Coding & Analysis

- ❑ **Codebook developed by consulting past work:**
 - ❑ Open coding, relational coding and thematic coding
 - ❑ A guest researcher coded all the essays independently;
 - ❑ Inter-rater reliability was high ($r = .92$);
 - ❑ Disagreements were discussed and resolved.

- ❑ **Analysis**
 - ❑ Qualitative: Case analysis & Cross-case analysis
 - ❑ Quantitative: MANOVAs and Two-way ANOVAs

Qualitative Results

RQ#1: A total of 12 Salient Themes (Personality Traits) were Identified

Trait	Theme
01 Adaptability	Reflecting on personal experiences and making necessary adjustment to teaching based on emerging situations
02 Agreeableness	Pleasant to communicate with and willing to interact with students
03 Caring	Being sensitive to individual needs and understanding students' differences in learning styles and other personal background issues
04 Enthusiasm	Showing passion or interest in teaching and students
05 Expectations	Challenging students to achieve high
06 Fairness	Maintaining consistent standards, rewarding or punishing students based on policy and behaviors
07 Friendliness	Easy-going, outgoing, like friends, friendship
08 Honesty	Telling students the truth about their strengths and weaknesses, and admitting mistakes and correcting them
09 Humor	Interesting, funny, making class enjoyable, joking
10 Patience	Showing patience to students of different learning speed, being responsive to student questions, and responding to student request of slowing down.
11 Respectfulness	Respecting students of different achievement levels and backgrounds
12 Responsibility	Coming to class well prepared, good organization of materials and activities, and being available to students after class

Quantitative Results

RQ#2: Effects of Culture on Personality Traits (N = 155)

Trait	USA		China		F (1, 151)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Adaptability	.61	.49	.37	.49	13.56	< .001
Agreeability	.09	.28	.17	.38	4.49	.036
Caring	.36	.48	.50	.50	5.87	.017
Enthusiasm	.40	.49	.28	.45	2.12	.15
Expectations	.30	.46	.19	.39	3.52	.063
Fairness	.23	.42	.16	.37	1.98	.16
Friendliness	.18	.38	.56	.50	28.10	< .001
Honesty	.26	.44	.31	.46	.06	.81
Humor	.20	.40	.48	.50	13.90	< .001
Patience	.18	.38	.48	.50	13.97	< .001
Respectfulness	.22	.42	.16	.37	2.51	.12
Responsible	.36	.48	.09	.29	14.55	< .001

Quantitative Results

RQ#3: Effects of Gender on Personality Traits (N = 155)

Trait	Male		Female		F (1, 151)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Adaptability	.45	.50	.53	.50	2.53	.11
Agreeability	.17	.38	.11	.31	2.25	.14
Caring	.43	.50	.49	.50	.24	.63
Enthusiasm	.35	.48	.34	.48	.00	.99
Expectations	.17	.38	.29	.46	4.24	.04
Fairness	.22	.42	.18	.39	.07	.80
Friendliness	.32	.47	.39	.49	.04	.83
Honesty	.33	.48	.25	.44	.96	.33
Humor	.25	.44	.39	.49	1.63	.20
Patience	.25	.44	.37	.49	1.30	.26
Respectful-ness	.20	.40	.19	.39	.04	.83
Responsible	.25	.44	.22	.42	.00	.96

Quantitative Results

Interaction Effects of Culture by Gender on Personality Traits (N = 155)

Trait \ Country by Gender	F (1, 151)	p
Adaptability	4.78	.03
Agreeability	2.68	.10
Caring	1.14	.29
Enthusiasm	.06	.82
Expectations	.01	.94
Fairness	3.88	.05
Friendliness	.45	.50
Honesty	4.38	.04
Humor	.73	.39
Patience	.88	.35
Respectfulness	6.00	.02
Responsible	.54	.46

Quantitative Results

Mean (SD) of Content Analysis Variables and T-test for Variables with Significant Interaction

Trait \ Country	USA			CHINA		
	Male	Female	t	Male	Female	t
Adaptability	.64 (.49)	.59 (.50)	-.43	.17 (.38)	.47 (.50)	2.62*
Fairness	.31 (.47)	.16 (.37)	-1.57	.08 (.28)	.20 (.40)	1.24
Honesty	.39 (.49)	.16 (.37)	-2.38*	.25 (.44)	.33 (.48)	.72
Respectfulness	.31 (.47)	.16 (.37)	-1.57	.04 (.20)	.22 (.42)	1.94

* $p < .05$

Findings

❑ Effects of Culture

- ❖ Culture has an effect on 7 personality traits: teachers' adaptability, sense of humor, patience, responsibility, agreeableness, caring, and friendliness
- ❖ Compared to the Chinese, Americans showed significantly greater concern with teachers' adaptability, sense of humor, and responsibility and were less concerned with teachers' patience, agreeableness, caring, and friendliness.

Findings

❑ Effects of Gender

- ❑ Only one personality trait—teacher expectations—is significantly affected by gender, with females showing a significantly greater concern than males about the importance of teacher expectations
- ❑ Gender has no significant effect on other personality traits.

Findings

□ Culture by Gender Interaction

- A significant Culture × Gender interaction effect on adaptability, fairness, honesty, and respectfulness.
 - ✓ Chinese females were more concerned about teacher adaptability than their male counterparts
 - ✓ American males were more concerned about teacher being honest and their female counterparts.
- No significant Culture × Gender interaction effect on other characteristics.

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Thank You!

mgao@astate.edu

mmcjunker@astate.edu