

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'
DIFFICULTIES IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership

by

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Dedication

I dedicated this dissertation to my family

In the loving memory of my father, Boun Chareune,

To my faithful and prayerful mother who embraces life in all its colors,
Thank you, Mom, for your joyful and loving spirit and unceasing cares.

To my selfless and loving husband Mike Chen,
Thank you for always standing by me and believing in me.

To my four beautiful children, Nathanael, Angelique, Caleb-Joel, and Emma,
You are my pride and joy. Thank you for your love and patience.

How priceless is your unfailing love, O' God!

[I took] refuge in the shadow of your wings.

Psalm 36:7

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Abstract

UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES
IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

by

STACEY CHAREUNE-CHEN

Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership

For over ten years, the United States has seen a continuous increase of the international student population in its high schools. The enrollment of international student grew 17% from 2013 to 2015 (Farrugia, 2016). Past researchers have examined international student adjustment problems and school concerns at the university environment. However, little research has been done on issues pertaining to international students under the age of 18. In addition, school administrators, counselors, and teachers may need adequate professional training to address the unique needs of this phenomenon. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and assess the cultural, emotional, social, and academic challenges of international students attending U.S. high schools and gain a better understanding about this new phenomenon. Furthermore, this study explored school staff, parent, and host family perspectives on challenges that international students face. Data for this study was obtained through semi-structured interviews and survey documents. The findings of this study primarily suggested that international students needed to satisfy their physiological and safety needs in order to adjust satisfactorily to their new environment.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Since 1953, colleges and universities in the United States have experienced continuous growth in international student enrollment. According to Bohm, Davis, Meares, and Pearce (2002), the global number of international students in higher education is expected to grow to 7.2 million in 2025, from 1.8 million in 2000, with Asia leading 70% of the global demand for higher education in foreign countries. For the past decade, the number of international students in the U.S. has increased by 8%, from 573,000 in the academic year 2003/2004 to 886,000 in 2013/2014. California is ranked as the number one state for hosting students from foreign countries. According to the Open Doors Report (2014), the state of California experienced an increase of 9.2% (from 111,379 to 121,647) of international students from 2012/2013 to 2013/2014. However, after years of continual growth, the “Open Doors” reported that Fall 2016 enrollment of international students in universities across the State began to flatten due to social and political climate worldwide (Redden, 2017). While, simultaneously California witnessed an increase (18%) of international students enrolled in Grades 9 through 12 on an F-1 visa, which made it the largest state to host international students under the age of 18. In 2013, 73,019 international students were attending both private and public schools, 67% (48,632) of them were enrolled in 4-year high school programs, and 57% of the students came from Asia, essentially from China and South Korea (Farrugia, 2014). As of 2015, the international student enrollment in U.S. high schools has grown another 17%, leading to over 84,000 (Farrugia, 2016). Moreover, the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), a unit of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), reported that the number of international students enrolled in

secondary education in California has increased more than 35% from 2014 to 2016 (from 18,147 to 24,916). The growth in international student enrollment in U.S. high schools is substantial and poses challenges to school personnel to understand how to interact and support international students culturally, socially, emotionally, and academically (Farrugia, 2014; Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Lee & Rice, 2007).

According to Pandit (2007), universities around the world are positioning themselves to attract international students, which have become “a hot global commodity” (p. 156). Nationally, the U.S. recognizes that international students help advance scientific research in America (Altbach, 2004; Lee & Rice, 2007; Ruiz, 2014) and ultimately become “excellent ambassadors of American culture” (Pandit, 2007, p. 156) when they return to their home countries. At the university level, schools acknowledge the need to prepare American students to achieve “global competency.”

University leaders recognize the significant economic benefits that international students bring to the institution. International students pay nonresident tuition and fees, which contribute financially to the institutions as well as the local and national economies (Lee & Rice, 2007). According to the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) (2016), international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities contributed over \$32 billion to the U.S. economy in the 2015-2016 academic year. In addition to contributing economically to their host country, international students in higher education bring cultural diversity and global perspectives to U.S. school campuses and classrooms, which create international business networks (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Lee & Rice, 2007; Pandit, 2007).

International student enrollment has risen considerably over the past two decades in the U.S. The U.S. remains the most desirable destination for international students from around the

world. Despite the economic, political, and social complexities happening in America, many foreign countries, particularly Asian ones, still regard an American education as one of the most prestigious systems in the world. Unlike European and South American secondary students who only seek a 1-year exchange program in an American high school, Asian students, primarily from China, seek to earn a U.S. diploma (Farrugia, 2014).

International student enrollment in U.S. high schools has become the new phenomenon in the world of education (IIE, 2016). International students who seek to earn a U.S. high school diploma must obtain an F-1 student visa. They have a choice to attend either a public or private high school. However, students on an F-1 visa can only enroll one year in public U.S. high schools under State Department rules. On the other hand, international students can attend U.S. private high schools for as many as four years.

Confronted with a decrease in students and revenue, U.S. private high schools have actively recruited Chinese students for whom their parents trust will get a head start and be better prepared for U.S. higher education via an American secondary education (Goodnough, 2010; Lew, 2016).

From the New York Times, Spencer (2014) stated that international students who attend private U.S. high schools pay “more than five times as much as local students,” which is equivalent to \$47,000, while another article indicated that public schools can legally charge a tuition fee to students who do not live in the district (Goodnough, 2010). In 2010, Stearns public high school in Millinocket, a little town in Maine, charged incoming international students about \$13,000 a year, based on the district’s average spending per student, and \$14,000 for room and board (Goodnough, 2010). In California, new 2017-2018 Los Angeles Unified District (LAUSD) tuition fees cost \$17,150.28 for an F-1 student who wishes to enroll in any of its high

schools (LAUSD, 2017).

By coming to the U.S., these students are detached from their original social network (home, family, friends, community, etc.) and confronted with a new culture, home life, language, social network, environment, standards, and educational system.

Problem Statement

As the international high school student population in the U.S. grows, so does awareness of the diverse challenges for international students during their stay in American high schools. Despite the extensive literature addressing international students' adjustments to host institutions, and cultural and academic differences, at the higher education level, very few studies have looked at international students in U.S. secondary schools (Grades 9-12). This study examined the social and cultural challenges faced by international students in American high schools and how they affected their transition to U.S. life.

The majority of these students have no relatives or family friends in the United States during the transition. Therefore, these students are not only strangers to a new country, but also assigned to live with host families who serve as legal guardian during their academic years. Moreover, international students experience different levels of difficulties depending upon their backgrounds in their home countries. Researchers in higher education (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Lee, Koeske & Sales, 2004; Lee & Rice, 2007), agree that Asian students face more difficulties in acclimating to the host culture than their European counterparts. Similarly, in a Canadian study, Popadiuk (2009) depicts more challenges for Asian students in high schools as compared to European students. Like others who seek educational opportunities outside of their home country, international students studying in the United States experience culture shock and difficulty adapting to the practices of this new journey while learning to acclimate to the new

environment (Lee et al., 2004; Pritchard & Skinner, 2002). Therefore, U.S. high schools need to assess constructively their international student needs in a manner similar to studies performed in higher education institutions (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Owens & Loomes, 2010), in order to determine appropriate support services in which staff can be trained on diverse cultures and meet the unique needs of international students (Farrugia, 2014; Owens & Loomes, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine and assess the cultural, emotional, social, and academic challenges of international students attending U.S. high schools and gain a better understanding about this new phenomenon. In addition to the acculturation challenges faced by international students, this study hopes to examine their unmet needs while living and going to school in the U.S. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by international students, the researcher will look at perceptions of parents, school counselors, and host families. An extensive collection of data on the hardships that international students face will be used to stimulate discussions among educators, leaders, and policy makers in U.S. secondary schools designed to inform programs that support international students' needs.

Significance of the Study

According to Redden (2014), the number of international high school students aged 14-19 tripled from 2004 to 2013. U.S. high school administrators and district office personnel are responsible for providing training and professional development to teachers and staff to better serve this growing population. Furthermore, Roberts and Dunworth (2012) indicate in their study that the “services for international students need to be more aligned to students’ expectations of service provisions, and more centered on students’ actual needs” (p. 517); Kegel

(2009) advises that “counselors should assess the level of social support students have” (p. 73). Likewise, Andrade (2006) states that institutions should not expect international students to adjust simply to the host country’s education system and life “without appropriate support and programming” (p. 133).

Casto, Steinhauer, and Pollock (2012) stated that the growth of international students affects high schools academically and socially in the following areas: school structures and practices, educational goals, professional development, classroom learning, enrollment increase and staffing, host families supply, and resentment from local students.

Hanassab and Tidwell (2002) reported that international students from different regions experience various levels of adjustment difficulties, also referenced as “cultural distance.” For example, Wehrly (1986) stated that students from non-Western countries (Asian and African) seek help “only from within the family” (p. 16) and feel stigmatized if they see a counselor. Additionally, non-Western international students, from a collectivistic culture, have more “difficulty making friends with locals” (Smith & Khawaja, p. 703, 2011). A staff member noted the social issue when students come from the same country: “the groups of international students just stick to themselves and don’t necessarily socialize with anybody” (Casto, et al., 2012, p. 8). On the other hand, students from Western countries (European and Latin America) are more inclined to seek counseling, form new friendships with local students, and have fewer adjustment problems (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Popadiuk, 2009; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wehrly 1986).

This study explores the challenges faced by international students attending high schools in one of the largest states hosting foreign students. In addition to the common difficulties that native high school students struggle with, international students deal with other sets of difficulties pertaining specifically to social and cultural adjustments (Li & Gasser, 2005).

There has been little research done on the complexities and successes of high school educators faced with the inflow of international students to their campuses. Therefore, the results of this study will inform K-12 practitioners and be instrumental in enhancing the knowledge and best practices of the administrators, counselors, and teachers who work with international students. Discussions with international students, parents, counselors, and host families reflect a comprehensive range of perspectives on international student difficulties and needs. This research also presents information that high school administrators can use to strengthen their infrastructure and efforts supporting international students.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international student issues and adjustment?

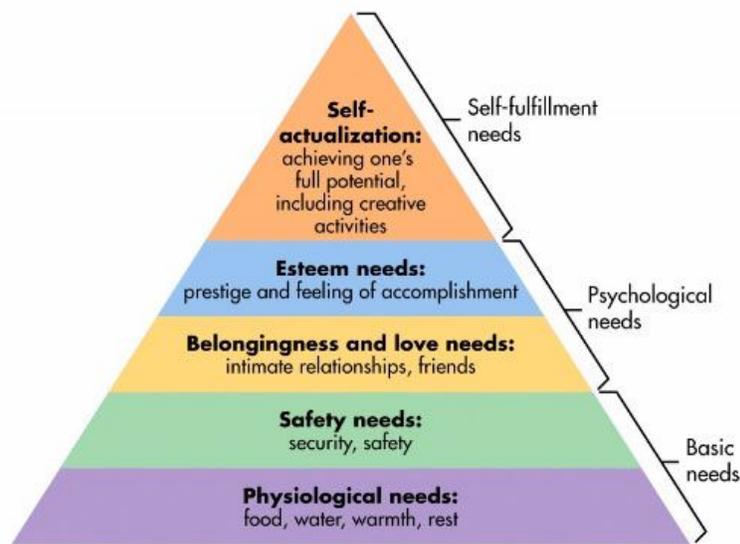
Conceptual Framework

In the past three decades, the influx of international students in host institutions (U.S., Canada, UK, and Australia) has increased the range of research on them in the following areas: challenges (cultural, social, and academic), integration, acculturation, etc. (Berry, 2005; Church, 1982; Hofstede, 1986; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).

To explore the issues faced by international students in American high schools, this study employs a combination of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Berry's Acculturation Model Theory as its conceptual framework. For over fifty years, Maslow's theory has been used to define international student challenges in comparison to those of local students (Owens & Loomes, 2010). According to Maslow's theory, an individual's needs are sequential: (1) the basic needs, (2) psychological needs, and (3) the self-fulfillment needs. Grounded by Maslow's theory, Lester (2013) stated, "The more these basic needs were satisfied, the better would be the psychological health of an individual" (p. 15). When basic needs are satisfied, the person can go on to fulfill the next level, and so on (Owens & Loomes, 2010). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is composed of three categories as shown in Figure 1.0 (Owens & Loomes, 2010, p. 278):

1. Basic needs include (a) physiological needs, such as food, clothing, and accommodation, and (b) safety needs, such as a home, properly adjustment to a new/no-family environment, and the feeling of safety.
2. Psychological needs comprise (a) belongingness and love, such as to a group or community, acceptance, or the ability to communicate effectively, and (b) esteem needs, such as competency or mastery of tasks (academic success), recognition, admiration, and the feeling of being needed.
3. Self-fulfillment needs contain (a) self-actualization, such as self-fulfillment and realization self-potential, and (b) self-transcendence, such as connection to something beyond ego, or helping other find fulfillment or realize their potential.

Figure 1.0 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.



Given the continuous adjustments required of international students from the time they plan and prepare to leave their home country to arrival in the host country, the primary challenge is to meet their basic needs first (physiological and safety). In accordance with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, if international students do not meet the fundamental two needs (basic and psychological), students will have difficulty achieving academic success and may not realize "a sense of well-being" (Owens & Loomes, 2010, p. 278).

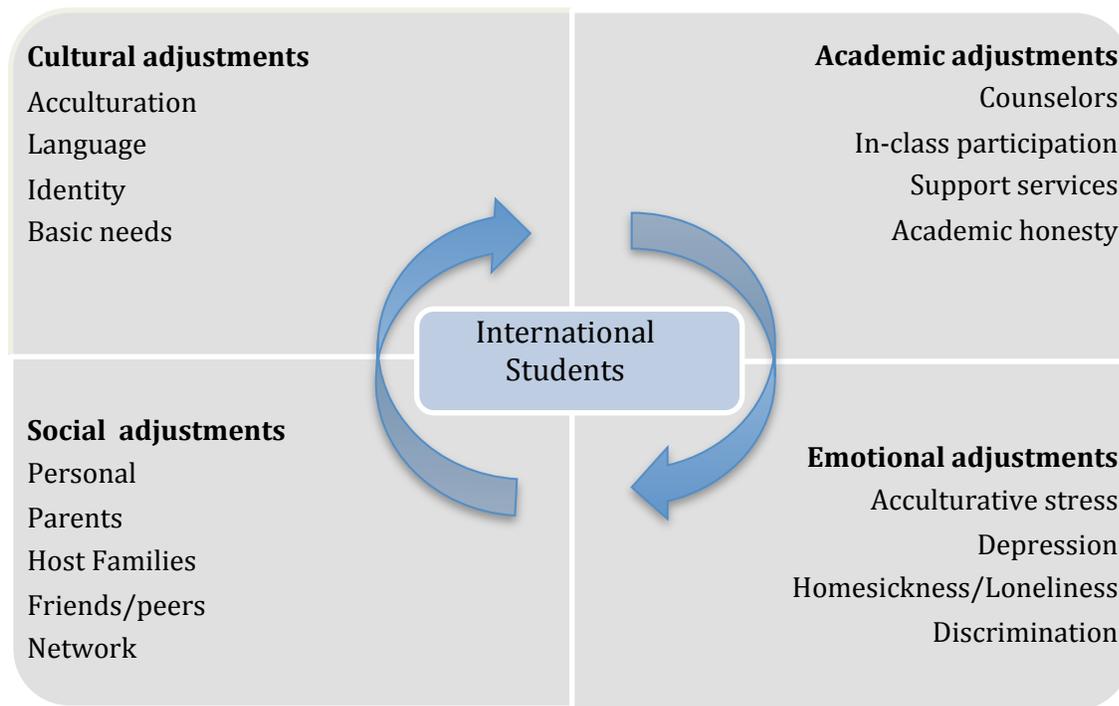
To help understand how one can successfully live in two cultures, Berry (2005) introduces the Acculturation Model Theory that involves "a dual process of cultural and psychological change" (p. 698). Berry's Acculturation Model Theory is based on two principles: (1) cultural maintenance, and (2) contact participation that leads to four acculturation strategies, shown in Figure 1.1 (Berry, 1997): integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. The acculturation process refers to the cultural changes of individuals from the original to the new culture as the result of migration (Berry, 1997).

Figure 1.1 Acculturation Strategies

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | Identification with the heritage culture: HIGH | Identification with the heritage culture: LOW |
| Identification with U.S. culture: HIGH | Integration Maintaining central features of the original culture while adopting key features of the new culture | Assimilation Full adaptation to the new culture without retaining the original culture |
| Identification with U.S. culture: LOW | Separation/Segregation Maintaining the original culture while rejecting the new culture | Marginalization Rejection of both the original and new cultures |

The combination of Maslow’s and Berry’s theories permits this study to explore a range of issues that hinder international students’ well-being and adjustment to American high schools. The following framework (Figure 1.2) offers a description of the four most critical actions that international students must make to integrate themselves more easily into the typical U.S. high school environment. It is important to recognize that each of the four adjustment areas are interconnected. Therefore, the challenges involve a combination of cultural, academic, social, and emotional issues that impact international students’ basic needs and acculturation. Furthermore, this theoretical framework may encourage high school administrators to assess and improve campus support services for international students as well as for school counselors and teachers.

Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework



Overview of Methodology

An ethnographic case study tradition was used for this study and used to examine the journey of international students in U.S. high schools. Case study research provided an in-depth understanding of all participants, which presented a “thick” end product that would illuminate the reader’s understanding of this phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

A holistic analysis of the data collected through interviews, focus groups, and a survey document (Creswell, 1996) allowed the researcher to better understand the challenges faced by international students. By using ethnographic analysis, this study captured and presented international students’ culture, beliefs, and values that influenced their decisions and actions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The results and findings of this research would enhance the knowledge of school administrators, counselors, and teachers, and help them to be more

innovative in creating programs that serve and more genuinely assist international students (Merriam, 2009).

Data collection for this qualitative study came from three sources: focus groups, interviews, and a survey document. Discussions from the initial focus group with international students and parents were used to prepare a questionnaire for one-on-one, in-depth interviews with international students, parents, a counselor, a director, and host parents. The researcher requested participation from nine international students, two host parents, three parents of international students, one school counselor, and one director from a private high school.

Qualitative research design is open and emergent, allowing room for exploration, flexibility, and creativity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Through the focus groups discussions, individual interviews, and a survey, the researcher identified multiple adjustment difficulties faced by international students when transitioning to U.S. high schools.

Definition of Key Terms

Acculturation. Acculturation is the process in which an individual acquires the culture of a new society (Ward, 1996).

Acculturative Stress. Stress occurs during the process of acculturation. The stressors are identified as a set of stress behaviors: confusion, anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality, alienation, and identity confusion (Berry, 1987).

Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Department of Homeland Security combined 22 different federal departments and agencies into a unified, integrated cabinet agency when upon establishment in 2002 (www.dhs.gov).

F-1 Visa. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, all international students have to be authorized to enter the United States as a full-time student at an approved accredited high school or higher education institution (USCIS, 2015).

High School Aged. This study defines high school aged students from 14 to 19 years old.

Homestay. Merriam-Webster dictionary (2015) defines homestay as “a stay at a residence by a traveler and especially by a visiting foreign student who is hosted by a local family.” However, in Australia, homestay is referred to as a local family who houses an international student (Richardson, 2003) for a monthly fee.

International Students. International students are students who leave their home countries to study in a foreign country without their parents; also called F-1 visa or J-1 visa students.

International students under the age of 18 are also referred to as “unaccompanied minors” or “parachute kids” (Popadiuk, 2009).

J-1 Visa. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) authorizes students from foreign countries to study in the U.S. on an exchange program by issuing a J-1 visa. The exchange program range from one semester to one full academic year depending on the country and school of origin.

Secondary Schools. This study defines and uses interchangeably the term secondary school and high school (Grades 9 through 12).

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). The SEVP is a unit of DHS that manages schools, and nonimmigrant students in F and M visa classifications and their dependents.

(www.ice.gov/sevis).

Limitations

Due to limited studies on international students in U.S. high schools, it is important to note that the literature review was predominantly based on international students from U.S. higher education and other countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and U.K.). However, all international students struggle with cultural adjustment and acculturative stress matters regardless of their academic level. Yet, we need to take into account that the age of international students may factor in to the level and intensity of challenges one experiences. With this in mind, it is crucial to select carefully survey questions tailored to high school students that are relatable.

Delimitations

This study covers both private and public secondary schools in Southern California. It includes both current and graduated international high school students who attend or attended U.S. high schools on an F-1 or J-1 visa. This study focuses on discovering teenage international students' needs and school infrastructures that assist the transition from a home country to the U.S.

Organization of the Study

This study is composed of five chapters. Chapter One provides the background, problem statement, purpose and significance, development of the conceptual framework, overview of the methodology adopted, limitation and delimitations, and the definition of key terms for this study. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature, looking specifically at scholarly research addressing international students' academic, social, and emotional issues in host countries (Australia, Canada, U.K., and U.S.). Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology used in this study. It includes the rationale of the methodology choice, research setting, date

sources and samples, data collection and analysis, and the confidentiality of this study. Chapter Four discusses the results and findings of this study. Finally, in Chapter Five there will be an analysis of the study's findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the cultural and academic challenges that international students encounter in American high schools. This research explores how international students are challenged socially and psychologically with acculturation that may impact their academic achievement and well-being. This study also seeks to discover resources and support services available in high schools and if they are tailored to assist international students' unique needs.

According to Chow's survey report (2011), which included 9,000 respondents from 11 countries covering four different continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America), the U.S. maintains its place as the world's leading destination of choice for education (Choudaha, 2015). Education in the U.S. continues to lead the world in the quality and the diversity of programs. The Open Doors 2016 report (IIE, 2016) indicates that the number of international students is up by nearly 50% from 2005/2006 to 2015/2016 (from 564,766 to 1,043,839). Within the same timeframe (2004 to 2013), the number of international students enrolled in American high schools has tripled. The international student enrollment in Californian private and public high schools has also increased, making California the largest host state of international students (Farrugia, 2014). American high schools experienced another 17% growth of international student enrollment in 2015 (Farrugia, 2016).

Due to limited published research and assessment for international students who attend U.S. high schools, the researcher will use studies done in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the U.K., as well as studies at institutions of higher education, to help understand high school aged international students. This literature review will present a range of difficulties

international students face when studying in a host country (Popadiuk, 2009; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Berry & Zheng, 1991), and provide a glimpse of stakeholders' observations when working with international students (Zhang & Brunton, 2007; Campbell, 2012; Ng, 2006; Pedersen, 1991; Richardson, 2003). It will include relevant empirical and theoretical research collected from the field of study on international students' social, academic, emotional, and cultural experiences. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

Theoretical Foundations

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham H. Maslow (1908-1970) was an eminent American humanist psychologist who published a paper on "Theory of Human Motivation" in 1943 and later expanded and developed the hierarchy of needs theory in "Motivation and Personality" (Maslow, 1954). Theorist believed that human behavior is driven and motivated by needs, and everyone has needs that should be fulfilled in a specific order with the purpose of advancing to the next level, starting from the bottom of the pyramid. Maslow classified needs in a hierarchical order and categorized them in five levels: (1) physiological needs; (2) safety needs; (3) needs of love and belongingness; (4) needs for esteem; and (5) needs for self-actualization.

Drawn by Maslow's theory, this study will consider international students' personal and environmental experiences, which may affect their ability to meet their basic and psychological needs prior to obtaining self-fulfillment needs. As described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' pyramid (Owens & Loomes, 2010), it is appropriate to predict that international students will face more challenges attaining the first two bottom levels of needs (physiological and safety) than local students.

According to Owens and Loomes' (2010) research in Australia, international students are focused on meeting their primary physiological needs such as living accommodations, clothing, and food. In many cases, this is the first time these students have to "take responsibility for these needs" (Owens & Loomes, 2010, p. 278). Once physiological needs have been fulfilled, these students deal with the challenges of meeting their safety needs, which include living on their own or with a host family, financial sufficiency, transportation, and establishing a feeling of safety. Satisfying these two basic needs are critical to the welfare of international students; more so than local/native students who can depend on their parents to take care of those needs.

Berry's Acculturation Model

John W. Berry is a professor emeritus of Psychology at Queen's University, Canada. Berry's work was inspired by working with Aboriginal people in Australia in 1967 (Berry, 1999). Along with his colleagues and students, Berry started his research in Australia, Canada, and India on "people's daily intercultural relations" that led to two main issues: cultural maintenance and contact-participation (Berry, 1999, p.13), upon which he created his framework that generated four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Berry, 1997).

Berry defines acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698). Berry suggests that both dominant and non-dominant groups “must deal with the issue of how to acculturate” (Berry, 1997, p. 9) in this plural society. For this study, the acculturation process is as critical to international students as to local students. Based on Berry’s acculturation model, the assimilation strategy takes place when non-dominant individuals seek to interact with other cultures without maintaining their own cultural identity. Contrary to the separation strategy, people avoid interacting with others, but hold on to their original culture. In the integration strategy option, the non-dominant group seeks to interact with others and participate in the dominant society while maintaining its own culture. Finally, the marginalization strategy states that individuals have no interest in maintaining their own culture nor connecting with others.

International Student Statistics

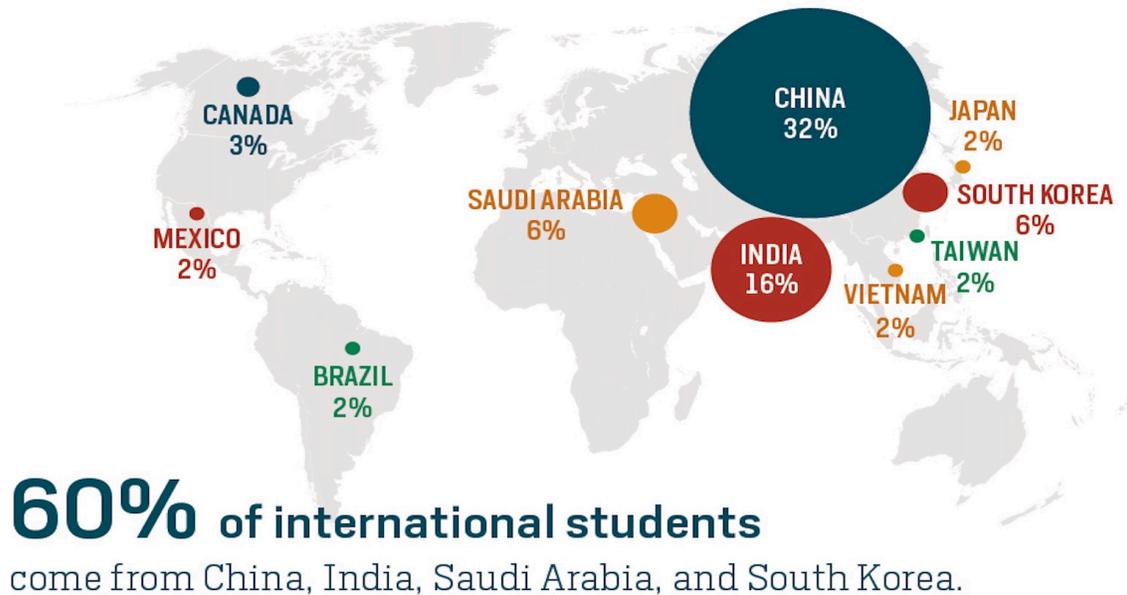
After World War II, the United States welcomed the increase in international students to strengthen cultural relationships with foreign countries around the world—with the intention of assisting and reconstructing education, providing technical support, and advancing the educational systems in emerging countries (Banjong & Olson, 2016; Garcia & Villarreal, 2014; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). Following this expansion, the Fulbright Hays Act of 1961, also known as the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, was established to benefit American and foreign exchanges (Banjong & Olson, 2016; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998).

Undoubtedly, the flow of international students into the U.S. brought the world into American classrooms and campuses—cultural diversity, discussion of new and different views, and awareness and appreciation of new cultures by U.S. citizens (Banjong & Olson, 2016; Lee &

Rice, 2007). In addition, international student enrollment has added significantly to host institutions and the country's economy through nonresident tuition fees and campus living expenses. From the Open Doors Report (IIE, 2016) for 2015/2016, international students contributed over \$30.5 billion to the U.S. economy and more than \$5 billion to the state of California alone (IIE, 2016). Students from China make up the largest population of international students, followed by India, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea (IIE, 2016) (see Figure 2.0).

According to Farrugia (2014), the United States witnessed significant growth from 2004 to 2013, with 73,000 international students in American private and public schools. Many private schools initiated international recruitment when they faced an enrollment drop (Goodnough, 2010; Spencer, 2013; Topo, 2014). International students add to enrollment numbers at host schools as well as contribute financially, which in turn, provides high schools with the resources necessary to upgrade and renovate computer labs and gymnasiums, install LED lighting, and maintain current facility standards (Goodnough, 2010; Spencer, 2014). According to the LAUSD regulations, international students are required to pay over \$17,000 a year to attend a public high school. In spite of the high tuition and fees that private high schools charge international students, an average of \$45,000 that includes room and board (Spencer 2014), Farrugia (2014) reported that 95% of them enrolled in private schools due to the U.S. immigration regulations of one year at a public high school.

Figure 2.0. Top Ten Places of Origin for International Students.



The adjustments by international students are more extensive than their local counterparts who may encounter some social and academic adjustment issues without the cultural changes (Andrade, 2006). Over the last thirty years, many researchers recognized the difficulties and challenges that international students faced during their academic journey away from their homeland and their original social network (Church, 1982; Popadiuk, 2009; Popadiuk, 2010; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Zhang & Mi, 2010). With little to no support, international students contend with the challenges of adapting to their new environment, which can be classified into four major, interrelated areas: cultural, social, academic, and emotional (Banjong & Olson, 2016; Lee & Rice, 2007; Watt, Roessingh, & Bosetti, 1996). Theoretical frameworks for this study show that international students need to fulfill their basic needs (Maslow, 1954; Owens & Loomes, 2010) and acculturate to life in America (Berry, 2005) on top of the pressures to achieve academically and perform successfully in an educational environment.

Language Barriers

Many studies have stated that international students are stressed during the acculturation period due to their lack of English skills and the language barrier (Church, 1982; Pandit 2007; Popadiuk, Sherry et al., 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yeh et al., 2008). The stress of needing to be English proficient in all settings affects the self-confidence of international students, which influences them academically and socially. Watt, Roessingh, and Bosetti (1996) state that “learning English as a second language is a long and uneven process” (p. 201). The language aptitude is essential to the acculturation process for both social and academic adjustment. The student’s English proficiency level determines the level of student acculturation (Kuo & Roysicar, 2004; Wang, Wei, & Chen, 2015).

Academically, international students are challenged with English comprehension during class sessions, writing assignments, discussions, and examinations (Andrade, 2006; Campbell, 2012; Li, 2004). In her study, Li’s (2004) interviewee Jasmine, a student from China, stated the following: “We don’t know how to use English...how to express our ideas clearly.” Another interviewee Magnolia said: “My essays on subject areas...the mark is much lower again and again” (p. 35).

Socially, the lack of English proficiency can exclude international students from making friends with local students, and from fully understanding the daily conversations among peers (Sherry et al., 2010; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Sarkodie-Mensah (1998) observes international students’ frustration and disappointment when Americans make little effort to understand non-English speakers.

Church (1982) concluded that language proficiency is a vital component in establishing relationships and social interactions with the host community.

Acculturation

Berry (2005) depicts fundamental issues of acculturation from the original culture to a new one by asking the following question: “How can peoples of different cultural backgrounds encounter each other, seek avenues of mutual understanding, negotiate and compromise on their initial positions, and achieve some degree of harmonious engagement?” (p. 698). In Lewthwaite’s (1996) study done in New Zealand, international students confess to having difficulty acculturating to the host culture and society because they have limited engagement with its members in a relaxed and social setting. International students tend to group with their own ethnic group outside of the classroom to lessen their acculturative stress, as one Thai student stated, “I belong to the Thai students’ club because I can relax and speak my own language...Yes, I suppose it stops me from meeting other students” (p. 176). Other students claim that it takes extra time to cultivate friendships and this increases their anxiety. The author observes that those who acculturate themselves well were “those who intentionally kept regular contact” (Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 177) with local people, sought the host community’s help and support, and avoided their own ethnic group.

Identity

According to Jung, Hecht, and Wadsworth (2007), the Communication Theory of Identity characterizes four types of identity: personal, relational, enacted, and communal (p. 607). When moving to a host country, international students experience a level of “identity gaps” and differences while communicating with host nationals. For example, a gap exists when there is a difference between how they perceive themselves and how others see them (Jung et al. 2007). Jung et al. (2007) stated that international students encounter two specific identity gaps: personal-enacted and personal-relational. In the personal-enacted identity gap, individuals view

themselves differently from how they express themselves. The authors suggest that the difference may occur as result of wanting to fit in. In the personal-relational identity gap, the individual's self-view is different from other people's perceptions. For example, "others may underestimate or overestimate an individual due to their inaccurate information, stereotypes, or relational issues with the individual" (Jung et al., 2007, p. 608).

Basic Needs

International students face difficulties in meeting some of the basic needs such as accommodations, unfamiliar foods, financial strain, lack of social support, or misunderstanding the education system and enrollment processes (Lee & Rice, 2007). One student said, "The fact that there is no ethnic food," is a problem (Sherry et al., 2010, p. 43). International students need to adapt to the American diet and adjust to the large portions of food. Another student commented: "I got fat with the food. I gained a lot of weight...pizza" (McLachlan & Justice, 2009, p. 29). With international students having limited cooking skills and living on their own, Owens and Loomes (2010) pointed out one critical challenge was meeting their physiological needs. According to Popadiuk (2010), international students who live with host families also face challenges in selecting their preferred food choices. A Korean high school student studying in Canada stated: "I thought that I'd like to eat Canadian food...but everything was so oily and it tasted awful. There weren't any vegetables or salad so I asked them to make me a salad..." (Popadiuk, 2010, p.17). In addition to the lack of ethnic foods, international students expressed their frustration with the limited availability of stores that catered to their food choices. For example, a student from Singapore reported: "I discovered that all the shops closed at 5 pm... In Singapore some of the shops are closed at 10 pm" (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011, p. 209).

International students are also challenged financially due to high tuition fees and the

restrictions of only working on campus (Popadiuk, 2010). According to Zhang and Brunton's report (2015), 70% of international students stated that their yearly living expense while studying in New Zealand should not exceed NZ\$20,000 (equivalent to US\$14,336), and 21% of those students expressed financial frustration. Undeniably, financial pressure impacts international students' academic performances and decisions on whether they should continue to pursue their education (Banjong, 2015) without any federal financial assistance or scholarships. To find relief from financial stress and "emotional turmoil," international students try to look for jobs on campus, which is the only place they are permitted to work with an F-1 visa (Cho & Yu, 2015; Khwaja & Stallman, 2011). A Chinese student said: "The most important thing that international students are doing is spending a huge amount of money to study here. The money I am spending for my course is a big amount" (Khwaja & Stallman, 2011, p. 217), therefore, international students abstain from sharing their problems with their families, who have already financially and emotionally invested so much.

Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) noted how critical it is for international students to develop connections with the community within the host country. The more interactions international students have with locals, the more support they will receive, and the less acculturative stress they will experience (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

Academic Honesty

International students face various academic adjustments that demand language proficiency, more commitment to study time, more focus, and familiarity with the environment inside and outside of the classroom in order to succeed academically (Andrade, 2006; McGowan, 2005).

McGowan (2005) states that plagiarism is a critical issue that affects international students. As international students develop their English proficiency, McGowan (2005) presents the difficulties for these students to acquire the language and skills and use them appropriately in their assignments. Students that are second-language English learners need guidance and time to learn and understand academic writing (McGowan, 2005). In “Who cheats at university? A self-report study of dishonest academic behaviors in a sample of Australian university students,” Marsden, Carroll, and Neill (2005) show a high percentage (74%) of international students plagiarizing as a result of their cultural and language difficulties (Marsden et al., 2005, p. 6).

Cole and McCabe (1996) raised the problem of collaboration among international students who receive considerable help from family and friends with their academic work. The authors suggest that faculty and students need to define clearly the boundary of what is “permitted and unpermitted” collaboration so that the practice is fair and honest. Therefore, it is important to “recognize that there is a legitimate place in the academy for individual accomplishment and assessment as well as for collaborative learning” (Cole & McCabe, 1996, p. 71).

In-Class Participation

According to Tompson and Tompson (1996), international students “do not participate fully in class discussions” (p. 55). From the survey, a majority of higher education faculty agree that foreign students do not debate nor voice their opinions, which negatively impacts their performance.

However, from the international student standpoint, if they are challenged to meet their basic needs, as defined by Maslow’s theory (Tompson & Tompson, 1996), they must resolve that before they can engage in self-actualization. Sarkodie-Mensah (1998) reported that international

students are not accustomed to the American classroom culture where informality is acceptable and students are on a first-name basis with professors, which is contrary to many international students' home country classroom experiences, where authorities (professors, administrators, and school officials) are highly respected and addressed by their formal titles (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Tompson & Tompson, 1996). Ladd and Ruby (2010) also noted the effect of international students' shyness and passivity that may create a false impression. As Lee and Rice (2007) indicated, staff may misinterpret international students' silence as "disinterest or incompetence" and neglect to consider "emotional and psychological dilemmas" (p. 387). Consequently, it is difficult for international students to change in-class behavior, modeled by their home country since preschool, to the expectations of the American classroom (Li, 2004). International students arrive to host schools with a set of "in-class attitudes and behaviors" different from American academic culture which is difficult to remove or "violate these ingrained beliefs" (Tompson & Tompson, 1996, p. 56).

Support Services

According to Tillman (1990), an institution of higher education usually provides advisors and support staff to help fully integrate international students into American life on and off campus. Although support services, such as learning and support are made available in universities to assist international students, "it seems that, for a number of reasons, many students avoid or are unable to use such services" (Fenton-Smith & Michael, 2013, p. 933). McLachlan and Justice's grounded theory research (2009) reports that only four out of twenty international students (20%) seek assistance from their institution because they prefer to get help and advice from family and friends. Previous studies have shown that international students are reluctant to seek help because they are uncomfortable and feel shame, and because of the "stigma

of mental health problems,” language barriers and/or “cultural mistrust of U.S. born helpers” (McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Mitchell, Greenwood, & Guglielmi, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Fenton-Smith and Michael (2013) report that services that help international students improve their school assignments and study skills are more favorable than social services or clubs.

High School Counselors

Hayes and Lin (1994) suggest that counselors should have “their own desire to work with the students” (p. 11) to enhance meaningful relationships with international students. Moreover, authors suggest that counselors need to be intentional in expanding their cultural awareness and increasing their skills in helping students in an international environment. Due to the students’ unique needs and social adjustment difficulties, counselors hold an important role in supporting international students (Popadiuk, 2010). Counselors need to be patient when exchanging conversation with non-proficient English students, and provide students with a certain level of comfort in which international students are open to disclosing their distress and feelings (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Wang et al., 2015). It is critical for international students to connect with a school staff member who can assist them as they transition to American school life. For many international students, school staff are viewed as “surrogate parents”: “She is like a mommy... She takes care of us and when we have problems we can ask her and she gives us some suggestions” (Moore & Popadiuk, 2011, p. 298). Popadiuk (2010) also indicated that often the counseling service is underutilized among international students, as they are not familiar with counselors’ roles. In many cultures, problems are discussed within the family and with friends. Students from a collectivist society will seek help for their academic and career concerns, but are reluctant to seek help for mental health concerns due to familial ties in which “family

cohesiveness measures pride and loyalty” (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003, p. 154; Popadiuk, 2010; Yeh et al., 2009). International students from Asian countries, in particular, are more hesitant to seek counsel and prefer to “suffer quietly” to avoid shame (McLachlan & Justice, 2009, p. 30).

On the other hand, Bartram (2007) explained how international students’ dependency on staff grows beyond what is considered appropriate. It is reported that school staff want to encourage students to “become more self-reliant and develop a sense of accountability for their own progress” (Bartram, 2007, p. 211). Moores and Popadiuk (2011) also indicate in their findings that in addition to teaching the class, faculty also “provide both academic and personal support” (p. 298). International students look for empathy and support as they transition to U.S. schools.

Personal Social Adjustment

According to a qualitative study completed in Canada, Moores and Popadiuk (2011) reported significant personal growth and a sense of independence among international students who study in a host country. Moreover, these students grew by stepping out of their comfort zone and taking risks, as well as developing their own decision-making skills, as one interviewee said: “I never did anything for myself... If I didn’t come here I would have never known that I could do so many things” (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011, p. 295).

International students tend to have low self-esteem due to their limited English proficiency and not being able to adequately express their feelings and thoughts (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Their struggle with the English language also impacts their social and academic learning skills, which prohibits their ability to interact in the same manner as in their home country (Chapelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). Moreover, international

students indicated that their local counterparts demonstrate a lack of interest in wanting to understand culture other than American (Lee & Rice, 2007).

International Students' Parents

Parents from foreign countries send their children to study abroad for different reasons: (1) political and economic instability in their own country; (2) high competitive academic standards; and 3) to broaden opportunities (Popadiuk, 2009). Parents are willing to sacrifice to advance their children's opportunity for success (Wang, 2007).

While struggling to improve their language proficiency and academic achievement, international students are challenged "to meet their parents' expectations during their first two years" (Li, 2004, p.38; Yin, 2013) and learn to be responsible "without parental supervision" (Andrade, 2006, p. 68). When these students encounter problems, they avoid sharing these problems with their parents, as one student said, "My parents have sacrificed so much for me to be here. I don't want to shame them by making a fuss, but I don't know how much more stress I can take" (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1535).

It is evident that the absence of family leads to students' insecurity, anxiety, and loneliness (Lewthwaite, 1996). One international high school student shared her loneliness and stated: "I felt so sad and lonely. I just wanted to go home to my parents" (Popadiuk, 2009, p. 234). As Popadiuk (2010) indicated, students wish to have their parents by their side when they are ill with a simple cold.

Host Families

In Canada, host or homestay families are defined as "custodians, and not legal guardians, and have no legal obligation to nurture youth or provide guidance on emotional issues" (Wong, Homma, Johnson, & Saewyc, 2010, p. 241). Host families' main responsibilities are to provide

room and board with “appropriate accommodation,” but not act as parents (Richardson, 2003). The homestay’s legal responsibility for international students under 18 is not clearly outlined or specified, nor guided (Richardson, 2003). According to Richardson (2003), homestay organizations are not bound by any federal law. The Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) in Australia suggests that law enforcement be involved in checking homestay families for students under the age of 18, but this is not mandatory. Therefore, due to the absence of regulations and the high demand for international student enrollment in host country schools, homestay organizations have leeway to “lower standards and quality” in their selection and screening processes for host families (Richardson, 2003; Richardson 2007).

Moreover, Richardson (2007) emphasized the significance of training and equipping host families to “deal more effectively with their international students” (p. 31). In the author’s research, host families expressed the need to be better informed about the student’s culture and their expectation that the student will “fit with the family” (p. 32). Host families for students under the age of 18 have the responsibility to care for them. However, the kind of care is not clearly defined.

Under the U.S. Government Publishing Office, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 62-Exchange visitor program, Subpart B-Specific Program Provisions, §62.25 Secondary school students, host families are required to be thoroughly screened and to meet the requirements listed in Appendix A. However, with only limited studies on U.S. homestay organizations, the rigorousness of the screening and selection processes is not fully understood. According to The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), the secondary school student exchange visitor program, also referred to as the “program sponsor,” is required to ensure that all employees and agents

involved are adequately trained and supervised, selected host families are fully vetted and capable of providing a safe and clean environment meeting the CFR §62.25 requirements, and members who are 18 years of age and older have undergone criminal background checks, and more (see Appendix A). The program sponsor is required to visit the student and host family's home after placement within the first two months and address any issues raised.

A goal of homestay is to help international students connect with locals to ease the international student's transition into the host culture. However, international students are fearful of sharing with their host families due to possible misunderstandings and "the stress of trying to interpret what they were meant to be doing" (Wong, et al., 2010; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Popadiuk (2010) states in her study that international students experience feelings of "anxiety, depression, fear, loneliness, uncertainty, and homesickness" (p. 1534) when incidents occur at the homestay residence. Additionally, one of the research participants shared how "her dark and dirty homestay bedroom in the basement made her feel depressed and withdrawn" (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1534). In Wong et al. (2010) study, the results showed that in Canada, female homestay students are more isolated and vulnerable than male students, and subject to higher risks of: "sexual behaviors, substance abuse, abuse history, and health status" (Wong, et al., 2010, p. 243). This study demonstrated the lack of "parental monitoring, caring and support" (p. 242) allowed students to engage in dangerous behaviors.

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International students experience a variety of adjustments and pressures with host families, which causes additional stress and feeling of helplessness. They are uncertain of actions to take, and they definitely do not want to be a “problem student” or “shame their family” (Popadiuk, 2010, p. 1535).

Friends and Peers

Literature confirms that exchanges with host individuals helps to enhance the international students’ adjustment and transition. International students have expressed the importance of personal bonds with host friends to help adapt to their new environment (Campbell, 2012; Moore & Popadiuk, 2011). However, literature also indicates the difficulty that international students have befriending local students due to their language issues, and the host students’ indifference (Andrade, 2006; Campbell, 2012). It was observed “that local students needed to recognize cultural barriers (Andrade, 2006, p.141), and international students recognized that they need to initiate contact with local students (Andrade, 2006; Campbell, 2012). According to Chapelaine and Alexitch’s (2004) interview with an Iranian student, the expectation of friendship differs greatly between international and local students. An Indian student commented: “Some of the Americans are not friendly enough to hang out with international students. I guess they do not have a decent comfort level with people from different cultures.” Another student from Sri Lanka also emphasized: “It’s always hard to make friends with American students, I have only one good friend and that was my roommate in International House” (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010, p. 41).

Farrugia’s report (2014) explains that the presence of a large number of international students from the same ethnic group may also impact international students’ ties with local students, because they will tend to be drawn to their own nationality and will have more

difficulty to learn and integrate in the host culture (Chapelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Farrugia, 2014; Popadiuk, 2009).

Collectivist Network

From collectivist cultures, the majority of international students from Asia pursue social network support more so than students from Western cultures. (Hofstede, 1983; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Studies indicate that international students have a tendency to seek to develop “co-national friendships” and rebuild their social capital, particularly, the horizontal and vertical networks (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011, p. 281). Their co-national friendships can help reduce some acculturative stress and anxieties, provide support, increase self-esteem, and avoid the stress of exchanging with local peers (Hendrickson et al., 2011). According to many researchers, the extent to which international students are able to establish friendships and social networks will have great impact on their acculturation adjustments (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Rienties, Heliot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013). Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, friendships and social networks are significant to meet students’ needs for love and belonging, the third most important need (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Maslow, 1954; Owens & Loomes, 2010).

However, international students’ co-national networks can prevent them from integrating with the host culture and be “less willing to adapt” to their new environments, which leads to “poor acculturation” (Hendrickson et al., 2011, p. 282; Rienties et al., 2013, p. 502). From a focus group study, international students shared two criteria of their networks: (1) pursue knowledge and learning opportunities regardless of the culture differences, or (2) pursue knowledge with co-nationals to ease communication and exchanges (Rienties et al., 2013).

Acculturative Stress

The process of acculturation produces acculturative stress. Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) defined acculturative stress as follows:

“The concept of acculturative stress refers to one kind of stress, that in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; in addition, there is often a particular set of stress behaviors which occurs during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety, and depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion.” (p. 492)

Acculturative stress is defined as one type of stress that consists of various stressors such as: depression, homesickness, loneliness, stress, frustration, fear, culture shock, and language problems (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). In the pursuit of understanding acculturative stress, Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) developed a scale of thirty-six items to measure international students' acculturative stress, known as the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS). According to ASSIS results, the authors concluded that international students experience discrimination and alienation as the major stressors (38.3%) (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994, p. 442). The feeling of discrimination or alienation results from “feeling powerlessness, meaninglessness, and social estrangement” (p. 443). ASSIS charts the stressors as follows: homesickness, hate, fear, culture shock, and guilt.

Depression

International students often experience depression because of failing to meet certain expectations or goals, such as academic achievement. As one student said, “Yes, when I was in my country I received a very good mark, but here it is a problem; it makes me depressed” (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011, p. 217). According to Jung et al. (2007), the difference in students'

identity gaps also led to depression. In the same study, the authors show a correlation between acculturation and depression. The more international students were acculturated to the host culture the lower their level of depression.

Discrimination

International students experience different forms of discrimination from offensive to indirect discrimination (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007): “Americans have the tendency to lump Asians of a different ethnic group into one homogeneous racial category by downplaying ethnic differences” (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007, p. 635).

Lee and Rice (2007) point out the challenges of cultural and verbal discrimination that international students encounter in schools and communities. International students often experience stereotyping comments and misperceptions about their cultures. One Brazilian student shared: “One professor didn’t like me because my English was bad. He was impatient. Other people told me about him. But I worked really hard, I had two tutors, I paid one twenty dollars an hour, and I got the same textbook in my own language and studied both.” Another international student from China explained: “I know the first time I can’t understand [because] my English is not too good. But if I ask questions the professor will say, ‘I don’t understand’ and so that makes me very embarrassed. I don’t ask questions anymore. I ask other students—I don’t ask the professor—I just talk to other students.” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 397). Another student noted, “Possibly some lecturers look down on me but I’m not sure whether it’s because of my race, my bad English, or my personality” (Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 180). International students also experienced discrimination outside of schools; one student experienced verbal discrimination from shoppers screaming, “Go back to your country” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 399).

Loneliness and Homesickness

The American Academy of Pediatrics defines homesickness as “distress and functional impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment objects such as parents” (Thurber, Walton, and Council on School Health, 2007, p. 192).

International students from collectivist cultures, such as Chinese students, suffer isolation, homesickness, and loneliness while studying in the U.S. (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). They are often lonely for lack of familiar friends and cultural environments, social networks, and English proficiency (Sherry, et al., 2010). A student from India shared her loneliness: “I was intensely homesick. I felt left out in my department because it had no diversity and had just European American students. I was laughed at for anything I said or did. I tried to socialize with my American classmates, but I thought of socializing with them as an additional stressor because I didn’t know what to say or how to say things. I felt deep despair. I used to be alone all the time. I used to walk in the snow because I had no car. I had no laptop” (Sherry, et al., 2010, p. 43).

Summary of Literature Review

This review of the literature suggests that international students face numerous challenges related to their transition to a host country. Given the limited studies on international students attending U.S. high schools, it is critical to explore the challenges faced by high school aged international students and their perspectives, which can be more demanding than those faced by international students attending higher education in the U.S. In addition, this study intends to understand whether school counselors, host families, and parents influence the adjustments necessary for international students to more easily integrate with host family members, other American students, and members of the community. While researchers have learned a great deal about international students attending institutions of higher education in the U.S., there is little

empirical study of the challenges faced by international students living with host families and attending American high schools. The literature raises important questions for this study such as: (1) How do international students manage their life without supervision? (2) How do they adjust to their new environment? (3) Who do they turn to for help? And (4) What are their personal goals? This study will examine this gap in the literature by considering the challenges faced by high school aged international students, their adjustments to the host culture, support services available to assist international students in meeting their unique needs, as well as resources and training available to equip counselors, host families, and international students' parents.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In 2013, more than 13,000 high school aged international students on an F-1 visa resided in California. Fifty-seven percent of them were from Asian countries, mostly China and South Korea (Farrugia, 2014). This study explored the challenges faced by international students as they integrated into American high schools and host communities. The findings of this study will benefit international students, parents, host families, counselors, and school administrators. The findings may provide stakeholders with a greater understanding of academic and social integration challenges that international students encounter. Additionally, the findings could aid them in developing needed support systems to meet international students' transition needs.

Included in this chapter will be (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the research questions, (c) the research design and tradition, (d) the research setting and context, (e) the research sample and data sources, (f) the instruments and procedures, (g) the data collection, (h) the data analysis methods, and (i) the role of the researcher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to examine the journey of international students from the time they leave their homeland to arrival in a new country, their establishment of a new residence with a host family, their enrollment in an American high school, and their introduction to new teachers and counselors, as well as peers. The primary focus of this study was to examine the academic, social, and emotional adjustments that international students had to make during their stay in an American school. To identify and understand the challenges of international students, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

Research Design and Tradition

The researcher utilized a case study methodology with ethnographic traditions. An ethnographic case study tradition helped examine international students in U.S. high schools. Case study research provided the researcher with an in-depth knowledge of all participants and a “thick” end product that would illuminate the reader’s understanding on this phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). This case study was not limited to a specific public or private high school in Southern California, but included any private and public high schools that enroll international students. This case study used a holistic analysis of the data collected from interviews, focus groups, and survey documents (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, using ethnographic analysis guided the researcher in capturing and understanding the international teenagers’ culture, beliefs, and values that influenced their decisions and actions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The researcher anticipated that the results of this study would be useful to school administrators and counselors as they work to create programs and interventions to better meet the needs of international students enrolled in American high schools.

The rationale for employing an ethnographic case study approach to answer the research problem was: (1) to achieve a deeper understanding of the challenges those international students are facing in U.S. high schools; (2) to determine students’ adjustment difficulties and stress; 3) to

examine international students' interaction with school counselors and peers; 4) to explore host families and counselors' perceptions on the increased number of international students in high schools; and 5) to draw an accurate conclusion of international students' successes and challenges in attending American high schools.

According to Schram (2006), ethnographic questions focused on what the researcher is looking for in a bounded system (U.S. high school). The researcher carefully prepared questions that reflect the details of students' emotional, social, and academic challenges, which led to a comprehensive result. Additionally, the researcher prepared questions that describe school counselors, host families, and parents' perceptions of international students. Furthermore, this qualitative research design was open and emergent, allowing room for exploration, flexibility, and creativity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

To obtain a broad and rich description of this phenomenon, the researcher interviewed nine international students who are attending or have attended U.S. high schools (private or public), who had proficient English fluency level that permitted them to participate in the interview process. In addition to student interviews, the researcher interviewed one counselor and one director from a private high school, and two host parents of international students. The researcher conducted two focus groups: (1) three parents of international students, and (2) four international students. Lastly, the researcher surveyed international students by utilizing the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS) developed by Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994). This qualitative study ensured all four dimensions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012):

- Transferability—this study can be applied to all U.S. high schools that enroll international students.

- Dependability—this study can be used again.
- Credibility—this study will accurately reflect participants’ perceptions.
- Confirmability—this study will confirm the findings.

Research Setting and Context

The researcher selected two private high schools located in Southern California. The private high schools were located in a major county known for its popular landmarks and beaches, and were within the boundaries of the state hosting the largest international student population (Open Door, 2014).

The selected private high school, “NorthWest High” (NWH), has an enrollment of over 750 students comprising a white majority (49%), followed by Hispanic (23%), Asian (12%), African-American (6%), and Natives e.g., American Indian, Alaska, Hawaiian, (3%), and two or more races. International students make up 7% of the entire student body. As a private school, NWH is allowed to enroll international students from Grades 9 through 12, who pay over \$17,000 per year in tuition fees.

The second private high school selected, “Sunny Hill High” (SH), has an enrollment of over 1,300 students with a Hispanic majority (40%) followed by white (22%), Asian (8%), Filipino (12%), and a small number of African-Americans (8%). International students make up 10-12% of the entire student body. International students are welcome to attend SH from Grades 9 to 12. The tuition fee for international students is 70% higher (\$18,500) than those for locals (\$10,780).

Due to revenues generated by international students, many U.S. high schools are opening their doors to international students. The additional funding from a growing international student population provides resources for schools to expand and improve their programs. In addition to

increasing funding for school resources, international students also introduce native U.S. students to different cultural and global perspectives. However, U.S. school administrators and staff also face challenges as they have had very little experience working with growing international student populations. For school personnel, some of the challenges are that the classes taken by international students in the home country do not match the classes offered in the school of the host country; English writing and speaking skills may be problematic, which in turn, create problems for the counselor attempting to put together school schedules. Or staff may simply not be able to support international students due to their limited understanding of the cultural adjustments and difficulties faced by international students in a new country and a new school. The lack of English speaking skills sometimes precludes international students from communicating with school personnel and their peers. Compounding these issues, international students who are minors live with host families instead of family members, which further discourage their cultural, social, and academic integration into the American school environment.

Site Selection

The site selection process was determined using a mixture of criterion and network sampling strategies. As a higher education professional, the researcher selected two private high schools as study sites. It was important to determine which schools enroll international students. The researcher used her relationship with highly influential community members who were interested in this research to make contacts with different stakeholder groups or individuals. These individuals assisted the researcher by identifying the gatekeepers to help make school contacts. The selected schools are geographically convenient and closely located to one another. The advantage was to save time by shortening the driving distance and omitting the burden of traffic and time constraints to reach school sites for fieldwork.

To enhance the credibility of this research, the researcher used a mixed sampling strategy, including both criterion sampling strategies and opportunistic/network sampling strategies (Glesne, 2016). The researcher took advantage of the gatekeepers at those schools to help identify individuals willing to participate in the interview process. After receiving recommendations and referrals, the researcher sent out a personalized invitation to the participants with a brief description of the study, and scheduled focus group meetings and individual interviews. The focus group meetings took place outside on a Friday and were held at the researcher's workplace. For the one-to-one interviews, the site was selected by the participants and convenient to their schedules and locations. After interviewing all participants, the data collected provided in-depth information regarding those issues faced by international students that have not been studied in U.S. high schools (Glesne, 2016). Lastly, a published survey was given to international students.

Data Sources and Samples

Data Sources

The researcher selected four data sources to conduct the study: host families, international students, parents of international students, and high school staff. There were two focus groups. One group consisted of three parents of international students. The second focus group comprised four international students. The researcher surveyed and interviewed international students who are currently attending a U.S. high school or have graduated from one. To further support the findings, it was important to interview one high school counselor who worked closely with international students as well as a director of the international student high school program. To further support the findings, it was significant to interview two host families

also known as legal guardians. The data collected from these four data sources will provide school personnel who work with international students' information about their needs and acculturation challenges. This information can also be used by school personnel to help in developing discussion topics about issues faced by international students as they attempt to integrate into the American school environment.

Sampling Strategies

The researcher used a mixed sampling strategy consisting of criterion and opportunistic/network sampling (Glesne, 2016). A criterion sampling strategy was used to select the participants: (a) international students on an F-1 Visa who are attending high school or have graduated from an American high school, (b) parents of F-1 Visa students, (c) host families who host international students, and (d) school counselor and director who work closely with international students. The researcher used an opportunistic/network sampling strategy to ask the participants to refer other individuals who have the same or similar characteristics (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Through the assistance of the gatekeeper and host families, the researcher gained access and approval to interview international students. At the conclusion of the interview with both host families, the researcher sought their consent to allow their host students to participate in this study. Additionally, the researcher provided time for discussion and questions, and assurance to the participants of their confidentiality. Once consent was received, the researcher scheduled 45-60 minute interviews with the students at mutually selected locations.

The researcher invited community college students who were parents of international students currently attending U.S. high schools to participate in a focus group. The researcher also requested permission from these parents to allow their high school teenagers to participate in this

study. As with the host families, the researcher provided these parents with time for questions and discussion of the study while assuring them of confidentiality. Once consent was received, the researcher scheduled 45-60 minute interviews with each student at a mutually acceptable location.

The researcher's relationships with some key people at various schools provided additional support to this research. The researcher met with the gatekeeper (counselor) to explain the study and their involvement, and reach agreement with them for their assistance. It was important to take time to listen to their suggestions, answer questions, minimize concerns and fears, and assure anonymity and confidentiality in this study. It was gratifying to hear: "Yes, your study sounds interesting. You are welcome" (Glesne, 2016, p. 57).

The researcher scheduled time to meet with the counselor of international student, who acted as the school's gatekeeper. Through the counselor's referral, the researcher later met with the director of the international student program, who recruits, admits, and is in charge of international students. During this meeting, the counselor and director were invited to participate in a 45-60 minute interview in their office. The researcher was flexible and accommodated the counselor's schedule. The counselor set aside an hour of her morning at the school to participate in the interview. As a token of appreciation for the counselor's time and participation, the researcher gave her a \$10 gift card for a local coffee shop. The purpose of interviewing a counselor and a director was to understand how they interact, counsel, and assist international students. The counselor and director did not teach classes, but they did provide assistance with class schedules, advice regarding postsecondary options, and advocacy for students. Advocacy typically involves guidance and assistance with teenage issues that may or may not have anything to do with academic performance. The researcher was interested in learning about the

kinds of advocacy support that the counselor and director provided for international students. Due to the limited amount of study and research about international students attending American high schools, the counselor's and director's information was critical to this study. Their input would be helpful to other counselors and teachers who work with international students across the United States. Their professional experiences and concerns about this new phenomenon would generate awareness for this growing student population in high schools.

With the consent and referral of the gatekeepers, host families and parents, the researcher reached out to international students currently attending U.S. high schools. It was significant to interview at least three international high school students to support the credibility of the findings, coupled with an in-depth understanding of this new phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher extended the participant sample to include six international students who have graduated from an American high school to get their perspectives regarding the challenges they faced.

Data Collection Instruments

An ethnographic case study was used to examine the international students' academic, social, and emotional challenges in the U.S. high schools.

Research Invitation and Informed Consent

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, Northridge and the selected school sites, the researcher sent an invitation via email to NorthWest High School. An invitation was emailed to all participants: students, parents, counselor, director, and host families. The invitation included an introduction of the researcher, explanation of the research study, guidelines for the participants, detailed information on confidentiality and protection of the participants' identities, and the date and time to schedule an

interview. The researcher provided separate consent forms, one for adult participants and another for minor participants. The consent forms included a description of the interview process, importance of the study, and value of the research to the field of international education (see Appendices B and C). A follow-up email was sent to remind the participants of the upcoming meeting and thanked them for their time and participation.

Focus Group Protocol

The researcher conducted two focus groups. One focus group consisted of four international students and the second focus group included approximately three parents. Each focus group meeting took approximately 75-90 minutes. There were two focus group protocols. Each focus group protocol had five open-ended questions, with follow-up questions designed to be employed only when needed, which encouraged multiple responses and information sharing (see Appendices D and E). For the student focus group, the researcher designed questions to get information about their social, emotional, and academic challenges, and how they found support during times of need. For the focus group with parents of international students, the researcher designed questions to explore the parents' motivation and purpose for sending their high school aged children to study in a host country, their perceptions of students' challenges, and how they supported their teenagers.

Interview Protocol

The researcher used semi-structured interviews for the data collection. This instrument provided in-depth understanding and description of the participants' positive and challenging experiences. There were three independent interview protocols. Each protocol had 10 to 15 questions and additional probing questions designed specifically for each group: students, host families, and counselor/director (see Appendices F, G, and H). For the student participants, the

interview questions were related to their personal experiences in school, their challenges, their successes, their expectations, and those areas where extra support may or may not be needed to help them adjust more easily to U.S. schools. When designing the interview protocols, the researcher included the following types of questions: grand tour, experience/behavior, opinion/value, feelings, and sensory (Glesne, 2016). The researcher carefully designed interview questions for international students to avoid any miscommunications, as these students were second language English learners. For the host families' interviews, the questions focused on their perspectives as the "legal guardians" of international students, the challenges they encountered with cultural differences, communication, students' social skills and stress, how well their students adjusted to American life, and their participation in the students' adjustments. For the counselor's and director's interviews, the interview questions pertained to students' social, cultural, and academic adjustments. The counselor and director provided their insights on international students' actions, understanding, and feedback in classrooms, as well as their engagement during and after school. The staff's interactions were primarily school-based, and therefore, their perceptions differed from the host families'. Both staff responses exposed students' academic and social matters in school and classroom settings. Each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes. However, additional time was provided in case the participants wish to share more information (Glesne, 2016). All interview sessions were audio recorded for transcription.

Survey Documents

The Acculturative Stress Scale of International Students (ASSIS) (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) is a psychometric instrument consisting of six subscales—perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate, fear, stress due to change/culture shock, and guilt—developed to

measure international students' acculturative stress (see Appendix I). ASSIS consisted of a 36-item scale in the Likert format. However, the researcher selected four subscales that were most relevant to the study: perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate, and stress due to change/culture shock. It consisted of twenty questions on the Likert scale. The researcher requested permission via email from the authors to implement the survey (the authors granted the researcher permission via email to use the survey on June 12, 2016).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures for this study consisted of two focus groups, personal interviews, and survey documents. The researcher will present details for each collection procedure.

Focus Groups

To participate in the focus groups, the researcher selected individuals (parents and students) based on characteristics that matched the selection criteria. The focus group meeting was held in one of the students' college campus conference room—a comfortable and non-threatening setting for the participants and the researcher. The selected location also allowed lively discussions. The researcher asked the participants to review and sign the consent form and informed them that they would be recorded. The purpose of and guidelines for the focus group were disclosed and the participants were given a chance to withdraw from participating. To facilitate the meeting, the researcher provided the participants with light refreshments: cookies, donuts, tea, and coffee. During the refreshments, the researcher invited the participants to introduce themselves and get to know one another. The researcher took notes and recorded non-

verbal information. By conducting a focus group with international students, the researcher was able to assess their attitudes, feelings, and emotional reactions with more transparency.

The focus group with parents of international students took place at a school campus conference room during a lunch break on a Friday. To minimize the inconvenience and show appreciation for their time and willingness to participate in the study, the researcher provided lunch catered from a local Asian restaurant. The parents were anxious because they had not participated in such a study before, but were eager to share their experiences. The focus group allowed the researcher to hear common issues, concerns, recommendations, and ideas. Moreover, the parents' perceptions were able to support and confirm the findings shared by international students.

Personal Interviews

The researcher conducted 10 to 15 one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with international students currently attending U.S. high schools, graduated international high school students, host families, and counselors from private and public high schools. The interview was open-ended questions and included probing questions designed to encourage the participants' responses. There were three different interview protocols for each category (host families, international students, and counselor and director).

Host families. The researcher scheduled an interview with two host families for a one-on-one interview of 45-60 minutes. Each the participant chose the location and time of the meeting and the researcher arranged her schedule accordingly.

International students. From the student focus group, the researcher selected two international students to conduct a one-on-one interview. In addition, parents who participated in their focus groups referred their children. The remaining two international students

volunteered after they were made aware of this study. The one-on-one interviews were conducted towards the end of the 2017 spring semester. The timing gave the students a chance to experience and adjust to high school classrooms, friends, homework, and life in the U.S.

Counselor/director. The researcher scheduled an interview with the counselor at the end of the 2017 spring semester when the counselor was not overwhelmed with deadlines. An interview was scheduled with the director during the summer break after he had returned from business trips and his schedule was not tied up with meetings. The researcher stayed objective and professional while recording and transcribing their answers, avoiding any biases despite her personal experience as a former international student.

The interviews took more than four to six weeks to complete. Some interviews were rescheduled due to unforeseen events. The interview took about 45-60 minutes including extra time for respondents to add more information.

Survey Documents

To help identify international students' acculturative stress, the researcher distributed ASSIS surveys to all students who participated in this study and extended the survey to the participants' network, which included other international students who were on an F-1 visa and attended an U.S. high school.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis involved organizing what the researcher saw, heard, read, and experienced, and linked all collected data from international students, parents of international student, host families, and counselor/director through interviews, focus groups, and survey documents (Glesne, 2016) to the conceptual framework and goals of this study.

Preliminary Data Analysis

The researcher began the analysis by writing memos, keeping a reflective field log, recording, and developing thoughts during the collection data process. According to Glesne (2016), it was critical for the researcher to work with the data while collecting it. This enabled the researcher to “focus and shape the study” (p. 189) as it progressed. However, the researcher “remained open to new perspectives and thoughts” (p. 189).

After each data collection, the researcher transcribed each interview, tabled the survey, and “deconstructed the findings” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 171) by coding the data, creating categories, and identifying themes. All transcribed documents were carefully labeled and data were kept in secure storage.

To help expedite the transcription process, the researcher requested transcription service assistance to allow time for the researcher to focus on analyzing the data.

After collecting all the transcriptions, the researcher spent time in reading and reflecting on them. It was prudent to journal thoughts, questions that arose from the reading, unexpected comments from the interviews, and direct quotes that could be used as code. The researcher became familiar with the data and identified the “big ideas” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 139).

Thematic Data Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis approach to search for themes and patterns. First, the data collected was segregated into categories by codes then analyzed. The researcher used three coding approaches in this study: taxonomic coding, *in vivo* or indigenous coding, and emotions coding (Glesne, 2016). Taxonomic coding strategy helped the researcher reflect on the patterns in the participants’ speech and behavior. The researcher also utilized *in vivo* coding approach to identify “familiar words” used by the participants when sharing about their lives.

For this study, the emotions coding was crucial. As the participants shared about their challenges living in the U.S., the researcher coded their emotions as they recalled the good and bad/sad experiences. With the use of three different coding strategies, the researcher sorted by topics, grouped like-codes in “families,” and organized codes relationally.

The participants’ names, locations, and schools were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. After completing all the coding, the researcher stored the identifiable and de-identified data in two different locations. The researcher protected the identifiable data with a password on her laptop, stored the de-identified data on a flash drive, and stored it at her home in an office-locked drawer. The original audio recordings were erased to protect the participants’ identities.

After gathering all the coding, the researcher identified key concepts and ideas to include in the study, connected the codes to the existing literature, and segmented the data. The researcher determined the important codes, created new codes that could combine several codes to form a category, and conceptualized the data. The researcher indicated different categories that emerged from the coded data, described the connections to the study and existing literatures. The researcher manually organized the codes, themes, and ideas through Microsoft Excel.

Interpretation

In the interpretation phase, the researcher identified and explained the meaning of the data and its method of integration, organized and connected emerging topics, subtopics, and transformed the data into a “useful form that communicates the promise of her findings” (Glesne, 2016, p. 211). The researcher interpreted the findings by restating the general findings, comparing them to past literature, identifying the potential of the study, and suggesting future

research (Creswell, 2012). For the interpretations to be trustworthy, the researcher sought member checking with the research participants.

Researcher Roles/ Research Effects

The researcher is bonded to three significant life roles that may have affected the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of this study. The researcher presents her personal, professional, and parental experiences in the international education field and the effects those may have had on her research.

The Personal Experience

After graduating high school in Paris, the researcher decided to leave the comfort of her home and pursue her higher education in the U.S. as an international student. Her personal experience as an international student has impacted her life. As an 18-year-old Chinese female student, away from home, family, and friends, the researcher experienced several events, good and the bad. In her freshman year at a community college, the researcher struggled academically, socially, and emotionally. The researcher did not know where and how to find help. She faced many unexpected adjustments and difficulties, such as understanding the U.S. higher education and grading systems, limited language proficiency, development of friendships, class participation, group work for class projects, loneliness and alienation in the host community, and unmet expectations. There were countless times when the researcher felt lonely and depressed. After two years of acclimating to the host culture, the researcher learned to appreciate and adapt to the U.S. culture and the opportunity to become a lifelong learner.

Her role of a researcher utilizing qualitative methodology was one of an insider as well as an outsider (Unluer, 2012). As an insider, the researcher had: (1) an understanding of the

participants' cultural background, (2) the ability to facilitate genuine conversations, and (3) the sensitivity to approach the audience without intimidation. The researcher believed that her experience helped establish rapport and trust among the participants (Glesne, 2016). On the other hand, the researcher may have lost objectivity due to the familiarity with these personal experiences. The researcher had to be mindful of balancing the researcher role and the "insider" voice.

The Professional Experience

Professionally, the researcher worked and advised international students on a daily basis. The researcher was an international student specialist at a community college. She worked closely with 100 international students. Her duties included, but were not limited to working with such subjects: Many of her students enjoyed spending time at her office simply to talk about what they were going through. There were days when students came by her office just to relieve concerns and release tears of frustration and helplessness. Other times, they shared triumphs like successfully obtaining As on their tests. The researcher became her students' go-to person for academic, social, and, sometimes, emotional needs. Even though she began as an advisor, the international students trusted her, appreciated her listening skills and genuine caring, and felt comfortable and safe in her office.

This ethnographic case study explored how international students interact with school administrators and teachers in American high schools. The professional status of the researcher helped her gain access to schools, students, and administrators.

The Parental Experience

As a mother of teenagers, the researcher is protective and caring. Similar to all mothers, the researcher watched out for her teenagers' well-being and guided them to be active and

productive students. While meeting and advising high school international students, the motherly instinct was influential and may have affected the validity of this study. It was challenging for her to hear the students' struggles and experiences, living alone without parental supervision or caretaking. The researcher learned to remain neutral and listen as a scholar, setting aside her parental lens.

Mitigation Strategies

In order to mitigate the research effects, the researcher relied on a triangulation strategy to help strengthen the credibility of this qualitative study. The researcher used numerous sources of data (interviews, focus group, and survey documents) to counter biases. The researcher also reached out to a critical friend, who worked in the international education field to review and point out biases. Additionally, the researcher used the "being there" strategy (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) to spend longer periods of time with the participants and obtain a substantial description of the phenomenon. Lastly, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to mitigate her biases (Watt, 2007) and reflect on her position to determine if that may have affected the research (Glesne, 2016).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will present the results and findings of this study. It will include a brief description of the purpose of the study, an overview of the methodology, and the participant profile. The findings will be provided to answer research questions guiding the study:

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

Study Context

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to examine and assess the journey that international students negotiated while studying in U.S. high schools. The researcher looked at four specific areas of adjustment: social, cultural, academic, and emotional, through theoretical frameworks of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Owens & Loomes, 2010) and Berry's Acculturation Model (Berry 1997). The findings provided insight into the acculturation difficulties that international students encountered in the U.S.

This study included semi-structured interviews with international students who attended U.S. high schools, host parents, one school administrator, and one school counselor. To ascertain transitional challenges from a student's country of origin to a host one (U.S.), the

researcher conducted two focus groups: one with parents of international students and one with international students who had graduated from U.S. high schools. With the permission of Sandhu and Arasbadi (1994), the researcher also administered a survey consisting of twenty questions from the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS) questionnaire to supplement the information gathered from interviews and focus groups.

Participant Overview

To determine a suitable sample population, the researcher used a mixture of criterion and networking strategies. Participant selection was based on the following: (a) students who currently attend a U.S. high school on an F-1 visa; (b) students who graduated from a U.S. high school while on an F-1 visa; (c) school staff who worked directly with F-1 visa students; (d) host parents who housed international students; and (e) parents who have a child or children who met the first criteria.

For this study, there were five population samples: students, school staff, host families, group of parents, and group of students. The participants included three international students currently attending high school and six international students who have graduated from high schools in the U.S. The sample also included one school director, one school counselor, two host parents, and three parents of international students (see Table 4.0). In order to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality, the participants were introduced by their role along with an alphabetical letter. However, school employees were referred to by their professional titles “Director” and “Counselor.” As presented in Table 4.0, there were eight students from Asia (China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam) and one student from Europe (Switzerland); all three parents were from Asia (China, South Korea, and Taiwan); the remaining four participants were U.S. citizens in daily contact with international students.

Prior to the presentation of the findings, the researcher will provide background information for each student and his/her reasons for wanting to study in the U.S.

Student A. Student A is an 18-year-old female from South Korea. She came to the United States in 2012 and started her American education at a small private middle school. Before attending American schools, she had visited the country multiple times because of her aunt's family who had lived in the U.S. for over 20 years. Student A shared that "the amount of opportunities provided in Korea is so small." Therefore she chose to come to the U.S. because she indicated that: "in America, there is equal opportunity for everyone to go to college. Even if you are kind of less smart, you still can learn the same things that everyone learns." Student A lives with her brother and mother in an affluent suburban area where her parents own a home. At the time of the interview, Student A was finishing the 12th grade in a public high school of 2,000 students from Grades 9 through 12. She was accepted to attend a prestigious and renowned private university in Southern California as a college freshman. With the approval and invitation of her mother, the interview took place at her own residence.

Student B. Student B is a 16-year-old junior from South Korea, and brother of Student A. He is attending the third best-ranked Christian high school in California according to 2018 Best Schools Niche. At ten years of age, he started his American education with the 5th grade. When he first arrived in the U.S., he was living with his aunt, his mother's sister, with whom he was very close. Therefore, he stated that: "Living with her was a smooth transition." With the influence of his aunt and cousins, American movies, and vacationing in California, he was inspired and sought to "experience a new side of life. Korea was just study, study, study." Eventually, he joined his mom and sister after they went to live in the U.S. He was interviewed at his own residence on the same day as his sister.

Student C. Student C is an 18-year-old junior from Taiwan. He is attending the same Christian high school as Student B. He began studying in the U.S. in 7th grade and middle school. Student C attended private schools in his country and began English learning in kindergarten. At the advice of a family friend, his parents decided to give him the opportunity to study in the U.S. They chose to live close by their friends in an affluent neighborhood and enrolled him at a top Californian private school in a suburban area. Student C agreed with his parents' plan to study in the U.S. because "it is a better learning environment and the teaching style is different. In Taiwan, all we do is just study and that's it." Upon reaching his decision to pursue his studies in the U.S., his mother came to live and care for him because he was underage. With the approval and invitation of his mother, the interview process took place at their home.

Student D. Student D is a 19-year-old male student from Grens, Switzerland, who finished 12th grade a year ago and attended a southern Californian community college. He attended a public high school of over 2,000 students that was predominantly 76% White students. He decided to come to the U.S. because of his neighbor's stories of the U.S. and the information he received from families who visited him from the U.S. Upon his friends and families' influences, Student D reached out to an educational agency to start his application process. To attend specifically a California high school, the student's family had the option to pay more. Student D explained: "When I applied I had to select three states and I could be sent to any of them. But I really wanted to come to California, so my parents had to pay more to guarantee my choice." In his senior year, he was admitted to a suburban high school located in a highly affluent community where there were very few international students. Student D was living with a local host family. The interview was conducted at the researcher's residence for convenience and a quiet environment.

Student E. Student E is a 19-year-old male from Vietnam. He attended a small religious school that offered a comprehensive education from preschool through 12th grade in the U.S. The total population of this school was about 1,000 students, predominantly White students, with 302 students in Grades 9 through 12. The school is located in a small city of southern California on the outskirts of Los Angeles County. From the age of ten, he has been attending the same school on an F-1 visa, and living with his uncle. Student E was part of the focus group interview.

Student F. Student F is a 19-year-old female from Guiyang, China. She joined an international program offered through a high school in her home country and run by a Chinese agency. The program was limited to families and students who wanted to attend school in the U.S. The agency placed the student based on the host family: “The host family picked me so I went to the school of that host family.” As a result, she was sent to a small town on the East Coast where she was one of only two Chinese students in her school. She is currently attending a local community college in order to transfer to a 4-year university. For Student F’s convenience, the interview took place in one of the college’s classrooms after class. She also participated in the focus group interview.

Student G. Student G is originally from Canton, China, and came to the U.S. when she was 17 years old. The student’s parents suggested that she and her sister study abroad. Like the majority of Chinese families, her parents reached out to an agency to process her application to study abroad. The locations and school selections were unfortunately done solely by the agency. Due to a false impression, Student G “felt I could choose the country I wanted to go to like New Zealand or Australia, but the agency took my application and sent it to the U.S. where they would leave me.” She attended a very small private high school located in a rural area of

southern California. She is now 20 years old and attends a local community college where the researcher met with her for the individual interview and the focus group.

Student H. Student H is the sister of Student G. Her travel journey and school selection were similar to her sibling, in that she came from China to the U.S. and was not given a choice of school. Everything was assigned by the agency that her parents contracted with. She is a year older than her sister and somehow attended the same school and same grade. According to Student H, the entire student population at her school attended on an F-1 visa. Moreover, the student indicated that the school population was no more than twenty students. She and her sibling lived together with a host family and had to share a bedroom. Student H participated in the focus group interview of this study.

Student I. Student I is a 21-year-old male from Hong Kong, China. Prior to studying in the U.S., he attended boarding schools in England for 9th and 10th grade, then transferred to a U.S. high school at age 17 for his junior and senior years. He chose to transfer to the U.S. after vacationing with his dad in California. Unlike England's gloomy weather, southern California's sunny weather and climate convinced him to finish his secondary education in the U.S. Like previous participants, Student I's family turned to an agency for his application to attend a private religious school located in a suburban area of Los Angeles. The school profile is composed entirely of international students: over 1,300 in Grades 9 through 12, including a large Hispanic population of 40%, white population of 22%, Filipino population of 13%, African-American population of 7%, and Asian population of 10%. While attending high school, Student I lived with a host family assigned by the agency. To fit the student's schedule and availability, the interviews occurred at a classroom in the community college where he is currently enrolled.

Table 4.0 Participant Profile

| Participant | Gender | School | Grade | Guardian | Country of Origin |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Student A | Female | Public | 12 th | Parent | South Korea |
| Student B | Male | Private | 10 th | Parent | South Korea |
| Student C | Male | Private | 10 th | Parent | Taiwan |
| Student D | Male | Public | Graduated | Host | Switzerland |
| Student E | Male | Private | Graduated | Uncle | Vietnam |
| Student F | Female | Private | Graduated | Host | China |
| Student G | Female | Private | Graduated | Host | China |
| Student H | Female | Private | Graduated | Host | China |
| Student I | Male | Private/SH | Graduated | Host | Hong Kong |
| Director | Male | Private/NWH | | | U.S. |
| Counselor | Female | Private/NWH | | | U.S. |
| Host Parent A | Female | Public | | | U.S. |
| Host Parent B | Male | Private/SH | | | U.S. |
| Parent A | Female | Private | | | Taiwan |
| Parent B | Female | Public/Private | | | South Korea |
| Parent C | Female | Private | | | China |
| TOTAL PARTICIPANTS 16 | | | | | |

Data Analysis Process

The data collection process was initiated in June 2017 and completed in August 2017, using five different interview protocols, which were individually designed to correspond to a specific population sample. The interview protocols consisted of open-ended and probing questions, customized to each group, with the objective of answering the research questions of this study. Depending on the participants’ openness, the length of each interview varied from 30 to 90 minutes. All individual interviews and focus group interviews were audio recorded. Following the interviews, the recordings were submitted to a transcription service. The focus group interview with parents included Chinese language use during the interview, which necessitated utilizing the researcher’s time to transcribe. With the permission of their parents, the interviews with high school aged participants took place at their own residences. The

remaining interviews with those students who had graduated from a U.S. high school occurred in a classroom of their community college campus. For convenience and privacy, the researcher met host parents at their own residences. The interviews for the director and the counselor were completed in their school offices. Lastly, the focus group with parents of international high school students took place in a conference room located on the community college campus they were attending.

To complement the findings from the interviews, the survey was given to all students who participated in the interview process. With the support and help of high school graduate participants, additional surveys were given to their international friends who also graduated from a U.S. high school.

Upon completion of all transcribed interviews, the data was analyzed then organized into categories and emerging themes. By coding and identifying common themes, the researcher categorized the findings to answer the research questions of this study (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Emerging Themes

| Research Questions | Themes |
|---|---|
| <p>1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?</p> | <p>Language barriers Resources Friendships/network Academic adjustment/school environment Cultural adjustment Segregation Living accommodation Pre-departure preparation Food</p> |
| <p>2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?</p> | <p>School clubs and sports Host families' activities Community involvement Religious affiliation Transportation Social media Attitude</p> |
| <p>3. What are the perceptions of parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?</p> | <p>Relationships: parents, school staff, hosts, agents Procedures/school rules Communication Future career/hope Professional training</p> |

In this section, the researcher will present and organize the findings using the research questions as guidelines as shown in Table 4.1. The data from this study was examined through the lenses of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Berry's Acculturation Model, which served as theoretical frameworks for this study.

Research Question 1: What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

According to Owens and Loomes' (2010) research, international students seek to first meet their two basic needs: physiological and safety. As summarized in the literature review, international students face numerous difficulties and challenges during their transition journey in U.S. high schools.

Language barriers. Research shows that language is the most common struggle for international students, more specifically for students coming from Asian countries. English proficiency is the fundamental skill in adjusting to the host community, school, and culture. All nine students reported that English was a barrier when they first arrived to the U.S., including those who learned English in their home country.

Student F lived with a host family in a small town located on the East Coast. The agency that she and her family contracted with assigned her school and host family location. She shared her difficulty with English language:

My English was pretty bad. I couldn't express my feelings in sentences. So, I just said words one by one and hoped they would understand.

Student G echoed the same difficulty:

My biggest problem is the use of English language. Even though I have learned English since elementary school but it was different. In China, we did not use it as conversational language. We only focused on homework and tests. So I was afraid and shy in using English and speaking it.

For Student C who had been learning English since Kindergarten in his country (Taiwan), he also thought "it was a challenge for the first two years" in the U.S.

Student E who had been in the U.S. since middle school noticed the language difficulty when he observed his younger brother's difficulty with language when he arrived in 10th grade:

My brother came to the U.S. three years ago and it was harder for him to learn English. I feel that it is easier to learn English when you come to the U.S. starting from middle school.

As a result of having a language barrier, Student H concluded that it affected other aspects of international students' adjustments:

English language is the most challenging issue. It is harder for international students to socialize with American students and to become friends. It is difficult to share and express my feelings.

The NorthWest High (NWH) counselor confirmed the difficulty that international students faced in listening and understanding the English spoken in the U.S. She further added that it was important for international students to blend in and make friends with local students so they could use the English language instead of their native language.

Resources. When students were asked where they went to find help, most of them did not know how to go about finding help or who to turn to. For Students A and B who lived with their own mother, they were automatically cared for in terms of daily life needs. However, when they needed help with schoolwork and classes to take, they turned to their private tutor or friends. Student A, who attended a public high school, shared:

When I needed help, I asked my private tutor who helped me with schoolwork like exams, SAT, and all subjects. I did not really go to the counselor at school. The counselor was so busy so I asked my friends and other Korean students who were older than me. In my freshman year, I did not know how to take honor and AP classes. Then my schoolmates

told me that I had to get a recommendation letter from teachers who have taught the course so I could petition for honor or AP classes.

Similarly, Student B did not seek help from his school counselor. He thought that the counselor was too busy and did not want to “disturb” her. Therefore, he turned to his family and classmates for help.

For international students whose parents were not nearby to help, they sought help or information from their host families or would rely on the internet to solve their problems. For example, Student G reached out to her host family for basic information:

I didn't know anything about getting my driver's license. I asked my host family to explain to me the process of getting a driver's license. I then searched online to learn what I needed to do in order to learn driving. So I called driving schools myself to schedule classes and went to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for my driving test.

Students who worked with agencies were also left on their own in solving problems. Student F explained the limited resources she encountered:

I don't think there was a counselor at my school. I never met the counselor. I just met with the principal or agent about my school. But my agent was not helpful too. When I asked my agent to switch my host family because I was very uncomfortable, the agent representative of that region said: “No, there is no other host family. You cannot just switch your host family.” But the host family could kick me out anytime. That was so unfair. When I had problems, I usually dealt with them on my own. My agent only brought me to the U.S. and then left me with no help. It is useless to ask my agent and I

don't want to bother my host family because I don't want them to think that I am trouble and they can choose to kick me out.

From the findings, international students were more comfortable in reaching out to their teachers who they saw everyday compared to their school counselors. The director of NWH concluded that depending on the students' relationships, they would seek help from the person they were most comfortable with. As indicated in the literature review, the participants from Asian countries were more hesitant to find counsel (McLachlan & Justice, 2009).

Friendships and network. According to Wright and Schartner (2013), there is a lack of integration between international students and host members. They further added that cultural distance was perceived as evidence of integration difficulty especially for Chinese students. In addition, there was also a lack of initiative from host students in seeking to build relationships with international students. In Table 4.2, international students shared similar perspectives on the difficulty of establishing friendships with host nationals.

Table 4.2 International Students' Perspectives on Friendship and Network

| Participants | Responses |
|------------------|---|
| Student C | If you attend a large school with lots of students, it's harder to make friends because they already have their own group. So, you need to try to talk to them and fit in. |
| Student F | Networking was difficult. I was one of only two Chinese students in school. It was hard for me to find someone I could relate to. I did find one friend, but he moved and went to a different school. I was back to being alone. It was really hard to find someone to be friends with and have a relationship. |
| Student G | I was friends with a Canadian person who played hockey. He tried to date me, but my teacher advised me not to go out with him. My teacher took care of me and looked out for me. I wish I had an American friend. |
| Student I | It's easy to know people, but it's hard to be friends, like going through life together. I had friends at school, but they are just friends at school. We don't hang out after school. |

Students A and C had a common comment:

I don't feel like an international student because I hang out with local students. I don't want people to see me differently.

Student C strongly objected to being viewed as Chinese and refused to take part in any Chinese or international students' group activities at school.

Contrary to Students C, F, G, and I in Table 4.2, Students D and E were able to make friends through sports. Student E attended a small private Christian high school, joined the school's basketball and football teams. His graduating class was only sixty students where everyone knew each other. Student D, who attended a large public high school, also joined sport

teams such as cross-country, cheerleading, and track and field. Through sports, he met his best friend and his girlfriend. Both students concluded that their participation in sport teams led them to meet more people and eased their transition in making new friends. Student D added:

I met Franklin on the first day of school and he became my friend. Franklin took me under his wing. He showed me everything and took me to places. He liked to stay busy and was involved in a lot of activities. He helped me integrate and be part of the school instantly. I was very lucky for meeting him on the first day of school.

As mentioned in the literature review, the counselor also observed that international students had difficulty in making friends because:

They stick to themselves. During lunchtime, the international students would sit together. I get that they are shy. It is not that we have not reached out. Our director tries and pairs them up with American students. But the students have to make the effort themselves to step out of their own culture.

Host Parent B noticed a similar problem when international students looked for friendship:

International students (Chinese) don't assimilate well. They want to hang out with their friends. And most of their friends are Chinese nationals. They tend to stick to their own, "their clan."

In support of finding the factors that may cause acculturative stress, seventeen international students, who attended a U.S. high school, participated in the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students survey (ASSIS) (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). The ASSIS survey document results showed that 70% of international student that participated "missed the country and people of their national origin" which may shed light on their attachment to their "co-

national” friends. Furthermore, the survey revealed that almost half of them were “sad leaving their relatives behind.”

Academic adjustment and school environment. In a collectivist culture, specifically in Asian countries, teachers are viewed as experts who transfer knowledge to their students (learners). The classrooms were teacher-centered where students do not speak. Coming from South Korea, Student A discovered the emphasis of presentations in her American classes:

You have to go in front of the class and speak for maybe three to four minutes. I was not used to that, and I kind of had a stage fright symptom. First of all, I was afraid because I still kind of have an accent and second, going in front of people and speaking were really hard. I was not used to that kind of education.

Furthermore, the same student shared another academic difficulty that many international students have encountered:

When I first came to school in the U.S., I had to translate everything, even math lessons. I spent so much time in translating the lessons that I didn’t have time to talk and have social life. But what I liked about attending American high school was lunchtime. People were not studying during lunch break. In my country (Korea), students would be studying to get grades A and B or you would be seen as not smart. Here, there was less pressure and school always emphasized an extra-curricular activity for college applications.

Table 4.3 presents the views of different international students who agreed that there was a more relaxed academic environment in U.S. high schools.

Table 4.3 Responses on Academic Adjustment and School Environment

| Participants | Responses |
|------------------|--|
| Student B | In Korea, the teachers overworked and overstretched you. But here, it's definitely manageable. I take three AP classes and study two hours a day, that's it. I put away my phone for those two hours. I don't know why my American friends complain about homework. Over here, you can do so many things besides study. They expect you to join sports and clubs. In Korea, literally, it's just studying and testing. |
| Student F | The academics are really easy, especially science. But English is hard because of vocabulary and grammar. |
| Student D | The academics are not as rigorous as in my country (Switzerland). Here, we can study, still learn interesting things, do sports, and create things. It's a different way of learning. There are lots of leadership opportunities and training in an American high school. |
| Student G | I didn't like my school. The school was very small and did not have many students and not many activities. It was not like a regular high school. I think there were less than thirty students in the school. |

From the focus group interview, all four students agreed that American high schools had less pressure than the ones in their home country. The academic days and hours were shorter here than in their home country where classes may start as early as 7 am and end at 5 pm.

Even though the school schedule seemed less stressful, Student B claimed: “As international students, we have to work twice as hard in all subjects than local students, because of English language.” He also saw a small group of international peers being disqualified and sent back to their home country due to their low grade point average (GPA) and their struggle with English.

The counselor and director also observed difficulties for international students in academic adjustment. The Director of NWH explained that the difficulty for his international students was dealing with bad grades and how to go about improving and asking for help. He shared one such situation:

We don't care if you (student) bombed an essay. We are more worried about how you got to the essay. So, the students look at that as a failure, whereas an English teacher or a science teacher do not look at that as a failure; they look at it as a route of discovery. So, I have literally walked kids up to a classroom. I did that a couple times last year. I said, "Have you talked to your science teacher?" "No." I go, "Why?" "I can't talk to my science teacher." "Well, you have to." "I don't want to." I literally took their hand and walked them up to the classroom. I said, "Sit. Now talk. You talked to me just fine. Do the same with Ms. Science." Usually they would say a few things and then the teacher would take over. The kids would not go and ask teachers questions. I also tell the students that participation grade is huge: "If you don't participate, you're not getting an A."

The counselor is the only staff person at NWH who worked with international students regarding their academic requirements as well as their college selections. The counselor witnessed a gap between international students' academic expectations and the reality of their academic proficiency challenges:

Some of our teachers speak really fast. It is usually very difficult for international students to catch on. Before school starts, we remind our teachers to slow down. The students faced their most difficult time in classes such as history, English, and Bible where English writing, listening, and speaking are vital. International students created more pressure for themselves because they believed that they had to take honors and AP

classes to meet the University of California (UC) admission requirement, more specifically, UCLA and UC Berkeley.

Cultural adjustment. Due to cultural and communication differences, international students and their host family members may misunderstand each other, which could create unexpected animosity. Like most teenagers of any ethnic group, Student F was playful when she commented on a subject of her culture:

My host sister was in the same class as me. She overheard my conversation with another classmate regarding, “Asians eating dog.” Jokingly, I told my friend, “Yes,” Asians eat dogs and it’s delicious!” My host sister was frantically upset and complained to my agent who then came to meet with me and gave me a warning. She later warned me not to talk about “eating dog.”

As she shared this incident, Student F expressed anger for being misunderstood and how her host sister was “ignorant” regarding cultural and communication differences. She was also upset that it was reported to her agent and caused unnecessary reproach. She went on to explain another incident—contrary to her Chinese cultural upbringing of being strict with academics, her host family was very lenient with academics. Her host mother wanted her to participate in family time by watching TV with them:

They said: It’s family time. So, I can watch TV with them. The TV show they watched was about “Finding Bigfoot.” I was not interested and wanted to study for my SAT and ACT so I could apply for university. But my host mother banned me from studying and reported to my agent. Again, the agent came to talk to me and told me to spend time with the host family instead of studying. I ended up not taking the SAT nor the ACT tests. It is why I enrolled in a community college.

Student C, who attended a Christian private school, shared that his counselor only helped with classes and issues relating to school, but did not help an international student in transitioning to U.S. culture.

The selected ASSIS survey questions concluded that 24% of international students “felt uncomfortable trying to adjust to new cultural values.” This finding reaffirmed the level of acculturation difficulty that exists among international students.

Segregation. Student B, who attended a Christian private school, thought that instead of helping international students integrate with American culture, the school segregated the international student population. With a disappointing and frustrating voice, he shared:

We have an international assembly. It’s like a prep rally. The assembly gathers all international students. Students perform on stage, show their talents, entertain, and it’s fun. I am in favor of sharing different cultures. But it basically focuses on international students. American students do not attend the assembly. So, I feel like we are divided and the school separates the international students from other students. How can we be “Americanized?”

Student A, who attended a public high school, experienced the opposite. At her school, international students blended in with the overall school student population. She said:

I forget that I am an international student when I am at school because I don’t have special treatment like my brother at the private school. Being treated like other students, I was forced to learn how to survive and what to do when faced with situations. I made friends and hang out with American students to improve my English. The teachers also treat me like other students.

However, she also noticed:

I know one international student from China. She hangs out with other Chinese students who are born here because she can speak Chinese. I think she had a hard time in her English and history classes because of English language.

Furthermore, the director observed an obvious difference happening at his school:

When the Chinese students come, everybody already knows that they are international students. They are already put in a box. But if a student comes from Italy or Germany, local students' reactions: "Oh, there is an Italian here!"

The survey responses collected from the international students confirmed that 24% of the participants had experienced segregation, and "felt rejected when people were sarcastic toward their cultural values" as well as "when others don't appreciate their cultural values" (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).

Living accommodation. Out of the nine student participants, only three students had the luxury of living and being cared for by their own parents. The remaining five students lived with a host family and one lived with a family relative (uncle). Some international students had good experiences living with their host family while others had negative ones. Student D was very fortunate. He was placed with a host family who was experienced with welcoming international students:

I was living with a host family. My host parents were very nice. They always included me in everything they did unlike other host families who just left the student alone. My host mom spent a lot of time with me at the beginning and helped me adjust to the U.S. life. They included me in their family game nights, their family travels (San Francisco, Texas), and took me on a tour of Los Angeles before school started.

On the other hand, Student F and Student G had unpleasant experiences. Student F said:

My host family picked me based on my application. I didn't like to spend time with my host family because my interests were different than their interests. My host sister was mean to me and told me mean stuff. Her attitude was bad and hurt me. Also, my host family complained to my agent that I studied too much.

Student G described her uneasiness:

It's hard to live with other people in the same house, especially when it's not my house. I shared a bedroom with my sister and we just stayed in the room. Even though they are nice, I am not comfortable to be in the living room since it's not my house.

Pre-departure preparation. For a successful study abroad experience away from home, Student D emphasized the importance of being prepared before coming to the U.S.:

I came to the U.S. with a very specific mindset. I told myself that I wouldn't get homesick and that I was doing it for a year so I should fully enjoy and make the most out of it...I think that way I was able to not be homesick.

Student G also recommended that parents should enlist their children in organizations in their home countries, expose their children to new cultures, or make them practice new languages before sending them to the U.S.

Food. Student B, who lived with his own mother, witnessed his Korean friend's complaints about diet: "Every day it's the same food like Costco pizza." He also said that his friend would tell his host family that he was going out to exercise, but instead ran to a neighborhood restaurant for food. The same student would skip breakfast at home because "it's bad" and spent money to eat breakfast at his school's cafeteria.

Student D confirmed that food in high school is "really bad" and his host family ate out a lot. Back home, his mother always cooked and included many vegetables and organic foods.

However, Student D was grateful that he was in California because the variety of food choices was diverse and plentiful. On the other hand, Student F commented that her host family “ate lots of meat and seldom ate vegetables” and there were not many choices of food in the little town of Minnesota. So, she would eat simply to get by. Furthermore, she shared about her international friend who lived with a host family and had limited access to food. According to the student, the host family was strict and would tell the student, “This is all you get and there is no more food.” Moreover, the student was placed with a Middle Eastern host family, and he was not used to their diet and culture. There the culture gap was even greater.

Likewise, Host Parent A mentioned that international students needed to adjust to the American diet when they arrived in the U.S. as it is very different from the diet of their native countries. All international students missed the food of their home country and the cooking of their parents. Many of them claimed that they would return home during school breaks just to enjoy their home country cuisine.

About 25% of the international students responded to the survey, sharing that they “felt uncomfortable with adjusting to American food and/or to new eating habits.”

Summary of Research Question 1 Responses

The findings confirmed that nine major categories were linked to factors that challenged international students when they transitioned to U.S. high schools: language barriers, lack of resources, lack of friends and social network, academic adjustment and school environment, cultural adjustment, living accommodation, pre-departure preparation, food, and segregation.

Research Question 2: To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?

Based on Berry's Acculturation Model Theory (1997, 2005), the extent to which international students acculturated to the host country and established new networks influenced their adjustments. While conducting interviews and focus groups, it became apparent that the participants who lived on their own had a tendency to develop "co-national" networks, which were different than the networks formed by those who were accompanied by their parents in the U.S. To analyze and identify international students' acculturation process, the researcher sought to explore how international students were involved in their respective school's extracurricular activities as well as activities outside of school.

Extracurricular activities. International students who lived with their own parents were more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities both inside and outside of school. In Table 4.4, the researcher presents different activities that international students were involved in while attending a U.S. high school. Students A, B, and C were involved in sports, orchestra, and clubs; others volunteered in their school and community. International Students F, G, H, and I did not participate as much in school activities because of lack of availability, limited choices, or disinterest. However, for Student D, high school life was filled with "fun." Prior to attending an American high school, Student D had not experienced a sports team in Switzerland. He shared:

I was on the cross country team. I never ran before so it was exciting. I was not super good, but it was nice being part of something every day. I used to do sports, but not part of a team like that. Here, sport is more intense and serious. I had to be on a special diet and no sugar. With the team, we went to compete in Las Vegas and won the Nationals. It was very exciting. Then I joined track and field and did the pole vault. It was really

fun. I did not have any idea but my friend showed me and I became the best on the team. I actually won one of the meets. Then I joined the cheerleading team with four other guys surrounded by a bunch of girls. It was really fun.

On top of sport teams, I was in a Small Business Management class requiring my team to start a small company. We named our company “Dress the Night.” We rented out dresses to students who couldn’t afford to buy dresses to attend formal events like prom and homecoming. We collected donations from people who didn’t want their dresses and we rented them out. With this company, our team was selected by Junior Achievement as one of the ten best junior companies of Southern California. Unfortunately, we did not win first place. But it was really fun. I got to meet business experts, the director of Business from USC, and some people from TV.

The director of NWH shared that when international students get involved in school extracurricular activities, they were more likely to acclimate to their new environment:

As a school, we tried to get international students to try out for sports and theater arts. Last year, a Chinese student was the star of our play. He was awesome! He met other kids and was involved with his playmates. It was a huge benefit for him. We also had two boys who tried out and made the volleyball team. They started to hang out with American kids, it was a huge benefit.

Host Parent B also confirmed that students who lived with him were not interested in joining school activities, but rather sought to spend time with their “co-national” friends. Understanding the vital element of extracurricular activities in a high school student’s life, Host Parent A requested that her international students participate in sports. She also added, “I am kind of their Mom away from home.”

Table 4.4 Extracurricular Activities On and Off Campus

| | Parents | No parents | On campus | Off campus | Leisure |
|-----------|---------|------------|---|--|---|
| Student A | X | | Orchestra—cello Clubs: American Latino Connection National Honors society Volunteer | Korean Traditional Dance Community volunteer | Cello Tutoring Korean drama Eat out with friends |
| Student B | X | | Clubs: Asian Culture Club president | Korean classic music/instruments Local museum volunteer | Basketball with friends Tutoring Video games Korean classical music |
| Student C | X | | Swim Baseball | None | Baseball Video games |
| Student D | | X | Cross country Track and field Cheerleading | None | Traveling with host family Yoga and cycling classes Hangout with teammates Museums Local festivals Movie screenings, Hollywood Bowl |
| Student E | | X | Football Basketball Club | None | Hangout with friends |
| Student F | | X | Club Golf Fundraising | None | Movie Dinners Social media Computer games Online friends |
| Student G | | X | Not available | Bowling | Reading Shopping Movies Social media (English Corner) Online friends |
| Student H | | X | Not available | None | Social media Online friends Boyfriend |
| Student I | | X | Golf | None | Hangout with friends Church with host family |

Host families' activities. International students who lived with a host family had few to no selected activities. Host families are not required to arrange activities for international students other than invite them to church activities if they were Christians. Out of five host families, only one host family was active in involving their students in the family's activities. Most host families were only bound by their responsibility to provide room and board. For Students G and H, they sometimes helped their host family by babysitting their children as they were too young to be on their own. They explained:

Sometimes when the host parents were busy, they would ask us if we could take care of their kids. We would do it and help because they were nice with us. But we don't really play with them.

Student F had hoped to do more touring and sightseeing while living with her host family, but she was not able to travel due to her host family's circumstances and liability:

My host family is a working-class family. They don't have a lot of free money to travel. I asked my agent if I could travel with my friends. The agent said "No, you have to have a guardian." I replied "but my host family doesn't have money." The agent's answer was "so pay for them."

Unlike the majority of host families, Host Parent A traveled frequently. She and her husband were very inclusive and treated her international students like her own children by including them when the family traveled and if their schedules permitted:

We have taken students with us on vacation to Canada, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and to Washington state.

Community involvement. As shown in Table 4.4, with the exception of Students A and B, the majority of international students did not participate in extracurricular activities outside of

school nor did they get involved in activities within their local community. Most international students were not used to doing volunteer work in the community after school because in their home country their school day was very long and left them no time to do anything else. Host Parent B reaffirmed:

They (international students) do not have any outreach with members of the community, which results in them only wanting to go to a friends' house once in a while. So most of the week they are home.

Religious affiliation. Eight students of this study either lived with a Christian host family or attended a Christian high school. Host families would often invite their students to join them in church on Sundays or invite them to participate in Friday night youth group activities.

However, Chinese Student G expressed her dislike:

My host parents invited my sister and me to go to church. I thought it would be fun, so I went with them the first time. But I thought it was boring, and I did not like it. Plus, I am a Buddhist and it is totally different. I don't like to read the Bible or sing songs.

Host Parent B shared that a particular agency required that international students be placed in Christian homes and that students had to attend church on weekends.

Transportation. International students could not travel extensively or visit different places because they had limited access to personal vehicles and public transportation.

International students were fully dependent on their host family to drive them and pick them up from school. Outside of school, students tended to stay at home in their rooms. For those who lived close to shopping centers, they could visit stores, go out to eat, or see a movie at theater. If they needed a ride to a location some distance away, like Students G and H, there was a fee included; as they explained, "If the distance took less than 30 minutes to drive, there would be no

cost, but if the distance took more than 30 minutes to drive, we could be charged as much as \$50.00.” For Student F, she would take the bus to school or sometimes got a ride from her host sister. In the case of Student I, the host family coordinated with other host families a carpool schedule to transport a group of international students to Sunny Hill High School (SH). For Students D and E, owning a car while in high school allowed them to spend time with their friends outside of school. Student D stated:

Once I had a car, I would often drive myself to my cheerleading practices in the early morning before school, and hang out with my friends after school.

For Students A, B, and C who lived with their parents, transportation was not an issue. The parents made themselves available to support their children by driving them to places. However, Student B shared an international friend’s dilemma living with a host family:

My friend, Kevin, (pseudonym) from Korea is on the soccer team and has soccer practices late at night. His housemate, who does not play sports, would be picked up right after school and taken home. But Kevin was sometimes told to “Uber” himself home after practices.

Social media. For most of the international students, social media was their best companion and social outlet. Many had limited access to transportation. Like their host country peers, the majority of international students lived in the changing world of technology. They stayed connected online, searched for answers to their questions, played online games, connected with friends from their home country via “WeChat” and “QQ.” Some acquired new skills like Student G, who learned to play the ukulele via YouTube, or made new friends through different sites. For example, Student G met new friends through an online site “English Corner Online,” and her sister met her boyfriend through the same website. “English Corner Online” is a social

networking site for English learners. It is a free platform that allows people to practice speaking and writing English with people all over the world. While playing computer games, many international students made new friends through different sites. Student H felt connected with her “online” boyfriend, also an international student who lived in Canada, because of their common experiences away from their home country.

Social media became the primary entertainment outlet during the day for international students and inevitably replaced many extracurricular activities. Like all teenagers, international students spent time on YouTube and game sites. Social media was convenient for many reasons: it did not require transportation, a high level of acculturation, nor involuntary commitment from the students, and it was the least stressful form of interactions with others.

Summary of Research Question 2 Responses

The findings demonstrated the importance of international students’ participation in extracurricular activities to expedite their acculturation in a new living environment. Students A, D, and E, unlike the majority of international students, identified largely with U.S. culture (Berry, 1997), which may have been influenced by their backgrounds, ethnicities, openness, and living situations in the U.S. Most of the international students in this study maintained their own culture, rejecting the new culture by segregating themselves and staying with their “co-national” friends.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of parents, school staff, and host families, regarding international students’ issues and adjustments?

The purpose of this research question was to learn from parents, host parents, and school staff about their perspectives on international students’ issues and adjustments. This research question also allowed international students to share their perspectives about their host families, school staff and environment, agents, and parents’ expectations.

Relationships. The relationships that international students had with parents, host family, school staff, and agents varied widely.

Relationships with parents. For some international students, relationships with their parents seemed to be limited to financial support and basic information. Many international students did not want to worry their parents with their problems, or thought that their parents would not understand, so when asked, international students tended to respond positively with “Good,” “Fine,” or “All is well.” Student G shared:

My relationship with my parents is not very close. My parents are not strict at all. They own their own business and are very busy. They hired a nanny to take care of my sister and I since we were little. Then, when I reached middle school age, they sent me to a boarding school. We have not lived with my parents since middle school. I wished my mother had asked me where I wanted to go to study.

Student F also recalled her distant relationship with her parents:

I hardly talked to my dad when I was in China. But after I came to the U.S., we became closer. We talk and joke more. I think living in America helped me see how kids talk and play with their parents. So I thought I should probably treat my parents like my friends so I can talk more. The distance actually draws me closer to my parents.

Student I also echoed the previous comments:

My relationship with my parents is getting better. I didn't talk much with them when I was in high school. I didn't tell them about my problems. It was just basic conversations about school and life. But nothing deep. They didn't expect me to have good grades and do something I like after college. They just wanted me to be responsible, healthy, and happy.

Contrary to Asian family relationships, Student D, from Switzerland was well supported by his parents:

My parents didn't have a set expectation. They just wanted me to be happy. They were very supportive when I asked to come to California because my dad used to live in California for six years and I remember him talking about his experiences living in the U.S.

Students A and B, who lived with their parents also enjoyed a very happy relationship with each, particularly with their mother: "We are very close to our parents. We can reveal everything to our mom." Both participants acknowledged their parents' expectations, "They want me to go to a good college and be successful in life." Like their father, they both wanted to become an entrepreneur. On the other hand, Student C, who also lived with his mother, did not feel that he had to share everything with his mother. He was close to his parents and they were there to provide for his "survival" needs in the U.S. He did not have to worry about anything. Yet, when it came to his personal issues, he turned to his peers for advice. Student E also claimed that talking with his peers was more reliable and easier than sharing with his parents and relatives.

Relationships with host family. International students who lived with a host family shared that the relationship and the experience was more like a transaction rather than an efficient process for integration into the U.S. culture. Students G and H stated, "I don't expect a lot. But we should have dinners or do something together with our host family." They also shared the cost of their living and accommodation: "We had to pay \$12,000 per person. My sister and I shared a small bedroom. That was a lot of money!" Student F expressed her insecurity and constant anxiety, fearing that her host family could kick her out. Student I thought his first two host families were sort of "stingy." He explained:

I guess they (the host parents) were maybe looking at, “Oh, I am hosting a student and it’s helping me financially.” So they have to be aware of how much they are spending to make profit. Also, I think that age has a lot to do with what the host family would do for students. The first two host families that my agent assigned me to were very lenient and computed every expense. Then, through friends, I found my third set of host parents in my junior year of school. They were older, in their sixties, and they had expectations for international students. We talked a lot. My relationship with them was actually better than with my parents. They mentored me and challenged me.

In spite of some negative experiences with her host family, Student F admitted:

I said a lot of negative things about living with my host family. But there are also advantages in living with them. They taught me a lot, like learning to appreciate people... Here we care more about people’s feelings. I learned from my host family to respect people’s opinions and to be positive. Sometimes I am confused with my host family. They said, “Oh, you are like my daughter now. We’re a family.” But I don’t feel the same way.

For Student D, his relationship with his host family was exceptionally good:

My host family was really nice. They always invited me to travel with them to different places. My host mom spent lots of time with me. When I first arrived, she took me to school and places. My host dad would take me to see football and basketball games. I sometimes walked the dogs with them and talked. They didn’t have specific rules. But if they needed me to be home, for example, family dinner, they will tell me “Can you be home this Saturday? We are going to have a family dinner.” And I would answer, “Of course, I will be there.” They also allowed me to bring friends home where we had

pizzas and watched a movie. We communicated a lot. As long I informed them about where I was and when I would come home, they were okay.

Relationships with school staff. For many international students, the relationship with school teachers and counselors were minimal, except when international students had a problem or a question about something to do with school. They seldom sought to interact with their school teachers or any administrators unless it was necessary. Students G and H attended an international school consisting of three classrooms. They had the same teacher for each class. After school, this teacher took them to bowling and museums.

Relationships with agents. Unfortunately, for most international students, relationships with agents were unpleasant and unfriendly. Student G explained her negative experience with her agent with anger and disappointment:

I had really bad experiences with my agent from the start. Agents should be in touch with us and ask if we were doing good or not. I think they have the responsibility to help international students as they promised my parents that they would take care of us. Back in China, the agents lied to us. They told me that I can choose my destination country. But they only offered me a placement in the United States. I think they only worked with agents in the U.S. Then they told us that I had to go to Beijing, the capital city, to process my student visa. I told them that I could do it in Guangzhou, a city closer to my home. But my mom listened and trusted the agent. So I obeyed, went to Beijing, and stayed in the hotel for one month. While staying in Beijing, the agent required my sister and I to take lessons with a teacher who has studied seven years in the U.S. I had to finish a month of studying before I could submit my student visa application to the U.S. embassy. The agent did not do anything. I had to fill out the paperwork myself. It took me two

days to fill out the paperwork because it was in English and I had to spend time in translating the application forms... My application was approved, but my sister's application was denied. So we went home and I took my sister to Guangzhou's U.S. embassy myself. She got approved and received her F-1 visa to the U.S. We paid so much money to the agent and thousands of dollars to the English teacher... My parents also paid the agents in full for my sister and my tuition fees and living fees. Arriving in the U.S., not only did the agent not help us but also held back my funds for tuition and living, and stopped paying my school fees and my host family's fees. They asked my parents to start paying for tuition for the next academic year... I did not know what school I would go to. I was so angry! I told my parents to stop using the agent...so my parents had to pay again... There was no contract signed. My father just transferred money to the agent.

Student F expressed similar disappointment:

Agents should be more responsible in selecting schools and host families for international students. They should ask how international students are doing and follow up with students and not just drop them off in the U.S.

As international students embarked on this education journey, they were faced with numerous challenges and expectations different from their parents. From the ASSIS survey collected, 20% of the students confirmed that they were overwhelmed with the multiple pressures placed on them after their relocation to the U.S.

Procedures and school rules. International students shared that they were required to follow rules that did not apply to native born students. Student B expressed his frustration about “unfair” rules required at his school for international students:

I am very close to international students. I can say that 95% of them always struggle. They complained because there are certain rules that only applied to international students. For example, I wanted to take other international students to Universal Driver with me, but the head of the school came and told me, “International students have guidelines. They cannot ride in someone else’s car.” They can’t even ride in their friends’ car or my mom’s car. Only their host family can drive them.

Student D was disappointed by some of his school’s rules:

I didn’t like the off campus rules even though they did not apply to me since I was a senior. Also according to the school’s policy, I attended the school on a different contract in my senior year. I could not graduate and receive a diploma even though I had better grades than others in my class. But my international friends who attended other U.S. high schools were able to graduate and attend the graduation ceremonies.

According to the survey document, international students responded that they were denied many opportunities and 20% of international students recognized that many of the restrictions were because of their F-1 visa status. For example, international students were not eligible to obtain a part-time job while attending high school, apply for financial aid or scholarship, or request assistance like their host peers.

Student I shared his detention experience, when asked about his involvement in school activities:

School activity? Does detention count? I had one detention for being tardy and not wearing my uniform...I also had to pay \$5 for my detention.

Attitude. Several of the international students believed that personal attitude was crucial to their success in acculturation and adjustment within the host country. Student A stated: “I did not keep in touch with my friends the first year I left Korea. I wanted to get out of

my mind everything about Korea, and try to only concentrate on America. I think that really helped me as an international student.”

Moreover, Student D affirmed:

I was mentally trying not to miss home. I had so much to do, and I knew that at the end of the year, I would go home. So there was no point to missing home. Instead I wanted to fully experience my stay in the U.S.

Unfortunately, many international students were not as motivated; as indicated by Host Parent B:

International students sleep a lot. One of my Chinese students could be an A student because his English is really good, and his aptitude was at a high level. But he was not motivated. He could have done a lot more. He self-stated, “I am lazy.” Plus, the international students like to play computer games instead of doing their homework.

Future career/hope. All of the international students understood and agreed that their parents sent them to U.S. schools for a better education and opportunities, and to gain a competitive edge in the world. Ninety percent of international students’ parents wanted their children to attend good American universities after high school. Given their limited knowledge of the U.S. higher education system, parents of international students were only aware of a few American university names. For example, many wished for their children to enroll at University of California, Los Angeles or University of California, Berkeley.

Student E confirmed:

As Asian parents, they care a lot about their image. It’s better to say, “Hey, my son went to Stanford,” than, “Hey, my son went to Cal State.” Plus, being the first male in the family of nine cousins, the expectation was high. They expected me to graduate and make lots of money.

Student F said:

My parents want me to go back to China after college and get a really decent job with high salary. They want me to study accounting instead of business administration because it is easier to find a job.

During his high school years, Student I was unclear about where he would go or what he would do:

Back then, I didn't really have a goal or vision. I just wanted to get through school. I thought about "good" universities but I never thought it was attainable. I was not motivated.

Compared to her sister (Student H), Student G was very determined about her long-term goal:

My mother expected me to become an interpreter. But they don't really expect a lot. They just wanted my sister and I to find a good boyfriend and marry a good husband. I studied hard and wanted to go to a good university like UCLA to study business. After I graduate, I want to stay and work in the United States. Everyone's goal is different. Like my sister, I think she is just wasting her time here.

Professional training. The director and counselor shared that they have received very little training for working with international students. They replied:

As the Director, I have received a little bit of training. But it's all self-initiated.

Basically, I was given the job and told "good luck." I took a class called "American Christian Schools International" and attended three conferences. I also searched online for information and glossed over a couple of books. That's about it. I don't have any certification or degree to hold this position. We don't have any training for our staff. I

tried to plan for weekly meeting and invite guest speakers to come and present to our staff and faculty. But it was not well received.

International Students' Recommendations and Observations

As she concluded the interviews, the researcher asked each international student for his/her recommendations to help future international students and their parents. The recommendations of the international students are presented in Table 4.5, which addresses four specific populations: international students, parents, schools, and agents.

Table 4.5 International Students' Recommendations and Observations

| | International Students | Parents | Schools/Staff | Agents |
|-----------|--|--|--|---|
| Student A | Hang out with other American students to improve English. | Expose children to English language early on. | Have student volunteers to help international students integrate. | |
| Student B | Make American friends. | Learn English from young age. | Don't treat international students differently; don't set them apart from the general population | |
| Student C | Talk to local students in English. | | Too much Chinese language in school hallway | |
| Student D | Students need to feel ready to study in the U.S. Get involved to meet people. Offer to help when living with host family. | They need to help their student to be ready. | | Agents have to be honest and not sell U.S. like a paradise. Be available to help students, plan trips and events. |
| Student E | Come to the U.S. in middle school to learn English faster | Send children early. | Make students joined sports and clubs. | |
| Student F | Get good grades to go to university. | Be supportive: emotionally and financially. Care how is your child doing. | | Be responsible when matching students and host families. |
| Student G | Study hard; it's the only way to be successful. Try to make American friends. It's better to come after high school. You are more mature. You won't forget your roots. | Ask children what they want. Give them English language exposure, conversation before sending them to the U.S. | Have English conversation program to help international students understand the American culture | Give students the option to choose their schools. Stay in touch with students. Be responsible and keep your promises. |
| Student H | Come to the U.S. from middle school. English language would be much easier and you would learn faster. | | | |
| Student I | Make many friends. They will make your experience more fun. Friends are important. Survive. | | Limit the number of international students in school. Give international students the right experience and genuinely care for them | Prepare students before attending U.S. schools. |

Student D added:

I feel like sometimes students come to study in the U.S., but expect to be driving convertible car or surfing at the beach. They could end up living on a farm in Montana where it is cold and snows. I think that students should not set too many expectations, but rather be open to the experience. International students have to be ready to leave their families and friends and fully immerse themselves in another reality.

Host Parents' Perceptions

International students enrolled in U.S. high schools are required to live with a legal guardian. Therefore, host families have become the most popular choices for international students' families and high schools enrolling F-1 visa students. The researcher sought to understand international students' challenges from the lens of an American adult who has had daily and direct contact with international students. Both host parent participants selected for this study were well-experienced and had hosted at least four international students.

Language and communication. According to both Host Parents A and B, international students were most challenged by the English language and communication. Host Parent A stated:

Usually the first month the international student does not understand the language. Even though they may have several years of English, it's not the same as having a conversation...American food may be odd for them.

Host Parent B observed and concluded the following about English learning:

They (international students) too often refuse to learn English. The more English they learn, the easier school will be. We had a Korean student who found the exact same textbook in Korean language...I tell my students that if they focus on learning English it

would take less time to study, take tests, and translate back and forth. They might take three or four times as long to do their homework because of having to translate what they read and think in their own language and back to English, and vice versa. It's important for international students to think in English and speak to people in English.

In addition to the language difficulties, Host Parent B added:

There is a lack of trust and comfort with their host family. Helping them understand their place, your place, the relationship and gaining trust... With my wife, we always give them advice that they don't want to listen to. Typically, most host families are told "treat them (students) like your children." The problem that arises is that a lot of these students are incorrigible. So it's harder to treat them like your own children.

For Host Parent A, communicating with her international students was not a problem. She has established a routine that encourages communication. She explained:

We haven't had any problems in communicating with our students. We've been very fortunate that my past four international students have been very open with us and would tell us if they had issues or problems. We request our students to have dinner with us every night. During dinner, it's when we catch up on what everybody is doing. My husband would share about his work, I would talk about my work with schools, and the students would usually share about what happened at school.

On the other hand, Host Parent B acknowledged the difficulty of communication with his students. He said:

My wife gives them a loving probe while I give them a more direct probe... Most students are on an average 14 through 16 years old. They come from a knitted family attitude, and don't communicate outside of their family, so you have to break into that

trust level. To gain their trust, we spend lots of time speaking with them, interacting with them, showing them how much we are interested in them. Other host families may just be, “Here’s the roof; here’s the food. Don’t like it? You can move.” It probably takes the better part of a year to gain their trust.

Contact with students’ families. In spite of the distance, one must expect that parents of a high school aged international student to be informed of their child’s progress and well-being in the host country. Host Parent A used to be thorough in updating her students’ family, she described:

I was really good with the first international student. I would send weekly emails with photos. Now, I know that my students are talking with their parents at least once a week or more, so I don’t email as often. But, if we go on a trip or something special happened (like an award), I would send them pictures by email.

Host Parent B shared the dilemma of communicating with students’ parents due to the language barrier:

My Chinese students’ parents do not speak English. So I would write in English and translated in Chinese on my computer, then copy and paste the translation before emailing to the parents. However, the translation could be twisted. Finally, one mom told me to just email it in English and she would get it translated... I actually don’t update. I mainly contact the parents and remind them when school payments are due.

Hosts’ responsibilities. Host families are mainly required to provide the basic necessities for international students such as room and board, legal guardianship because the students are minors, and treating the students like members of the family. In general, host families make breakfast, lunch, and dinner available. But as a responsible host family, the Host

Parent A indicated that it is “a big responsibility” as host parents. She continued explaining her dedication and constant presence for her students because, “You have to be there for them,” regardless of the activities they are involved in. For Host Parent B, he took on the responsibility to guide and mentor his students. Host Parent B gave an example:

I caught one of my Chinese students yelling at his mother while video chatting... I said to him, “You know, you are not going to treat your mother like that, and especially not my wife.” We’ve changed him as far as being in our home...a lot of it is disciplinary problems.

Host Parent B continued:

How you treat international students has some bearing. Do they trust you? Have you earned their respect? They don’t just give you respect. Unfortunately, cultural differences make it more difficult to build trust. Some of the international students felt that they were free of parental supervision. But I reiterate to them that we have laws here. When living in my house, they have responsibilities. I told them, “Yes, we’re in your business. We’re going to control where you go, how you go, when you go, and etc.” There is a piece of respect that gets earned by correction. To me, it is correction and explanation. I make sure they know that they can express their feelings and opinions.

Hosts’ challenges. Every host family may encounter different levels of challenges depending on the relationship of the host family with the student as well as the cultural gap between both parties. Host Parent A described the cultural challenges she faced:

I had a Spaniard who was very opinionated and had issues about women being in charge of things. So I had to talk with him about this, and explain that here in the U.S. women as well as men can be in charge.

Host Parent B reiterated that the most challenging element is the language barrier and communication. When problems arose, both host parents would contact their agencies and communicate the issues. Students may or may not be relocated to another host family, or they could be sent home depending on the problem. However, both host parent participants shared that they have not experienced any critical challenges that would have required their international students be withdrawn.

Reasons for becoming a host family. Due to the growth of the international student population in U.S. high schools, the demand for host families has increased because most international students are minors who must have a legal guardian. Some host families may be in the industry for financial benefit, others may be in it for personal enrichment, and some become involved out of curiosity. When both host parent participants were asked about the reasons they participated as hosts, they replied as follows:

Host Parent A: It's a wonderful experience. We enjoy having international students, we learned from them and they learned from us. Also, working with young people, it's sort of keeping us young. I personally enjoy coming home and hear about my students' exciting experiences. I would also go to their games and even visited their home country (Germany, Hungary, and Switzerland).

Host Parent B: Eighteen years ago, we started hosting out of a curious joy to interact with someone from a different country. We began hosting Korean students and then Chinese students.

Overall, both host parent participants' experiences with hosting international students have been positive. During the interviews, the researcher sensed their genuineness in caring for their international students.

School Staff's Perceptions

At a high school level, the perceptions of the director and counselor may differ from host parents given the structured environment of the school, expected performances, and American education standards.

Challenges. Three years ago, the director was assigned to the position of running the International Student Program at NWH. He had been with the school for 27 years. The school currently has about 46 to 50 international students, representing about 7% of the total student population (750). The director recognized that, as a small Christian private high school, the religious feature was a challenge for many international students:

First, religion is a big shift for Chinese kids. Their background of religiosity is zero... I mean, they don't even know Confucianism or Taoism... their concept of faith-based education is very hard for them. Second big challenge is the English barrier... It's hard for them because teachers talk fast. Sometimes it's daunting for these kids.

The counselor affirmed these challenges:

Definitely listening and learning how to understand the English spoken. It's usually very difficult for them when they come fresh from their countries. I also think the presumption that they have to have all honors and AP classes right away to get into a good university is misleading... I am not worried for those who get involved in sports, choir, tutoring, or film production because they get to meet other students and use English. It's those that don't get involved and stick to themselves that worry me.

The counselor has been working with international students for over eight years at NWH. She is the primary counselor assisting international students with class schedules, graduations, and college applications. Along with the director, they tried to encourage international students to

become involved in sports or choir. They also extended the math and English tutoring services to international students. However, the director has occasionally requested agents to arrange additional tutoring outside of school for international students who struggle with passing their classes.

Communication with parents and host families. According to the counselor and director, the school did not have direct contact with the parents of international students. Due to the language barrier, all information and questions about students were sent to the agents. Chinese parents, in particular, do not understand English. The communication with some parents was described as “horrible.” The director shared one incident that demonstrates the predicament:

I had a student with all kind of problems... He didn't bathe. I would have meeting after meeting, gave him detention, and gave him Saturday school... nothing worked. So I told the agency that I have to communicate with the parents. We set up a teleconference that included: student, parents of the student, a translator, and myself. Following the conference call, the student improved in his second semester because his parents got on him.

The relationships with host families were also “poor.” The counselor explained:

Lots of times, host families are not connected to our school. They don't care. They are just doing the host family thing; getting the kid to and from school. Agents select host families and place their students.

The director recognized the significance of working with host families:

I attempted to improve our relationship with our host families by implementing a couple of mandatory host family meetings. The attendance was atrocious is an understatement. Out of fifty kids, I had only four parents show up. I have zero relationship with host

families. But as a legal guardian, the host families have the same rights and privileges as parents, and look at their student's records and teachers' communications.

Academic. Both participants' common observations show that international students struggled with student-teacher relationships. Many of them were not used "to having a little bit of power" meaning, "they were afraid to ask why they failed their tests," or simply ask questions when they did not understand something. Regarding the challenges of learning the English language, the use of cellular phones in classrooms was a concern:

Director—The school's rule is no cellular phones in class. However, if the teacher wants to let them use it for translation purposes, the teacher can allow it.

Counselor—A student used his cellular phone as a calculator during an AP Calculus exam. When caught, he tried to deny by claiming that he was using it to translate English words.

They also encountered the highly academic achiever case where the international student's health became negatively impacted. The counselor said:

The student was pushing himself to be the best that he could be. I think there was pressure from his home life. He was spending time during lunch and after school going back into a couple of teachers' classes and trying to really understand the materials. He was very bright, but he got so overly concerned and stressed out that we could see it hurting his health. The host family took him to the hospital because of breakdowns... We ended up sending him back home because it got so bad.

Academic dishonesty among international students was also a concern that the director faced:

Everything from taking a picture of a quiz and emailing to their friends for answers to sliding your phone to the next kid to full-on plagiarism, copy and paste off the internet,

and not understanding the difference between an assigned collaborative assignment versus doing your own homework.

International students' involvement. International students were given the same opportunity to participate in sports but they had to try out. They could also join a club or establish a club of their own. The director described:

We have a club program but it's student initiated. However, my international students don't grasp the concept of a club being student run and sponsored by a teacher. They expect that we have established clubs and they just need to sign up for.

International student support. For many high schools, the director or the person who worked with international students, was the primary support. Depending on students' openness and relationships with people, students would find support from people they were most comfortable with: teachers, the director, peers, or host family. Sometimes, they just kept to themselves. At NWH, the director supervised all international student matters from recruitment to admitting them, coordinating events for them, to responding to any emergencies or disciplinary actions. He explained:

A week before school starts, I put together a "New International Students Orientation" for a week. I invite people to come speak to them on what to expect, the American culture, their class schedule, and etc. I expose them to different food every day (Mexican, pizza, burgers), take them to Santa Monica to bicycle ride, and I get to know them during that week. I meet with them when they are in trouble and have bad grades. To offset my disciplinary role, I also set up my office where they are welcome to hang out. I have three microwaves and hot water so they can heat up their lunch and eat their noodles... My goal is to meet with them individually at least four times a year.

In summary, the director and counselor acknowledged the challenges that the school had to deal with:

- “Serving these unique cultures in a classroom” that required teachers to make some adjustments in their classroom “to facilitate learning to the international students.”
- Recruit and admit quality students.
- Develop teacher-international student relationships.
- Blend them in with host students: “Come up with something to get Chinese kids not to hang out together” and not let them “shrink and stay within their own culture.”
- Encourage the international students to speak more English than their home language.
- Address the limited staff training: “I don’t think our school does enough for these kids.

Nevertheless, they recognized some benefits of enrolling international students at their school:

- Culture diversity in their classrooms.
- Expose local students to foreign culture.
- Positive financial contributions to the school.

They also would like to see improvements in the following areas:

- Get international students connected with the school and host community’s cultures.
- Help international students understand that “there’s a falsehood that UCs or Ivy leagues are the only best universities” and “come in with a more open attitude of other college options.”
- Improve the relationships between the school and host families.
- Meet international students’ unique needs.

International Student Parents' Perceptions

The majority of international students came to the U.S. without their parents because either both parents worked in their home country to provide financial support for their child's American education or are tied up with their own businesses. The three parents of international students who participated in this study have been living with their children in the U.S. for at least five years beginning from middle school all the way to high school. Parent A was from Taiwan and had two sons who attended a private high school. Parent B was from Korea and had one daughter and one son who attended U.S. schools since middle school. Parent C was from China with one daughter who attended U.S. school since middle school and is now in high school. All three parents confirmed that their main aspiration for their children was to give them a better education and provide them with educational opportunities that were not available to them in their home countries. Parent A stated, "With my husband, we believe that the U.S. is still the world leader in education that is why we sent them to U.S." Parent C followed in Chinese language:

The U.S. trains students to be independent thinkers and exposes students to different types of learning. From kindergarten, children in China are pressured to be very competitive. They spent their days studying from morning to evening with little time to get involved in other activities. Students listened to their Chinese teachers and rarely question their learning. Since my daughter has been attending U.S. schools, I have noticed that she is more self-confident. She has blossomed and enjoys extracurricular activities after school. She does horseback riding and takes part in competitions. She also tried cheerleading, but realized it did not suit her. So for now, she stays with horseback riding.

Parent B reaffirmed the quality of U.S. education:

The U.S. offers many educational opportunities. It's never too late to change your major and career. In Korea, my children had to decide what to study starting in middle school. However, parents of international students experienced challenges themselves. They acknowledged their limitation to sufficiently support their children's education in the host country. They struggled to understand the U.S. education system, A-G requirements, the application process for admissions to universities, and the numerous options available to their children. They were frustrated with their lack of knowledge and communication with teachers. Parent B claimed that she worried a lot because she "could not help her children much" and there was also a gap in the educational culture. Parent A learned to adjust to the American teaching methods and relationships with teachers. Unlike in her home country, she realized that the teacher's responsibility in the U.S. was mainly teaching and did not go beyond the classroom. In her country, teachers had great authority in influencing and leading students in making decisions; this is contrary to the U.S. where students are given the power to make their own choices. Parent C found it very challenging to simply meet her family basic needs when she first arrived in the U.S. She did not speak English and had to rely on friends to help her become established in a new home with her daughter and the logistics of buying a house, getting a driver's license, shopping for a car, completing paperwork for her daughter's school, making doctor's appointments, etc.

For their children's education and future, all three mothers sacrificed, such as leaving their husbands to come to the U.S., and gave up the comfort of their home country to care for their children's basic needs and well-being. These mothers wanted to provide the basic necessities to their children, such as food, shelter, protection, parental supervision, and emotional

support. These parents were clearly affluent and able to afford to live in the U.S. to be with their children. They also recognized that it was very unusual for parents to travel with their children for a continuous stay in the host country. Many international student's families could not provide their children with these types of accommodations nor the basic needs presented in the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Owens & Loomes, 2010). Furthermore, Parent A explained her dilemma with the U.S. high school schedule:

In Taiwan, students are in school from morning 8 am to 5 pm and will go to tutoring until sometimes 7 or 8 pm. Over here, their classes end at 3 pm. They have so much free time, and we don't know what to do during this time.

In spite of their early experiences with U.S. education, some students still struggled to adjust in U.S. high schools. Parent B shared that her son was severely challenged when he transitioned from middle school to 9th grade:

It was a culture shock when he started 9th grade in a private affluent Christian high school. He was labeled as an "international" student and was grouped with other international students, unlike his experience in middle school. Suddenly, he was not part of the mainstream student population. He did not know that he was an "international student" and did not think of himself as one.

Parent A also noticed that the grouping was determined by the student's F-1 status:

When my first son attended a private high school, he was automatically grouped with all international students. He did not mind being with international students and made lots of friends other than American friends. But my second son hated to be identified as an international student. His English language was better than most international students

from China, and he did not want to be associated with international students. So he only made friends with local students.

Parents A, B, and C also noticed the differences between male and female students. It seemed like female students were more mature, responsible, and self-motivated. Parents B and C who had girls concluded that their daughters were enthusiastic in their education and school activities. Whereas Parents A and B, who had boys, were more concerned with their son's educational planning and school involvement. Having son and a daughter, Parent B was able to make a clear comparison between her children and their different attitudes toward education. Parent A expressed that her second son did not have many friends and was not interested in getting involved with school clubs and activities. However, he was occupied with playing computer games. Her son justified that playing games was a profession:

He told me that "eSports" are played in professional competitions and you could earn scholarships for education. He said that UC Irvine has an eSports Program and competes with other universities.

Parent B also agreed that her son liked to play video games whenever he had time. All three parents laughed when accepting that the boys were very different than the girls. The anxiety was greater for the male students.

Parents A, B, and C believed that it was vital for them to be present with their children in the host country. They observed problems that arose without parental supervision among international students. Away from their home country, international students experienced a sudden and high level of freedom that they did not have at home. This freedom caused some international students to be easily influenced by their "co-national" friends and fall into unpleasant situations such as dating, using inappropriate substances, or being bullied. This

freedom also brought loneliness and depression when international students did not connect with the host community or have family members whom they could form attachments. Through her children, Parent B welcomed other international students to her house and fed them home-cooked meals that many students missed from their home countries. Parent B saw international students' loneliness and added: "They don't tell their parents about their problems, because they don't want their parents to worry since they are so far away." Parent A suggested that schools should have workshops to train host families on how to take care of international students. In addition, international students should receive training on what is expected of them as international students and how to interact with American families. Parent C stated:

There is lots of misunderstanding and conflict between host families and international students. Sometimes, the conflict originates from simple cultural differences. Sometimes, the conflict originates from international students dealing with being a teenager and going through the physical and emotional changes associated with the teenage years.

All three parents witnessed the continuous growth in international student enrollment at their children's private high schools. They also observed the overwhelming responsibilities that school staff had to assume on a daily basis as a result.

Summary of Research Question 3 Responses

The findings revealed a lack of professional training for school staff and host families. Similar to international students' findings, school staff and host families highlighted that the difficulty with language was a tremendous barrier in assimilation to the school and the host community. Through the lens of parents, one can better understand the reasons and sacrifices international families made to provide their children with an education in the U.S.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher organized the findings to align with the research questions. Data from individual and focus group interviews and the survey document shed light on the difficulties that international students faced with adjusting to U.S. high schools. As addressed by the theoretical framework (Figure 1.2), the findings of this study concentrated on four specific areas: cultural, academic, social, and emotional.

Cultural Adjustments

The primary finding of this study was the tremendous impact that the language barrier imposed on all international students regardless the number of years spent learning English in their home country. The participants clearly expressed their frustration and stress when their limited English skills impacted their self-confidence, their academic life and homework, their interactions with local peers and host families, and their ability to get involved and make friends with American students. Hanging out with their “co-national” peers alleviated some of this stress, but isolated them from interactions with American students.

The second finding of this study was the ongoing difficulty that international students had in satisfying their basic needs. The international student participants missed the food of their home countries. A major reason for international students wanting to go home during breaks was to experience their native foods. In addition to the lack of native foods many international students did not have access to a personal vehicle nor public transportation to visit different places of interest. Lastly, international students had difficulty with their living accommodations. A majority of the participants were dissatisfied with the living arrangements and the host families. Meeting their basic needs became an ongoing challenge for international students.

The findings demonstrated a clear linkage between unmet basic needs and acculturation difficulties. As the international students sought to settle in their new environment, they experienced a level of acculturative stress in satisfying their basic needs that might have prevented them from embracing the host culture. Depending on their expectations and how well they prepared prior to leaving their home country, some international students assimilated more easily than others.

Academic Adjustments

After comparing the different educational structures in foreign countries, a finding in this study revealed that international students and their parents were very pleased with the educational opportunities available in the U.S. They were satisfied with the less rigorous academic schedule that allowed for more participation in activities outside of school. A second finding showed their appreciation for the variety of extracurricular activities available to all students. Parents of international students also liked the training available to their children to become independent thinkers at school.

The third finding was academic difficulty directly tied to their English proficiency level. Many of them had to spend extra time on translating school materials, presentations for class, meeting the admissions requirements for the university of their choice, reaching out to school counselors when they had questions, and figuring out what they wanted to study or pursue as a future career.

The fourth finding of this research study emerged from the restrictions that specifically affected international students because of their visa status, such as employment, financial aid, traveling with friends, etc.

The fifth finding of this research occurred upon the observations of the two school staff (director and counselor) in which they experienced lack of training for teachers and staff and the lack of urgency from school administrators in providing programs that met the international students' unique needs. Simultaneously, there was a lack of training for international students on what to expect upon arriving to a new country, attending a new school, living with complete strangers, etc. They also observed that the language difficulty was the most predominant barrier to international students' academic adjustments.

Social Adjustments

The first finding in the area of social adjustment was the fact that international students had a difficult time in adjusting to their host families' values and culture. There were misunderstandings and unpleasant incidents that were beyond the scope of most high school aged children.

The second finding showed a common tendency among international students; they used the internet via English learning and gaming sites, to seek friendships and fill their free time after school, or to find information.

The third finding was the distant relationships international students had with their parents back in their countries of origin. They all confirmed that they did not have a close relationships with parents and seldom shared their problems. However, as they witnessed American families, they learned to develop a closer parent-child relationships with their own.

The fourth finding was the importance of "co-national" peers in the international students' networks. The participants agreed that they turned to their like-minded peers whenever they had problems. Like a collectivist culture, they tended to stick with their own ethnic group, with the exception of Student D who was from Switzerland.

Emotional Adjustments

The first finding from the participants interviewed and surveyed expressed a level of homesickness/loneliness, discrimination, and acculturative stress. When schools grouped international students for events, they created a feeling of being discriminated or being the “outsiders.”

The second finding was the lack of acculturation among international students. Based on Berry’s Acculturation Model (Berry, 2007), many international students maintained their own culture with poor identification with U.S. culture that put them in “segregation” category. However, international students who had attended U.S. schools since middle school seemed to assimilate better, adapting better to the U.S culture and retaining less of their home country’s culture.

The findings of this study clearly stated the importance of meeting one’s basic needs to facilitate the acculturation process. For international students traveling thousands of miles from home, meeting their basic needs was a necessity. However, for many international students their success in integrating to a new environment was hindered by their inability to acquire basic necessities, such as ethnic foods, transportation, and living accommodations. This chapter revealed how difficult it was for all participants to meet basic needs and acculturate to a new country.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the current study, which includes an overview of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, methodology used, and summary of major findings. Following the introduction, the discussion section will provide an analysis of this study. After the analysis section are the implications for policy and practice followed by recommendations for future research. The conclusion ends this chapter.

The primary goal of this study was to understand the factors that challenged the ability of international students to acculturate successfully within the American educational system.

Summary of the Problem

The number of F-1 visa students studying in the U.S. has increased rapidly. In 2013, the United States had admitted over 73,000 international students in their high schools (Farrugia, 2014). The state of California alone has enrolled 18% of those international students. During the years 2013 to 2015, the international student population increased by 17% from 73,000 to 85,000 (Farrugia, 2016). This continued growth affected enrollment in schools throughout the United States. The problem of this study was to examine the social and cultural challenges faced by international students in American high schools and how they affected their transition to U.S. life. As the number of international students in U.S. high schools became more prominent, so did awareness of the diverse challenges/difficulties encountered by international students. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and assess the cultural, emotional, social, and academic challenges of international students attending U.S. high schools. This study used a blend of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Owens & Loomes, 2010) and Berry's

(2005) Acculturation Model Theory as its theoretical frameworks. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs consisted of meeting one's individual needs in the following order: (1) basic needs (physiological and safety), (2) psychological needs, and (3) self-fulfillment needs (see Figure 1.0). Berry's Acculturation Model Theory consisted of observing cultural and psychological changes and adjustments in order to live successfully between two cultures.

The research of this study focused on the phenomenon of international students attending U.S. high schools. High school aged international students as young as 14 have migrated to the U.S. without their parents to attend school. Many families of international students, particularly from Asian countries (China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam) are motivated by the greater educational opportunities in the U.S. and the desire to protect their children from the more rigorous and intensive competition of the educational systems back in their home countries.

The researcher utilized a case study methodology to examine international students in U.S. high schools. Using an ethnographic analysis, the researcher looked to examine the international students' culture, beliefs, and values that influenced their decisions and actions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The research study was based on the following research questions:

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

Review of the Methodology

In this ethnographic case study, the researcher sought to gain in-depth and holistic insight of a population sample of high school aged international students. This qualitative design focused on the “complexity within the case, its uniqueness, and its linkages to the social context of which it is a part” (Glesne, 2016, p. 290). This study also explored the perceptions of a school director and counselor, and host parents who worked specifically with international students. Furthermore, the parent interviews and focus groups identified additional obstacles that affected their children’s ability to integrate into American culture.

This study’s participants were selected using a criterion and opportunistic/network sampling strategy (Glesne, 2016), which included nine international students who were attending American high schools or had graduated from U.S. high schools, two host parents with years of experience in housing international students, two school staff representatives (a director and a counselor) who worked directly with international students, and three parents who came with their students and provided living accommodations and support while their children studied at NorthWest High and Sunny Hill High (pseudonyms) in the U.S. The schools were selected because each had experienced a growing international student population on their campuses during the past five to eight years. The semi-structured interviews with each international student participant and focus group interviews were audio recorded. All recordings were sent to a transcription service with the exception of the parent focus group interview, which was transcribed by the researcher because of the participants’ responses in Chinese. Data from the survey document was analyzed. The themes that emerged from the data were coded and aligned to each of the research questions. There were a total of 16 participants that served as data sources, which ensured validity and reliability for this study.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this research study clearly indicated that international students experienced a variety of adjustment difficulties/challenges while studying in U.S. high schools. For international students, moving to a new country, living with a new family, enrolling in a new school, dealing with a new culture, and instant isolation from their native communities created significant challenges. Therefore, the discussion of the findings and conclusions will provide answers to the research questions as well as insight into the four quadrants: cultural, academic, social, and emotional, which are addressed in the theoretical frameworks in Figure 1.2.

Research Questions – Findings and Conclusions

1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?
2. To what extent are international students involved in their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, or religious affiliations, etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

Conclusion 1 - Cultural Adjustments

Language barrier. Based on the findings of this study, 100% of the student participants responded that a lack of English proficiency skills was a significant barrier to their acculturation. In the review of literature, language proficiency was a vital component in adjusting to the culture of a new country. As Yin (2013) stated in her research, the majority of international students were frustrated because, "I can't express myself freely in English" (p. 148), which resonated in the findings of this study. The findings concluded that, without appropriate English skills, international students faced numerous difficulties: (1) international students spent most of their

time socializing with co-national peers because of their common language, which isolated them from their native peers as well as English-speaking school staff and members of the community; (2) international students were reluctant to spend time on improving their English skills, which precluded them from participation in extracurricular and/or community activities; and, (3) the lack of English communication skills, oral and written, inhibited every interaction or possible involvement that would make the acculturation process less dysfunctional. Findings showed that students who came to the U.S. at a younger age, e.g., attended middle school, or came from a country where English was a dominant language (Student D from Switzerland) had a much easier time assimilating to the host culture, such as taking part in school activities, and making friends with local students. Therefore, it was crucial that international students acquired a reasonable command of the English language before coming to the U.S. in order for them to communicate more successfully with peers, school personnel, host families, and community members. The level of English language mastery, in addition to speaking, writing, and listening proficiencies to a degree to which they could satisfy basic needs, would enable international students to integrate into American schools, and converse with their native peers so that they would not feel isolated from the larger school community. As Student G shared, “In my home country English was through homework and tests, but I was not taught how to speak English nor given time to practice with a teacher to gain confidence in using the English language.” The negative effects of the language barrier combined with poor communication skills compounded the stress of acculturation and identity for international students. Being detached from their native language, culture, and social network, international students found themselves “being an outsider” (Yin, 2013).

Basic needs. Another significant finding of this research was the struggle and frustration that international students experienced in satisfying their basic needs as defined by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 1.0). For those international students who were able to live with their own parent in their own homes, physiological and safety needs were met. However, the remaining 70% of participants in this study shared that, while living with a host family, their basic needs were not met. They were frustrated with the limited choices of ethnic foods and not having any access to their native diet. For some international student participants, their living accommodations were unsatisfactory and unreasonable based on the high fees that their parents were paying. Additionally, most of them did not have access to a personal vehicle, and therefore, were dependent on their host parents to provide transportation, which limited their opportunities to visit cultural or community attractions.

Those international students who struggled to meet their basic needs (physiological and safety) were subject to stress, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, homesickness, and isolation, which impacted their academic learning. International students with unmet basic needs were not able to attain the next stage in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory: social belonging, which is the sense of belonging and acceptance among social groups.

Acculturation. Based on the interview responses of the student participants, international students found it difficult to access activities that enhanced "American life" after school. Host families were only responsible for providing room and board. They were not required to "entertain" international students unless they volunteered to take on additional responsibilities that included social activities. In this study, Host Parent A was a great example of someone who cared about including her international students in her family's travels and educating them about American culture by involving them in family outings. Host Parent A

could be viewed as a role model for other host families as she believed it was her responsibility to support, by whatever means necessary, the integration of her international students into American culture. By engaging and including her international students in her family life, she established a connection to and trust with her international students, which allowed them to satisfy their physiological and safety needs. It was depressing that the findings of this study demonstrated that international students living with host families stayed in their bedrooms for fear of disturbing their host family, which produced additional isolation and segregation. According to the literature, one of the goals for a host family was to help international students to transition into the host culture by connecting with them through social activities.

The findings showed that international students who received intensive language and cultural preparation before coming to the host country reduced their cultural adjustment struggles. According to the international student participants' responses, most arrived to the U.S. not knowing their final destinations, schools or host families. Their parents relied on agencies to select the final destinations and coordinate the enrollment process with the receiving schools.

As a result, international students had little time to prepare and did not know what was required of them or their parents upon arrival. In this study, the parent participants who accompanied their children to the U.S. also indicated their own struggles with adjusting to the host country. The adults who admitted to having difficulties adjusting acknowledged the greater difficulties of a teenager going to a new country by himself/herself without parental support. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare international students and teach them how to assimilate to the new culture. Contracting agencies and receiving high schools should collaborate on short-term programs for international students to ease their transition into American life, such as addressing the challenges of living in a new country without their families, learning about U.S.

high schools and American academic expectations, enrollment processes, and mixing with their host peers.

Preparing international students by exposing them to American culture beforehand would alleviate some of the anxiety and help make the journey more positive as Student D shared, “I told myself... I should fully enjoy the experience and make the most out of it.”

Conclusion 2 - Academic Adjustments

Support services. The findings of this study exposed the academic difficulties faced by international students. Support services for international students were minimal and usually consisted of assistance with enrollment and scheduling. Similar to English Language Learners (ELL) in U.S. schools, international students stand to benefit from additional English language support to improve their communication skills, oral and written; most international students are typically not proficient enough in order to be successful in the classroom. It was found that high schools were limited in their class offerings for lower level English. However, international students were required to meet the same standards to graduate high school as their native peers who did not have to spend extra time (1-2 hours more on homework) translating in order to complete assignments. Additionally, international students had to improve their English skills before communicating with their native peers rather than speaking their common language with co-national peers. To improve academically, international students worked with tutors to master subject matter content and build their self-confidence. Engaging with tutors allowed the international student participants to access both academic and emotional support.

In-class participation. International student participants were stunned by the number of oral presentations, in-class student participation, and group work required in American classrooms. In their native countries, the educational system was competitive and required that

international students listen and memorize subject content and spend many hours studying. International students were handicapped in that they had no knowledge of the expectations of American high schools, which only added to their stress in acculturating to the challenges of a new educational system. The stress and anxiety felt by international students was understated, not understood, and not shared because Asian cultures do not encourage expressing one's problems. The international student participants came from different educational systems with learning habits that were ingrained and hard to ignore in an American educational system, which is more hands-on, e.g., students are expected them to make presentations, and participate in discussions and group activities.

School staff. School staff (teachers, counselors, and administrators) were also challenged when dealing with foreign cultures, language barriers, and host families who did not want to be involved in school activities. Without appropriate professional support and training, school staff was overwhelmed by and felt helpless when dealing with the school and home issues of their international students. The findings of this study indicated a need for schools to establish protocols and procedures that addressed the issues that pertained to international students through school-sponsored student and family orientations, which would include all school staff. Providing additional student information could be done through the development of an international student handbook that could include the following: (1) description of the school, (2) list of staff and teachers, (3) enrollment process and F-1 visa status, (2) A-G requirements and class descriptions, (4) clubs and extracurricular activities, (5) academic dishonesty rules, (6) emergency and/or health assistance support, and, (7) commencement. This handbook could be for international students, their parents and/or host family members. Initiating protocols and

providing training for school staff would ensure additional support for the international students enrolled.

Conclusion 3 - Social Adjustments

Network. The findings in Table 4.4 showed that international students who lived with their parents were more involved in extracurricular activities than those who lived with host families. It could be concluded that when parents were present and available to provide support their children were better able to scale to the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid (Figure 1.0) and achieve self-fulfillment needs. Another important finding was that international students had limited to no access to team sports at some high schools, which prevented them from becoming involved in afterschool activities. Also, with limited transportation options, international students could not participate in extracurricular activities. Therefore, international students found their social activities on the internet, such as playing computer games, meeting friends virtually, establishing friendships leading to romantic relationships, shopping, watching drama shows, etc. The internet was a primary theme in the host family observations.

Friends/peers. As mentioned in the section on cultural adjustments, the international student participants found that their low level of English language proficiency made it difficult to make friends with their English speaking peers. They were drawn to their "co-national" friends, which lessened their acculturative stress.

However, the literature stated that the extent to which international students are able to establish friendships and social networks have great impact on their acculturation adjustments (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Rienties, Heliot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013). It takes both native English speaking students and international students to make an effort to establish a friendship.

Cultivating friendships takes time and willingness, and a school setting is ideal for bringing students together.

Perhaps the school could establish a “buddy system,” pairing a local student with an international student for a determined number of weeks. The students might share classes together, meet outside of school at nutrition, lunch, and after school or participate in extracurricular activities together. This “buddy system” would (1) separate international students from their co-national peers and allow them to mix with the local population, (2) allow the students to develop common interests to initiate conversations and learn about each other’s cultures, and (3) allow the students to use English on a daily basis both inside and outside of the classroom.

Host families. Findings from the parent focus group interviews and the student participant interviews found that international students were very dissatisfied with the host family selection process and living accommodations. According to the literature, Popadiuk (2010) stated that international students experience fear, loneliness, depression, and homesickness when incidents occur with host families. More than a few of the international student participants shared that the host family “can kick me out.” With the limited supply of host families for international students, there needs to be a focus on increasing the number of host families and appropriate standards for them to meet. Richardson (2003, 2007) confirmed the lack of training and support for host families and the need to define their roles by established regulations and oversight.

At the same time, it is important to prepare international students on what to expect when they come to live with an American host family. International students need to be open to embracing cultural differences and making an effort to assimilate to and learn from the host

family culture. Student F admitted that in spite of cultural differences and complaints, she learned to appreciate her host family's parent-children relationship and their ongoing interactions. From that observation, she learned to build a close relationship with her parents.

Conclusion 4—Emotional Adjustments

Homesickness/loneliness. According to the data collected from the ASSIS survey, over 50% of international student participants expressed experiencing homesickness, loneliness, and discrimination leading to acculturative stress (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). In accordance with Yin's research (2013), parents of international students observed that many international students who came to the U.S. on their own experienced loneliness or isolation due to the lack of their family support and native networks (Parents A and B). Furthermore, Parent C stated that high school aged international students had to deal with survival skills as well as emotional changes associated with the teenage years. Unfortunately, based on the findings, most international students did not share their problems with their own parents because they did not have close relationship with them. Also, the international student participants indicated that they did not want to burden or worry their parents. Given the wide range of difficulties they had to deal with, it was appropriate to conclude that international students experienced frustration, anger, anxiety, and acculturative stress as they tried to adjust to a new environment based on what they knew at the time.

Studies have shown that international students commonly deal with social isolation. International students from countries with a collectivist culture constantly struggle to find ways to adjust and integrate into a host country with different cultural values, and attempt to make friends and succeed in school despite their lack of English skills, which in essence, makes sense

when they withdraw and isolate themselves, especially when they are not receiving guidance and help on adapting to the new culture (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Discrimination. Another interesting finding was that international students felt discriminated against when schools created programs that segregated international students from the local students. As Student B shared about his school's event, "The idea of having an international event was great; however, none of my American peers attended the event. It was mainly for international students." On the other hand, Student A was pleased that her school did not "label" her as an international student. As a result, she was treated like her American peers without "special treatment" and was able to assimilate more quickly to her environment.

When you compare Students A and B, it is clear that segregating international students from local students did not help them integrate into the school culture, but instead, made them feel like "outsiders." If the school enrolls too many international students from the same country, it would be expected that the students would be drawn to each other because of familiarity and interests.

Implications for Policy and Practices

In order for international students to experience a smooth transition to the U.S., it is critical for stakeholders: parents, students, schools, host families, and contracting agencies, to evaluate and assess their responsibilities when considering the enrollment of a minor in an American high school.

For Parents of International Students

Parents of international students should recognize that their children will face significant challenges while being a minor, relocating to a new country, and enrolling in a new school setting, which demonstrates the importance of their collaborative involvement with the agency.

The parents and the agency should be deciding together the country of destination and the school, and the future host family; for instance, the parents can request a video conference with the host family, a monthly academic report that includes updates on the student's progress, and a monthly invoice with an explanation of the tuition fees, room and board fees, etc. Moreover, it would be important for parents and their children to discuss the choice of destination countries and the options available. The agency, the family, and student should look at all alternatives before making a final decision about the country of destination. It is important that the agency, family, and student be in agreement with the country selected. If this is not the case, the students, as mentioned in the findings, might be unhappy with their placement in the U.S.

For Students

For international students who plan on studying in the U.S., there should be a requirement for the agency to provide the family and student with information about U.S. culture, social programs and activities, public transportation availability, curriculum and extracurricular activities in U.S. high schools, and community attractions, such as libraries, shopping malls, and theaters. As Student D mentioned in his response, his pre-departure mindset of having no preconceived expectations allowed him to acculturate more quickly upon arrival to the U.S. Therefore, international students should determine such attitudes for themselves. Their English proficiency will play a major role in the transition process; therefore, international students should be motivated to improve their English skills to succeed academically and socially.

For Schools

As the international student population continues to grow at U.S. high schools, school administrators should consider adding staff trained in international programs to teach school personnel and assist international students and host families with the enrollment process and

transition to an American high school. There should be a local public school administrator organized and paid for his entire school staff to travel overseas to experience the culture and the people. Through that experience, the staff will become more knowledgeable and sensitive to the issues that confront international students. Oftentimes, school teachers, counselors, and administrators are overwhelmed with meeting school performance goals and end up neglecting to establish connections with their international students.

This study and others have shown that private high schools enrolling large numbers of international students enjoy significant financial benefits. Thus, schools that admit international students and benefit from extra revenue should utilize these financial resources to assist in the acculturation process of these students through programs and activities designed to enhance their transition to school life and living in the U.S.

For Host Families

Although there is an application process for host families to become caretakers for international students, the current process is problematic. There should be more stringent requirements and screening done for applicants. Host families should go through a certification process that includes training and classes that prepare them to deal with the issues and challenges facing international students. The trainings should comprise ethical and standard matters regarding food, cleanliness, safety, bedroom, transportation, free time, expectations, responsibilities, emergency procedures, monthly outings, etc. If selected, host families should be limited in the number of international students housed in their residence depending on the number of people already living there and the size of the home. This should be monitored on an ongoing basis to guarantee that living accommodations for international students are satisfactory.

For Contracting Agencies/Agents

The researcher found that in the majority of schools, host families and their international students worked with an agent here in the U.S. or overseas. The contracting agency played a vital role in bringing international students to the U.S. Therefore, it was important for those agents to be honest and ethical as they represented the U.S. as well as American schools. Just as there is a need for a certification process for host families, there is a need for oversight for agents who work with families and international students. A licensing process and training for agents would ensure ethical practices when dealing with families of international students. Agents, like host families, should be familiar with the complexities of acculturation, easing the transition of international students to life in a new country, organizing and providing resources for intensive English instruction for international students before they leave their home countries, offering information to families and students regarding the culture of the destination country, providing information about selected school placements, coordinating the purchase of plane tickets and arrival to the U.S., taking care of introductions to the host family members, and following up with the international student and host family on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. The role of an agent is more than just recruiting and signing contracts; it is about maintaining a relationship with the parents, the student, the host family, and the new school.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher has identified two limitations in this study. First, the participant sample who took the survey was very small (17 students). The survey questions published by Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) may have been challenging for international students due to their lack of English language proficiency. Also, some of the international student participants did not take the survey seriously and selected their answers randomly.

A second limitation was that the researcher did not have direct contact with the contracting agency. The findings of this study do not reveal an accurate assessment of the contracting agencies' roles, responsibilities, and fees when recruiting international students for U.S. schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study captured the common adjustment difficulties faced by international students while studying in U.S. high schools, living with host families, and navigating the challenges of life in a new country. Future researchers may consider the following recommendations:

1. Explore the vision and motives of high school administrators located at other school sites for enrolling international students. Look at the availability of support services for international students and school personnel.
2. Look at added financial benefits that international students bring to American high schools and how schools invest these revenues to benefit international students.
3. Investigate contracting agencies' responsibilities in placing international students in U.S. high schools. It is recommended that the roles, functions, and standards of both local and international agencies be examined to ensure that international students and their families are receiving appropriate services.
4. Survey a random sample of international students accepted at a highly selective university to determine if their years of attendance in an American high school affected their admission to the university.
5. Replicate this study at larger public high schools with large numbers of international students enrolled. NorthWest High and Sunny Hill High were private high schools where school standards and policies differ from those in public schools.

Conclusion

This study used the accounts of nine international students to identify the difficulties they faced while attending U.S. high schools. To confirm the adjustment difficulties of international students, the researcher explored the perceptions of those individuals who worked closely with international students (host families, a school director, a school counselor, and parents).

The findings of this study demonstrated that the lack of English proficiency skills, the inability to meet one's basic needs, the absence of the home country's culture and social network, and cultural differences of the home and host countries impacted the international students' ability to successfully navigate the acculturation process while living in the U.S. Upon arrival in the U.S., international students were not prepared for the challenges they would face.

To experience success in the U.S. or any destination country, international students must be proficient in the dominant language to deal effectively with the acculturation process. Secondly, international students must purposefully choose to interact with their local peers and host family members by communicating in English on an ongoing basis. Lastly, international students should not come with preconceived ideas as they need to step out of their comfort zone to assimilate more quickly to the new community.

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APPENDIX A

U.S. Government Publishing Office - Code of Federal Regulations

Part 62 – Exchange visitor program. Subpart B – Specific Program Provisions

§62.25 Secondary school students.

(j) *Host family application and selection.* Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

(1) Provide potential host families with a detailed summary of the Exchange Visitor Program and of their requirements, obligations and commitment to host;

(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, “Information to be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications.” The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.” Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

(3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home where the student will be living;

(4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary; that the exchange student's bedroom contains a separate bed for the student that is neither convertible nor inflatable in nature; and that the student has adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency. An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same sex.

(5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (*i.e.*, field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;

(6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing;

(7) Verify that each member of the host family household 18 years of age and older, as well as any new adult member added to the household, or any member of the host family household who will turn eighteen years of age during the exchange student's stay in that household, has undergone a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(8) Maintain a record of all documentation on a student's exchange program, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years following program completion; and

(9) Ensure that a potential single adult host parent without a child in the home undergoes a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant. Such secondary review should include demonstrated evidence of the individual's friends or family who can provide an additional support network for the exchange student and evidence of the individual's ties to his/her community. Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student's placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

(k) *Host family orientation.* In addition to the orientation requirements set forth in §62.10, sponsors must:

(1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange visitor program, including examples of "best practices" developed by the exchange community;

(2) Provide all selected host families with a copy of the Department's letter of appreciation to host families;

(3) Provide all selected host families with a copy of Department of State-promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations;

(4) Advise all selected host families of strategies for cross-cultural interaction and conduct workshops to familiarize host families with cultural differences and practices; and

(5) Advise host families of their responsibility to inform the sponsor of any and all material changes in the status of the host family or student, including, but not limited to, changes in address, finances, employment and criminal arrests.

(l) *Host family placement.* (1) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:

(i) Facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a host family placement has not been secured;

(ii) Place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the host family, the natural parents, and the students being placed. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with a host family, or in the home of a local coordinator, regional coordinator, or volunteer. Sponsors may not place students from the same countries or with the same native languages in a single home.

(2) Prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or arrival placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances that necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor must document the reason(s) necessitating such change and provide the Department of State with an annual statistical summary reflecting the number and reason(s) for such change in host family placement in the program's annual report.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

**UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES
IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Stacey Chareune-Chen, a doctoral student from the CSUN Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, as part of the requirements for the Ed. D degree in the School of Education. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to examine and assess the cultural, emotional, social, and academic challenges of international students attending U.S. high schools and to gain a better understanding about this new phenomenon.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you:

- Are parents of an international student who are attending or have graduated from a U.S. high school.
- Are a counselor who works directly with international students
- Are or have hosted international students in your home

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately 45 – 60 minutes of your time for the interview over the course of one week.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview. With your permission, I will schedule a one-on-one interview with your high schooler.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: fatigue, boredom, mild emotional discomfort, embarrassment, and stress. This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include understanding of international students' difficulties while studying in U.S. high schools.

Compensation for Participation

You will receive a \$10 gift card to a local coffee shop.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed at the end of data collection and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage

All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The audio recordings will also be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected, then transcribed and erased at the end of the study. The identifiable information will be stored on a separate computer that is password protected. The storage of identifiable and de-identifiable data will be separated. The identifiable information is only your first initial and last name, email address, school site at which you are employed, and whether or not you implement Restorative Justice in your classroom or school. The use of pseudonyms will replace your names in the final written analysis of the research.

Data Access

The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention

The researcher intends to keep the research data until the conclusion of the study, and then it will be destroyed.

Mandated Reporting

Under California law, the researchers are required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, he or she may be required to report it to the authorities.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

Please sign your initials next to the signature line for consent to be audio recorded.

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not wish to be audio recorded

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

California State University, Northridge
ADOLESCENT ASSENT TO BE IN A HUMAN RESEARCH PROJECT
[for ages 14yrs to 17yrs]

**UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES
IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS**

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project. Participating in this project is your choice. Please read about the project below. Feel free to ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A person connected to the research will be around to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:

Stacey Chareune-Chen
Department of Education
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330 - 8265
818-268-8155
Stacey.chen@csun.edu

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Jody Dunlap
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330 - 8265
(818) 677-3078
Jody.dunlap@csun.edu

Project Location(s):

What is this project about?

This project is being done to find out what are the difficulties that international students faced when attending U.S. high schools and living in a new environment.

What will happen if you take part in the project?

These things will happen if you want to be in the project:

1. You will be interviewed one-on-one
2. You will be audio-recorded
3. You will be given a pseudonym

How long will your part in this project last?

You will be in the project for 45-60 minutes.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this project?

The information we collect from you will be kept private. Only the people working on this project will be able to look at the information we collect.

We will not tell anyone what you tell us during this study without your permission. But, if you tell us that you are in danger, or that someone is or has been hurting you, we may have to tell that to people who are responsible for protecting children. They will make sure you are safe.

What are the possible risks or discomforts from being in this project?

You may experience fatigue, boredom, mild emotional discomfort, embarrassment, and stress.

What are the benefits from being in this project?

The potential benefit to you from being in this project might be informing others of your unmet needs and be the representative of international students

What if you have questions about this project?

You can ask questions any time. You can talk to the researchers, your family, or someone else in charge before you decide if you want to participate. If you do agree to participate, you can change your mind and end your participation without penalty. If you have questions about the study please contact a member of the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact: Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or call 818-677-2901.

If you want to be in the study sign your name below.

Please sign your initials next to the signature line for consent to be audio recorded.

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not wish to be audio recorded

Signature of Adolescent

Age

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Individual Obtaining Assent
If different from researcher

Date

APPENDIX D

Parents - Focus Group Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. Can you introduce yourself?
 - a. Name
 - b. Where do you come from
 - c. How many children do you have?
2. How many of them is/are attending or have attended high school in the U.S.?
3. What is your child high school's name?
4. How long have you been in the U.S?

RQ1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

1. How would you describe your child's experience in U.S. high school?
2. What affected or impacted your child the most since you move to the U.S.?

RQ2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, religious identification)?

3. Does your child participate in extracurricular activities after school? Please explain
4. To what extent do you influence your child's decision in getting involved in school or communities activities?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

5. What do you think your high school child struggle with at school?
6. What are some of the adjustment difficulties your child encounters when moving to the U.S.?
7. What has been your experience as a parent of an international student?
8. What are your expectations for your child?
9. Would you like to add anything that would help me understand parents and/or international students?

APPENDIX E

International Students - Focus Group Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. Can you introduce yourself?
 - a. Name
 - b. Age
 - c. Where do you come from?
 - d. What high school did you attend or are attending?
2. How long have you been in the U.S?

RQ1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

1. What are the challenges you have experienced?
2. How do you adjust to U.S. education and daily life?
3. How do you get help in navigating in school and community, in meeting your needs (transportation, food, housing, etc.)?

RQ2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, religious identification)?

4. Are you involved in extracurricular activities?
 - a. No. Please explain why not?
 - b. Yes. Please give examples.
5. To what extent do you interact with local students and friends?

6. What do you do during your free time?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

7. In what circumstances do you ask help from parents, counselors, or host parents?

a. Why? Or Why not?

8. How would you describe your relationships with your parents, school counselors, and host families?

9. What do you think your parents expect from you?

10. Would you like to add anything that would help me understand parents and/or international students?

APPENDIX F

International Student Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. What city and country are you from?
2. Why did you choose to come and study in the U.S.?
3. Do you have any siblings or friends who have studied in the U.S.?
4. What drew you to the U.S. over other countries such as Australia, UK, etc.?
5. How did you select a U.S. high school?
6. How long have you been in the U.S.?
7. How old are you?

RQ1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

1. How did you settle in the U.S.?
 - a. Who helped you?
2. What are the challenges that you encountered upon your arrival to the U.S.?
 - a. How about in school?
 - b. With your host family?
 - c. How well do you communicate in English language?
3. Where do you go to find help?
4. Who helps you when you have problems at school, with host family, or with friends?
5. Can you tell me about your daily routine?
6. What is the most exciting activity or event that you have participated in since you arrival?

7. What do you like about attending an American high school? Why? Can you explain?
8. What do you not like about attending an American high school? Why? Please explain

RQ2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, and religious identification)?

9. Are you involved in school activities? With your host family? With American friends?
10. Do you stay in touch with your family and friends from your home country? How often?
11. What do you do when you are not in school?
 - a. What kinds of transportation do you have access to?
 - b. Does a member of your host family drive you to school and other activities?
 - c. Do you use public transportation to get to school and other activities?
12. What kind of hobbies do you have?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

13. Can you describe your relationship with your parents? Host family? And School counselor and teachers? (please give example)
 - a. What school do you parents expect you to do after graduating high school?
 - b. What do you wish to do after graduating high school?
14. What do you think parents/school/agents should do to better prepare international students for living and attending school in a new country?
15. How do you feel as an international student?
 - a. Do you like the food choices here?

- b. Do you like the community?
- c. Do you like to go shopping?
- d. Do you like to go to athletic events?
- e. Do you like to go to the movies?
- f. Do you bring friends home after school?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX G

Counselor and Director Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. How long have you worked at this school?
2. How long have you worked with international students?
3. How many international students are enrolled in this school?
4. How many counselors work with international students?

RQ1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

1. In your opinion, what are the challenges international students faced while attending this school?
2. What are the programs and services your school offers to support international students?
3. Who do the international students go to when they encounter problems?

RQ2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, and religious identification)?

4. Can you tell me about international student's experience in school? Friends, activities, involvement, in-class, etc.?
5. Under what circumstances do you usually meet with international students?
6. How does the school communicate with the parents of international students? If any.
7. To what extent do you communicate with the host family in regards to the international student's academic achievement and wellbeing?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

8. How do they adjust academically? Please provide an example.
9. Have you encountered any academic dishonesty? Please provide an example.
10. What do you think about having international students enrolled in American high schools?
 - a. What are the challenges for the schools and their students, staff?
 - b. What are the benefits for the schools and their students, staff?
11. As a counselor, have you received any training to help you in working with international students? Any resources and support?
12. What are your challenges as a counselor?
13. What would you like to see improved?
14. Would you like to add anything that can help me better understand counselors who work with international students?

APPENDIX H

Host Family Interview Protocol

Introduction:

1. How many people are in your family?
2. How many times have you been a host for international student?
3. What made you want to volunteer as a host family? Why?
4. What is the process of becoming a host family? Requirements?

RQ1. What are the key factors that challenge international students while transitioning to U.S. high schools?

1. What do you think are international students' challenges and stress?
2. To what extent does your student share with you about his/her problems?
3. How do you communicate any student's update with his/her parents?

RQ2. To what extent are international students involved with their new host community (school, families, friends, culture, and religious identification)?

4. What types of activities is your student involved in?
5. Does the student participate in your family's activities? Please give examples

RQ3. What are the perspectives of international students' parents, school counselors, and host families, regarding international students' issues and adjustments?

6. What are your responsibilities to the student?

7. What are some positive experiences that you have enjoyed as a host family with your international student? Please provide an example.
8. As a host family, what are some of the challenges you have had with international students? Please provide an example.
9. Who do you report to when you encounter problems? Example.
10. Would you like to add anything that would help me understand host families and/or international students?

APPENDIX I

International Student Surveys

**An Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students
(Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994)**

Personal Data Sheet

Identification Code Number: _____ (Please leave it blank).

Sex: _____ male _____ female

Age _____ years _____ months

High school _____ Grade _____

Native Country _____ Continent _____

Please check below your major area of study in the United States:

- _____ Business and management
- _____ Computer and information services
- _____ Education
- _____ Engineering
- _____ Health Professions
- _____ Physical Sciences
- _____ Psychology
- _____ Social sciences
- _____ Miscellaneous

Please check the source/s of your financial support while studying in the United States.

_____ Families _____ friends _____ native government

_____ College/University _____ U.S. Government _____ other

Language/s

_____ English is my native language

_____ I learned English as a second language in my native country

Directions:

As foreign students have to make a number of personal, social, and environmental changes upon arrival in a strange land, this *cultural-shock* experience might cause them acculturative stress. This scale is designed to assess such acculturative stress you personally might have experienced. There are no right or wrong answers. However, for the data to be meaningful, you must answer each statement given below as honestly as possible.

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that BEST describes your response.

1= Strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Because of my different cultural background as a *foreign* student, I feel that:

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Homesickness for my country bothers me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods and/or to new eating habits. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I am treated differently in social situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I feel rejected when people are sarcastic toward my cultural values. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings here. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Others are biased toward me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Many opportunities are denied to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I feel overwhelmed that multiple pressures are placed upon me after my migration to this society. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I feel that I receive unequal treatment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. People from some ethnic groups show hatred toward me nonverbally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I am denied what I deserve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I feel rejected when others don't appreciate my cultural values. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I miss the country and people of my national origin. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new cultural values. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. People from some other ethnic groups show hatred toward me through their actions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I am treated differently because of my race. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I am treated differently because of my color. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. People from some other ethnic groups show hatred toward me verbally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I feel sad leaving my relatives behind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I feel that my people are discriminated against. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Dr陈恭喜成功

Dad - 3/1/16