EXPLORING THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF ACCULTURATION

by

FENGKAN ZHU

(Under the Direction of Alan E. Stewart)

ABSTRACT

Academic institutions in the United States (U.S.) have witnessed a rapid growth of the population of international students from China in the past decade (Institute of International Education, 2017). As sojourners, Chinese international students can experience numerous acculturative stress in the U.S., which may cause psychological distress (Han, Han, Luo, Jacobs, & Jean-Baptiste, 2013; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1997). However, there is a significant disparity in mental health care for this population at American universities (N. Zhang & Dixon, 2003; Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015). Most existing studies in this field were quantitative studies. However, quantitative method has its own limitations in investigating the essence and meanings of subjective experiences of individuals. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate Chinese international students' acculturative experiences in the U.S. and to present their coping strategies of acculturative stress. This study also investigated co-researchers' perceptions of counseling services on campus and their experiences with the services if they had used them. Specifically, this study used two rounds in-depth semi-structured

individual interviews to collect data and applied the transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) in data analysis. Textual descriptions were developed to describe what co-researchers experienced in acculturation in the U.S. as well as their perceptions of counseling and experiences in counseling. In addition, structural descriptions were developed to explain how these experiences and perceptions were formed. Finally, a synthesis description was created, representing the group as a whole, to describe the meanings and essence of these co-researchers' acculturation experience in the U.S., their perceptions of counseling services, and their experiences in counseling. The findings of this study are congruent with previous research and have implications for clinical practice and further research with Chinese international students in the U.S.

INDEX WORDS: Chinese international student, acculturation, perceptions of counseling services, experiences in counseling, transcendental phenomenology

EXPLORING THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF ACCULTURATION

by

FENGKAN ZHU

BS, Nanjing University, China, 2012

MA, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2014

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2019

EXPLORING THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF ACCULTURATION

by

FENGKAN ZHU

Major Professor:	Alan Stewart
Committee:	Edward Delgado-Romero
	Bernadette Heckman

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions in the United States (U.S.) have witnessed a rapid growth of the population of international students in the past decade. In the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 1,078,822 international students at U.S. colleges and universities with a 3.4% growth over the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2017). This was the first time in U.S. higher education history that international student population surpassed one million. The education systems in the United States has reflected the increase of cultural diversity (Bradley, Parr, Lan, Bingi, & Gould, 1995). Given this large number and its high growth rate, greater attentions have been directed toward the cross-cultural adjustment and psychological well-being of students from abroad (e.g., Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Yakushko, Davidson, & Sanford-Martens, 2008; Yoon & Portman, 2004).

As sojourners, international students face a number of challenges and need to cope with various sources of acculturative stress in the U.S. (Pedersen, 1997; Olivas & Li, 2006). Acculturation refers to the changes a person experiences in behavior, values, knowledge, and cultural identity, as a result of contact with another culture (B. Kim & Abreu, 2001). In the acculturation process, people might experience negative social and psychological consequences, which are referred to as acculturative stress (Berry, 1997, 2005). The acculturative stress international students experience can come from language barriers, unfamiliarity with the U.S. educational system, financial difficulties, and interpersonal and intrapersonal problems (Mori, 2000). Tseng and Newtown (2002) contended that international students are encountering four

specific challenges: (1) general living adjustment, adjusting to U.S. food, housing, and transportation; (2) academic adjustment to the American university system and the skills required for academic success; (3) sociocultural adjustment marked by an adjustment to cultural norms and local customs; and (4) personal psychological adjustment, such as homesickness, loneliness, and identity loss.

Adjustment distress in another culture can manifest itself in different symptoms including somatic complaints, cognitive fatigue, and psychological symptoms as well (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007). Thomas and Althen (1989) highlighted several most prevalent psychological symptoms associated with adjustment stress among international students. These include irritability, disorientation, intolerance of ambiguity, depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and paranoid feelings. Physical correlates have also been identified. Mori (2000) listed stress-related somatic symptoms such as sleep and appetite disturbance, low energy, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, greater susceptibility to illness, and other chronic somatic complaints with no clear organic basis. All of these symptoms might indicate a need for health services including mental health services.

It is noteworthy that international students are a heterogeneous population, which consist of people from 196 countries with various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. However, many existing studies erroneously treat international student as a homogeneous group. Prior research overlooked the variance of cultural distance and failed to examine the within group diversity under the label “international”. Cultural distance is a construct defined by how dissimilar two cultures are in variables such as language, religion, and values (Berry, 1997). Greater cultural distance implies the need for greater culture learning and might contribute to negative intergroup attitudes and greater culture conflict that lead to poorer adaptation (Berry,

1997). Students from Western countries such as Canada and Britain might perceive a much smaller cultural distance between their homelands and the U.S. compared to students that come from China.

In a sharp contrast to the potential high-level stress, international students, especially students from Asian countries, are reported to have a notable underutilization of either on campus or off campus counseling services (Hyun et al., 2007; Mori, 2000; N. Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Hyun and colleagues (2007) surveyed 551 international graduate students and 2,493 domestic graduate students in a university in the U.S. The results of their survey indicated that international graduate students reported significantly lower use of any counseling services than did domestic graduate students. Consistent with this result, Yukushko, Davidson, and Sanford-Martens (2008), found that only 1.8% of international students enrolled at a large Midwestern university sought counseling services at the university counseling center over a 5-year period. Moreover, within the population of international students, Asian international students were significantly less likely to use counseling services than were other ethnic group international students (Hyun et al., 2007; Michell, Greenwood, & Gugliemi, 2007). Research also indicates that when Asian international students do seeking counseling, they typically attend fewer therapy sessions (Nilsson, Berkel, Flores, & Lucas, 2004; Yakushko et al., 2008).

This discrepancy between high stress and underutilization of counseling among Asian international students not only exists in the United States but also in some other western countries. For example, in a study investigating the usage of counseling services among international students in Australia, only 19.8% of the students who reported that they had need help actually sought counseling services (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008). They also found that students from non-Asian countries perceived greater need and were more likely to

turn to counseling services based on that need. This result is comparable with the situation in the U.S. The worldwide underutilization of counseling services among Asian international students might reflect a cultural difference between East and West in terms of their beliefs and behaviors of mental health care. Thus, it is imperative to find the answers to the question—What factors lead to underutilization of mental health services by certain groups of international students?

However, even within the population of Asian international students, there still is a wide range of heterogeneity (Li, Marbley, Bradley, & Lan, 2016). Asian international students consist of students from 48 countries with various ethnicities and unique cultures. For example, Chinese, Indians, and Japanese are all counted as Asians in research, but they are very different in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, value, and religion. Frey and Roysircar (2006) found that international students from South Asia and international students from East Asia were different in terms of their counseling service utilization. Therefore, it is more applicable and meaningful to narrow down and examine a specific cultural/national group. However, there were few studies that only focused on one specific ethnic group of international students such as Chinese international students, who are the largest international student group in the U.S. In the 2016/17 academic year, there were 350,755 Chinese international students in the U.S. and they constituted 32.5% of the total international student population. In addition, China was the top country for international students in the U.S. for seven consecutive years. This rapid growth of Chinese international students as well as the large cultural differences between China and the U.S. warrant more attention to study their acculturation and mental health need in this country.

In terms of who are Chinese, it is a controversial topic due to the history of and political changes in China since late nineteenth century when Western countries started to colonize areas in China and the nation’s civil war from 1945 to 1949. However, many people from different

regions do share a core Chinese cultural root. Today, in counseling psychology, many scholars see Chinese as a cultural construct and regard Chinese international student as a group that include students from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau (e.g., Du & Wei, 2015; Wei, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2011). However, there are also some other scholars claimed that the subgroups of Chinese need to be treated as separate and individual groups due to their unique developmental paths in politics and ideologies since the late nineteenth century (e.g., Dao, Lee, & Chang, 2007; Ying, 2005). I can see points from both sides. In this study, I welcomed whoever identified as a Chinese international student to participate as a co-researcher.

It is noteworthy that little research has specifically focused on the adjustment of Chinese international students in the U.S. (Du & Wei, 2015; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). The existing studies of Chinese international students in the U.S. suggested that Chinese international students may encounter considerable acculturative stress due to the differences in academic and social norms between Chinese and U.S. cultures (Yeh & Inoes, 2003). In addition, the dramatic change in social status from being a majority member in their home society to being a minority in the U.S. requires a lot of effort to adjust (Mori, 2000). Many Chinese international students experience an internal conflict between consciousness of Chinese cultural identity and strong aspirations toward U.S. political and economic systems (C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). All of this acculturative stress can cause psychological distress and sociocultural adjustment difficulties. However, little research has specifically focused on the perceptions of professional counseling services and help seeking behaviors of Chinese international students in the U.S.

Majority of the existing research in the field of international students' acculturation and their utilization of counseling were quantitative studies. The most widely used research method was to give participants self-rating scales to measure their acculturative stress, psychological

well-being, and help-seeking behaviors (see Yoon & Portman, 2004). However, quantitative measures have their own limitations. For example, in some of the most cited studies of the underutilization of counseling services (e.g., Yoon & Jepsen, 2008; N. Zhang & Dixon, 2003), the Likert scales being used to assess preferences of services consisted of items such as "I like more structured format (e.g., 1 hour a week) rather than a more flexible format (e.g., the length or frequency of a counseling session(s) can be shortened or extended according to my need)" and "I would prefer to talk with a counselor in some place other than a counseling office." However, what if a Chinese international student had no counseling experience before and is unfamiliar with the English psychological terms, how can she/he respond these questions? Given the fact of underutilization of mental health services, there is a possibility that many Chinese international students have no experience of counseling at all. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain how such data can result in sound conclusions.

A qualitative study could complement some of the shortcomings of quantitative studies. One of the strengths of qualitative inquiry is to give participants a chance to make their own voices heard. Moreover, most measures used in existing studies were in English. They have a limitation in terms of helping non-native English speakers express themselves. Therefore, in order to better understand, researchers may consider providing Chinese international students with an opportunity to speak out their narratives in their own language of their acculturation and perceptions of professional mental health services in the U.S.

Problem Statement

Though there have been a few quantitative studies conducted to investigate the acculturative stress of Chinese international students and a few quantitative inquiries of help-seeking behavior of mental health services of international students in general, limited qualitative

studies have specifically focused on examining Chinese international students' acculturative experiences in the U.S., their coping strategies, and perceptions of professional counseling services in the context of acculturation.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate Chinese international students' acculturative experiences in the U.S. and to present their coping strategies of acculturative stress and their perceptions of on-campus counseling services in the context of acculturation. More specifically, this study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to examine the sources of acculturative stress Chinese international students face in the U.S. and the strategies they use daily to cope with stress. Additionally, this study aimed to investigate Chinese international students' perceptions of counseling services on campus and their experiences with the services if they had used them.

This study was conducted at a Southeast public university in the U.S. This particular university had a total 36,574 students enrolled in fall 2016 including around 2,391 international students from 125 different countries. Chinese student was the largest subgroup of international student on the campus, with a total number of 1,017 Chinese students that compromise 44.8% of the total international student population. This study provided several Chinese international students with an opportunity to speak out their living and studying experiences in the U.S.; therefore, to make their acculturation experiences audible and visible. Moreover, this study explored implications for mental health service providers on campus in improving their understanding of Chinese international students and in gaining insights about how to adjust their services to better serve the unique needs of this population and hopefully international students from other countries or areas as well.

I used transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) as the qualitative research method in this study. Transcendental phenomenology is based on principles identified by Husserl (1931) and was translated into a qualitative method by Moustakas (1994). It holds promise as a viable procedure for phenomenological research (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Transcendental phenomenology provides a systematic approach to analyzing data of lived experiences by allowing researchers to develop an objective "essence" through aggregating subjective experiences of a number of individuals (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What do the acculturative experiences look like for Chinese international students in the U.S.?
    1.1. What acculturative stress do they encounter in the U.S.?
    1.2. How do Chinese international students cope with stress?
2. How do Chinese international students perceive counseling services?
    2.1. How much do they know about counseling services in general and on campus?
    2.2. What attitudes do they have about counseling?
    2.3. How do they come to a decision about seeking or not seeking counseling services on campus?
3. How did they experience counseling on campus if they had used the services?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Who are Chinese International Students?

According to the statistics from the Institute of International Education (2016), there were 328,547 students from China studying in the United States, which compromise 31.5% of all international students in the U.S. Among these students from China, 41.3% are undergraduate, 37.5% are graduate students, 5.3% are other, and 15.9% are recent graduates undertaking Optional Practical Training (OPT), which is a post-graduation working permit. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, these Chinese students contributed $11.43 billion to the U.S. economy in 2016. It is noteworthy that with the boost in economy in China with its open-door policy and the consequential improvement of political and economic relations between China and the U.S. since the early 1990s, the demographics of Chinese international students in the U.S. have changed significantly (Han, Han, Luo, Jacob, & Jean-Baptiste, 2013). Today, most Chinese international students, undergraduate students in particular, are studying and living abroad with funding from their families. This was unconceivable 25 years ago when China first started its reform and opening-up policy, which aimed to boost the country's economy, welcome the influences of Western cultures, and improve its relationships with Western countries including the U.S. According to World Bank (2016), China's GDP was 360.859 billion USD in 1990 and was 11.008 trillion USD in 2015. Additionally, due to the strict one child policy implemented in China since the late 1970s, most current Chinese international students in the U.S. are the only child in their family, and this can bring more educational, material, and social

resources to the only child in a family and be beneficial. However, one child policy may also bring challenges to the development of kids. For example, an only child might experience difficulties in interpersonal interaction, personality development, and a greater family expectation of success (Han et al., 2013). These factors might bring unique challenges to Chinese international students when they leave home and study by themselves in the U.S.

Moreover, Chinese international students face a significant cultural distance between China and the U.S. To many of them, the U.S. is strange and alien before they start their adventure. Cultural distance is a construct defined by how dissimilar two cultures are in language, religion, values, etc. (Berry, 1997). In a cross-cultural context, Ward (1996) defined cultural distance as the similarities and differences between the culture of origin and the culture of contact. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2014) cited the U.S. and China as an example of maximum cultural distance. This notion has been validated through empirical research. For example, according to Hofstede (2001), U.S. culture and Chinese culture differ significantly on values of collectivism/individualism, power distance, and long-term/short-term orientation. Traditional Chinese values emphasize an interdependence self-construal while European American culture often cultivate an independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Moreover, people from these two countries have differences in language and communication style (Hall, 1989). Würtz (2005) claimed that Chinese are growing up in a more high-context culture and thus they could have misunderstandings when they communicate with U.S. citizens whose language is less context-oriented. Ward (1996) suggested a robust relationship between the degree of cultural distance and the degree of psychological distress experienced in cross-cultural transition. This notion has been supported by empirical studies comparing the acculturative stress between Asian or Chinese international students and European international

students in the U.S. (Fritz, Chin, & DeMartinis, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). All these studies found that compared to European international students, Asian or Chinese international students face significantly more cross-cultural challenges in the U.S. and thus report more acculturative stress.

In spite of the large population of Chinese international students in the U.S., there has been limited research investigating this group and their study and life in the U.S. Therefore, I had to expand the search radius for literature review to include studies of Asian international students and overall international student group in order to gain a comprehensive picture about the acculturative experiences of Chinese international students. Even within the group of Chinese international students, there has been a dramatic change of their characteristics with the development of the China's economy and politics since earlier 1990's, therefore, most of the empirical studies I reviewed were published after 2000.

Acculturation

Definition of Acculturation

In the field of psychology, acculturation is broadly defined as the dual process of cultural and psychological changes that follow the contact between two cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005). Therefore, acculturation can take place at both a group level and an individual level. Berry (2005) noted that at the group level, acculturation manifests itself in forms of changing social structures and institutions as well as changing cultural practices. At the individual level, acculturation involves changes in an individual (in both behavior and internal characteristics) whose cultural group is collectively experiencing acculturation. In the psychological research, acculturation is often conceptualized as an individual-level variable (Graves, 1967).

Acculturation Process Model

As one of the most influential scholars in cross-cultural psychology, Berry and colleges (1987) developed a comprehensive model of acculturation process, which has been mostly widely used as a framework in acculturation research (C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Berry's model proposes four moderating factors of acculturation process: (a) the nature of the larger or host society, (b) the type of acculturation group an individual belongs to, (c) modes of acculturation, (d) demographic, social, and psychological characteristics of the individual.

The first factor, nature of the host society, refers to the attitudes of people in the dominant culture of the host society toward people from other societies or cultures. These attitudes can range on a spectrum from celebrating cultural diversity to forcing everyone to conform to a single cultural standard. The second factor, the type of acculturation group, refers to the nature of the acculturating group. Berry and colleague (1987) identify five different groups, which include immigrants, refugees, native people, ethnic groups, and sojourners. There are variations in the degree of voluntariness, movement, and permanence of contact among these five groups. Generally speaking, immigrants may have more voluntariness and positive initial attitudes toward contact and change compared with refugees and native peoples. Sojourners are temporary residents who immerge into contact with another culture for a certain period of time and often plan to return to their home culture after the temporary visit. International students are most often classified as sojourners because in most cases they are involved in temporary contact with people in the host culture and they live in the host country without permanent social supports. Sojourners may face intense issues living in another culture. For sojourners who have a goal of acculturation, they may encounter many challenges in the process acculturation and may

experience more mental health problems than immigrants who are permanently settled, established, and who have more permanent social supports in the host society.

The third factor in this model is acculturation mode. Berry and colleagues (1987) claim that individuals in acculturation process need to face two central issues: (a) the degree to which they maintain the identification with their original home or ethnic culture (also known as enculturation) and (b) the extent to which they embrace and accept the host culture, which may manifest in how much they value, desire, and seek contact with the host culture. Combinations of positions on these two dimensions yield four modes of acculturation: (a) integration (highly identify with both home and the host cultures); (b) assimilation (highly identify with the host culture but weakly identify with the home culture); (c) separation (highly adhere to the home culture but devalue the host culture); and (d) marginalization (neither adhere to the home culture nor value the host culture). Research has suggested that different acculturation modes have different influence on acculturative stress and adjustment problems. In general, individuals with a more integrated acculturation mode tend to report lower levels of acculturative stress and better adjustment while people who are marginalized or separated are more likely to report more distress and a worse adjustment (Berry, et al., 1987; B. Kim, 2007). Therefore, embracing the host culture while maintaining a strong connection with the home culture is the strategy that is most often recommended for acculturation. Scholars have suggested bilinear acculturation models, which proposed that the identification with one culture does not necessarily lessen that with the other culture (Miller, 2007; Rudmin, 2009). However, it is noteworthy that not every sojourner is willing to be acculturated to the host culture. For example, some international students come to the U.S. for a short-term intensive English program that lasts for a few months. They may have a clear goal of returning to their home countries later, and therefore, choosing to

not acculturate in the U.S. might become a protective factor that helps them keep an adherence to their home cultures and thus they can better re-adjust when they return to their home countries. However, these students may still face an assimilation pressure or expectation from people in a host society that does not celebrate diversity.

The fourth factor in Berry's (1987) model refers to the demographic, social, and psychological characteristics of the acculturating individual. These characteristics include but are not limited to: age, gender, educational level, language skills, prior cross-cultural experience, available financial resources, coping styles, attachment style, cognitive style, susceptibility to psychological distress, and cultural distance. All four factors can combine and interact with each other and have various impacts on the outcome of acculturation, which is proposed to have two distinguished but interrelated dimensions: sociocultural adjustment and psychological adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Acculturation and Acculturative Stress of Chinese International Students

The Nature of the Host Society

There have been quite a few empirical studies conducted to investigate the specific roles of these four factors in the acculturation of international students in the U.S. With regard to the nature of the larger or host society, for many Chinese international students, the propagandized values of freedom, democracy, open-mindedness, and the celebration of diversity in the U.S. are incentives to come to the U.S. (De Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013). However, it is not uncommon for them to encounter a discrepancy between what they expected and what they really experience here in the U.S. For example, they may by treated by their U.S. peers in certain stereotypical ways. Through cultural exchange, U.S. students may form certain stereotypical perceptions of Chinese international students (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). Stereotypes are person

perception schemas of a particular group of people and they may contain a combination of both positive and negative attributes (Fiske, Harris, Lee, & Russell, 2016). The results of Ruble and Zhang's study (2013) suggest five categories of stereotypes American students hold of Chinese international students: (a) smart/hardworking; (b) nice/friendly; (c) bad at English/not assimilated; (d) shy/not social; and (e) oblivious/annoying. Stereotypes that fall into the nice/friendly category can be regarded as positive and thus might promote U.S. students' willingness to interact with and include Chinese international students into their social circles. In contrast, the degree to which U.S. students endorse the stereotypes of the perceived deficit in English skills, social incompetency, and avoidance of assimilation to the host culture could be a disincentive to interaction. Chinese international students might be treated as outgroup members and stereotypes that they are overly studious and have communication problems and thus U.S. students might become less willing to interact with them. The degree with which U.S. students are willing to communicate with them influences Chinese international students' adaptation to the U.S. culture (Zimmermann, 1995). Even the seemingly positive stereotype of Chinese international students as smart and hardworking could cause stress if they fail to live up to high expectations for their academics. In particular, due to stereotypes such as Chinese are good at math and science, Chinese international student may they may experience a high degree of stress and decreased self-confidence if they experience difficulty in these areas (Suzuki, 2002).

Along with negative stereotypes, perceived discrimination is another common experience for international students in the U.S. Lee and Rice's study (2007) revealed neo-racism as a cause of a range of international student problems. Neo-racism is discrimination based on culture and national order rather than by physical characteristics alone (Spears, 1999) and what underlies neo-racism are notions of cultural or national superiority which include a rationale for

marginalizing or assimilating groups (Lee & Rice, 2007). Under this framework, Lee and Rice's study (2007) found that students from Asia, India, Latin America, and Middle East reported considerable discrimination while students from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not report any direct negative experiences related to their race or culture. More specifically, international students in the U.S. experience discrimination in the following forms: (a) on cultural discrimination (e.g., negative media portrayals or remarks of their home country or culture, hostility towards perceived or assumed lack of fluency in English, cultural intolerance); (b) feelings of discomfort (e.g., unsettling feelings of discomfort and inhospitality that are hard to specifically identify, feeling left out or excluded from peer study groups or social events); (c) verbal discrimination (e.g., faculty negatively comment on their home country or culture, verbal or sexual harassment); (d) direct confrontation (e.g., physical attacks or hate crimes). It is also noteworthy that in their study (Lee & Rice, 2007), many international students stated that they were not aware of their rights or where they could seek support. Some participants stated that they did not trust that they would be heard even if they were knowledgeable about helping resources on campus.

Consistent with these findings, Hanassab (2006) revealed that 16% of the Asian participants in their study reported experiences of being discriminated in interaction with their professors; 19% of them reported discrimination in interaction with university staff; and 21% of students from Asia reported discrimination when interacting with classmates. These findings suggest that Asian international students are one of the ethnic groups that are most likely to be discriminated on U.S. college/university campus. Additionally, Hanassab's study (2006) noted that there is much more discrimination towards international students in the outside community compared with on university campuses. This finding might suggest that it is more difficult for

international students to acculturate to the local community than acculturating on campus. Consequently, especially for rural campuses, Chinese international students may be reluctant to leave campus, and thus limiting their experiences to the campus environment. In a sharp contrast with the rapid increase of numbers of international students and the discussions on issues of diversity in U.S. higher education (Brown, 2004), these studies reveal that the existing demographic diversity does not necessarily equal integration or inclusion. As Spencer-Rodgers (2001) noted, international students are leaners, learning sources for domestic students, potential skilled workers, cultural diplomats, friends at times, and strangers at others.

Higher education leaders and policy makers recognize the economic advantages of international students as an economic revenue stream; however, this perspective might result in less emphasis on international students' cross-cultural and academic experiences (Habu, 2000; Lee & Rice, 2007). International students are required to provide a certificate of finances with supporting bank statements or documents when they apply for U.S. universities. Moreover, most schools charge specific international student fees for special programming or government-required international student tracking. These extra charges can run from $50 to $966 per-semester depends on universities. Although international students make great contributions to the U.S. economy, they are still perceived by some people as threats to the U.S. economic self-sufficiency or a contributor to the high unemployment rate in this country and therefore, they become "the foreign student problem" (Rhoades & Smart, 1996, p. 142). Not all the issues international students experience can be problematized as matters of their own fault in adjustment; however, many of the serious challenges they face are due to inadequacies within the host society (Lee & Rice, 2007).

As sojourners, Chinese international students may also face a significant challenge in the U.S. classroom due to the difference in academic and social norms between Chinese and the U.S. cultures (Yeh & Inose, 2003). For example, Chinese education is viewed as teacher centered, content based, and test driven (Wang & Kreya, 2006). Growing up in a collectivistic society with a hierarchy in social structure, Chinese international are often taught to be complaint, remain quiet in class, and withhold expressing their own opinions; they may also feel it impolite to interrupt their teachers or classmates while they are speaking to ask questions unless they are invited to do so (C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Similarly, Durkin (2011) argued that many Chinese students are not comfortable with U.S. classroom activities, such as participating in group discussion, raising questions in class, and engaging in critical argumentations. However, taking the initiative in expressing opinions and having interactions with teachers and other classmates are often highly valued in U.S. education. Therefore, Chinese international students may feel the pressure to abandon the classroom norms that they are familiar at home to adapt to U.S. norms of academic behavior so that they can meet the expectations of their teachers in the U.S. Otherwise, they might be perceived as too quiet or passive by their teachers or peers. It is not uncommon to see the misunderstanding or negligence of this cross-cultural difference in academic norms between East and West. Even though Chinese international students are informed of this difference during orientation, it still takes them great effort to adjust their behavior in classroom. Moreover, the virtues of humbleness, modesty, emotional restraint, self-effacement, and saving face are highly valued in Chinese culture and thus are consistently instilled into children in school in China (B. Kim, Atkinson, & Umemtoto, 2001). Therefore, Chinese students who are identified with these traditional values are more likely to encounter difficulty in interacting with Americans in classroom or social events because U.S. culture values

more direct expressions of feelings, assertive expression of opinions, and expectations of sharing personal information (C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). This difference in social norms may cause considerable stress for Chinese international students who had high expectations of making friends with U.S. peers.

Acculturation Modes of Chinese International Students

As for the relationship between acculturation modes and international students' cross-cultural adjustment outcome, most research has applied the bilinear acculturation modes (Berry et al., 1987; B. Kim, 2007; Miller, 2007; Rudmin, 2009) (i.e., adherence to the home culture and identification with the host culture). The findings of C. D. Wang and Mallinckrodt's study (2006) suggest that adaptation to and identification with the U.S. culture is a significant predictor for Chinese international students' psychosocial adjustment, after controlling for the effects of demographic variables, including English skills and length residency in the U.S. More specifically, they found those Chinese international students who self-reported more adaptation and implementations of Western values, beliefs, behaviors, and life style are more likely to effectively deal with people and various situations in the U.S and thus are more satisfied with their life in the U.S. However, adherence to the Chinese culture was not found to be directly related to Chinese international students' psychosocial adjustment in their study. Sojourners often face a dilemma between how much they would like to maintain their home cultural identity and the extent to which they want to be assimilated to U.S. culture, and this is true for many Chinese international students (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011a). They may experience an internal conflict between consciousness of Chinese cultural identity and the strong aspiration toward U.S. culture (C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006).

Some scholars point out that studies on acculturation and adjustment of international students tend to focus too much on the direct association between the two constructs (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2007; Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005; Rahman & Rollock, 2004). Therefore, they suggested further examine mechanisms or indirect processes underlying the acculturation-adjustment relationship (i.e., mediators or moderators). J. Zhang and Goodson (2011a) found that the more Chinese international students adhere to the U.S. culture, the more likely they feel connected with U.S. citizens and the U.S. society and this greater sense of social connectedness facilitates the management of psychological symptoms and mastery of U.S. sociocultural skills. In other words, Chinese international student's perceived social connectedness with Americans mediates the links between their adherence to the American culture and their psychological adjustment. J. Zhang and Goodson's study (2011a) also lent support to the hypothesis that Chinese international students who implement the marginalization acculturative mode (i.e., rejecting both Chinese culture and American culture) have the highest depression levels of international students. Furthermore, they found that for Chinese internationals with relatively low levels of social interaction with U.S. citizens and high levels of adherence to Chinese culture, they tended to be less depressed. Therefore, social interaction with Americans plays the role as a moderator in the association between adherence to Chinese culture and psychological symptoms. This moderating effect of social interaction/connectedness with Americans was also supported by Yu and Wei's study (2015).

Furthermore, Du and Wei (2015) found that students with higher levels of adherence to Chinese culture were likely to report less future negative affect through feeling close to other Chinese in their ethnic community; however, students with higher levels of identification with their home (Chinese) culture were likely to report less future life satisfaction and positive affect

through feeling less close to individuals in U.S. mainstream society. These findings support the notion that the integrative mode of acculturation might be most beneficial to sojourners (Berry et al., 1987; B. Kim, 2007). Therefore, it seems optimal that Chinese international students actively participate in both their home and the U.S. cultures and have interactions with people from both cultures (Lin & Yi, 1997; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011a).

Moreover, it is not uncommon to see cross-cultural experiences having an impact on the worldviews or value orientations (Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987) of Chinese international students. For example, the worldview pattern (i.e., value orientations about human nature, human relationships, and man-nature relation) of Chinese international students who have been in the U.S. for 4 years or more was found to be more similar to that of their European American peers but different from that of the Chinese international students who have lived one year or less in the U.S. (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006). Chinese international students who have lived in the U.S. for 4 years or more were found to value control-over-nature significantly more than did their European American peers. Additionally, they were also found to be significantly more future oriented than their European American peers. Both control-over-nature and future-time orientation are regarded as a preference of the dominant middle-class American culture rather than Chinese culture (Stewart, 1987; Nisbett, 2003). It is noteworthy that the Chinese international students who have been in the U.S. for 1 or less year in Yang et al.'s study (2006) perceived human relationships to be significantly more individualistic than do the European American students. These findings suggest the influence of cross-cultural experience on the changes of the value orientations of Chinese international students through interacting with U.S. citizens. Furthermore, the sociocultural characteristics of Chinese people have gone through a change during the past three decades as a result of the dramatic change in China's economic and

political structure as well as its rapid modernization (Yang et al., 2006). These changes suggest an urgent need to investigate the cross-cultural experiences of today's Chinese international students in the U.S. with an updated perspective.

Other Characteristics of Chinese International Students

With regard to the fourth factor in Berry's (1987) comprehensive model of acculturation process, there have been quite a few empirical studies that investigated potential demographic, social and psychological characteristics of Chinese international students that can have impact on their acculturation outcomes. For example, English proficiency has been extensively studied and was found to play a significant role in Chinese international students' cross-cultural adjustment in the U.S. (see J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011b). Language proficiency appear to be the most challenging issue for majority of international students (Mori, 2000). C. D. Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) found that English proficiency is a significant predictor for Chinese students' sociocultural adjustment difficulty in the U.S. Similarly, Yeh and Inose (2003) claimed that higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree to which international students feel comfortable speaking English, predict lower levels of acculturative distress. Cross-cultural experience requires a great deal of communication with people in the host culture, which takes time and an adequate level of language abilities (Pedersen, 1991). The U.S. is a monolingual society, and therefore there is increased pressure to speak English in a way that would differ if bi or multilingualism was valued. Unfamiliarity with colloquial language such as English idioms and slang and lack of background knowledge were also reported by many Chinese international students as barriers to fully understanding the content of conversations with their U.S. friends (Yan & Berliner, 2013). Therefore, it is understandable that those Chinese international students who have higher self-rated English skills tend to feel more confident and comfortable in

interacting in their daily lives (e.g., asking for help, ordering food, initiating social interactions, meeting new friends), which will make them more enjoy their cross-cultural communication with U.S. students or students from other countries. Smoother interactions lead to greater feelings of adjustment. Students with higher TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores are found to experience fewer adjustment difficulties, have more positive experiences and feel more satisfied than those with lower scores (Senyshyn, Warford, & Zhan., 2000). These issues related to English fluency also can partially explain why European international students reportedly experience less adjustment difficulty in the U.S. than Asians.

Additionally, academic success and English fluency are often interrelated. Asian culture values honoring their family through academic achievement (B. Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005). Therefore, Chinese international students might receive and internalize high expectations for academic achievement from both their family and culture. However, low English language fluency may make Chinese international students feel less comfortable in articulating their thoughts and expressing their opinions in classrooms and on essay exams or research papers (Liu, 2009), resulting in poor academic performance and evaluation. Failures in academic performance can negatively affect psychological well-being (Mori, 2000). In order to function at a high level with English as a second language, Chinese international students have to spend extra hours reading course materials, doing homework, and editing papers, which could potentially deprive their time for socializing and lead to greater feelings of anxiety, loneness, and isolation (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011b). Many graduate students are expected to teach as a part of their graduate education, and U.S. students can be particularly harsh in evaluating people with accents or fluency issues. This discrimination is made worse by some state legislatures that have passed laws mandating higher educational institutions to test foreign teaching assistants for

English competency (Lin & Yi, 1997). Therefore, for those Chinese international students who have limited or developing English language skills, it is less likely for them to receive teaching assistantships, or to face prejudice when they do. Professors and supervisors often fail to recognize the complexity of language issues confronting foreign students (Andrade, 2006).

Length of residency in the U.S. is another characteristic of the Chinese international students that was found associated with their acculturative outcomes. Quite a few studies found the length of time in the U.S. is significantly negatively associated with international students' sociocultural adjustment difficulties and psychological symptoms (see C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011b). However, researchers need to be cautious of overgeneralizing this conclusion. Being in the U.S. for a longer time can potentially become an added pressure for Chinese international students with high maladaptive perfectionism and thus might cause them more psychological distress (Wei et al., 2007). K. T. Wang and colleague (2012) published the first study to empirically identify distinct adjustment trajectories of new Chinese international students over their first 3 semesters in the U.S. The results of their study suggested 4 distinct groups of adjustment patterns: (a) a group exhibiting consistent distress (10%); (b) a group with decreasing psychological distress over time (14%); (c) those with a sharp peak in psychological distress at the end of first or second semester in the U.S. (11%); and a group with consistent low psychological distress (65%). In addition, K .T. Wang and colleagues (2012) found that higher self-esteem, positive problem-solving appraisal, lower perfectionism prior to the acculturation process are significant predictors of better adjustment outcomes. After one semester of study in the U.S., if students have a balanced array of social support and using acceptance, reframing, and striving as coping strategies, they are likely to have a better transition.

Moreover, coping style is another factor that can impact sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment when they experience difficulties in the host society (Heppner, 2008). To many Chinese, forbearance coping is a common coping strategy they are familiar with and often use (Moore & Constantine, 2005). People having this coping style tend to minimize or conceal problems or concerns to maintain social harmony and to avoid bringing trouble or burden to others (Moore & Constantine, 2005; Yeh, Arora, & Wu 2006). This theory has been supported by a serious of empirical studies. For example, H. Kim, Sherman, and Taylor (2008) found that East Asians are more reluctant to explicitly ask for support from people they feel close to than European Americans because they are more concerned about the potential relational consequences of their help-seeking behavior. H. Kim and colleague (2008) suggested that individuals in collective cultures are expected to be sensitive to others' needs. Moreover, Chinese culture is highly context-based (Rallapalli & Montgomery, 2015; Würtz, 2005). People may choose to express needs through indirect ways. Rather than asking for help, people might be more used to expecting their friends or family members to sense their needs in times of distress.

Additionally, saving face is important in Chinese culture (Sheu & Fukuyama, 2007). Face refers to the positive public and self-image or personal prestige and success a person cultivates in a social context. While face is a universal human concern, it is particularly important in collectivist societies like China (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). In order to save face, many Chinese people would rather keep problems to themselves (Wei, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2012). However, people who did not grow up in Chinese culture may not be able to understand these social norms. Therefore, Chinese international students who adhere to this coping strategy might feel helpless in the U.S. especially with their U.S. professors and fellow students. Wei et al.'s study (2012) found that for those Chinese international students with a weaker identification

with their heritage culture, when acculturative stress was higher, their use of forbearance coping was positively associated with psychological distress. However, for those with a stronger identification with Chinese culture, the use of forbearance coping was not significantly associated with psychological distress even when they experience a high acculturative stress.

Psychological Wellbeing of Chinese International Students

Psychological Distress

All the four factors in Berry et al.'s (1987) comprehensive acculturation process model can have interactions with each other and contribute to the acculturative outcomes of Chinese international students in the U.S. One of the acculturation outcomes that has been widely studied by psychologists is mental health concerns or psychological symptoms/distress (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Research suggests that Chinese international students are at great risk of developing mental health problems as a result of cross-cultural adjustment (Han et al., 2013; Li, Liu, Wei, & Lan, 2013). The most frequently reported sources of stress for international students in the U.S. include language barrier, unfamiliarity with U.S. educational system, relationship with advisors, discrimination, cultural shock, difficulty in forming social relationships due to cultural difference and miscommunication, relationship issues with people in their own ethnic communities, personal crises originating at home, eating and body image issues, substance abuse, financial difficulties, career issues, decisions about return to home country, and trauma (see Mori, 2000; Yakushko et al., 2008).

Excessive, continuous exposure to stress can result in impairments in people's psychological, cognitive, and physical functioning (Duric, Clayton, Leong, & Yuan, 2016). Some of the most common psychological symptoms international students have include but are not limited to depression, anxiety, feelings of loss, disappointment, resentment, sadness, a sense

of inferiority, hostility, anger, homesickness, isolation, loneliness, helplessness, and hopelessness (Mori, 2000). In their study comparing international student clients and American student clients, Mitchell, Greenwood and Guglielmi (2007), found that in therapy, international students were more likely than American students to report presenting concerns such as cultural concerns, difficulty expressing feelings, bizarre thoughts or experiences, grief issues, loneliness, difficulty making decisions, and problems with professors. Mood disorders and adjustment disorders, relational problems, anxiety disorders, phase of life problems, acculturation problems, and academic problems were found to be the most frequent diagnoses for international students (Mitchell et al., 2007).

Additionally, to many international students including Chinese students whose first language is not English, have to consistently put conscious effort in processing various types of information in English or in American culture context. And this constant demand can easily cause them cognitive fatigue, mental exhaustion, and burnout (Winkelman, 1994). Moreover, chronic acculturation stress can also cause international students somatic symptoms such as migraines, loss of appetite and sleep, fatigue, and gastrointestinal problems (Liu, 2009; Mori, 2000; Russell et al., 2008).

Underutilization of Counseling Services

In a sharp contrast to the high acculturative stress level and needs for psychological assistance, mental health services have been consistently and significantly underused by international students relative to domestic students (Pedersen, 1991; Bradley et al., 1995; Yakushko et al., 2008; Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015). Moreover, there is a gap between international students who have considered seeking counseling services and those who actually do so (Chen & Lewis, 2011). Less than half of the students who reported having considered

seeking counseling services for stress-related or emotional issues actually used the services (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007). Even among those who seek counseling services, there is a high premature dropout rate. Yakushko and colleagues' archival study (2008) claimed that approximately 60% of international student clients used 5 or fewer individual counseling sessions; 36% of them attended only 1 individual counseling session; and only 10% of international student clients chose to participate in group counseling with attendance ranging between 2 and 22 sessions. However, underutilization and high dropout rate do not suggest international students do not need help. To the opposite, international students were found to be more likely than their U.S. schoolmates to make use of crisis appointments; the endorsement rate of suicidal ideation among international students was found as twice as much as that of U.S. students; they were also more likely to report harassment experiences and were more likely to have been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons (Mitchell et al., 2007). This gap between need and action is a concern (Russell et al., 2008).

Furthermore, Asian international students were found to be less likely than European international students to receive counseling on campus, and for those who used counseling services, Asian students attended fewer sessions than European students did (Mitchell et al., 2007). Being a student from China was a significant predictor of not acting on perceived need for help from the health service (Russell et al., 2008). However, as introduced earlier, it has been consistently verified by empirical studies that European international students, in general, experience less acculturative stress than Asian international students in the U.S. (Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Asian international students not only have a lower utilization rate compared with European international students, they were also found to be significantly less likely to use counseling services than other ethnic group international students

(Hyun, et al., 2007). Even though Asian international students tend to underuse counseling service, such services were found to be helpful to their psychological well-being. For example, Boyer and Sedlacek's study (1989) provided empirical support suggesting that using counseling services both indicated and contributed toward a positive integration of international students' academic and social functioning. Group counseling was found to be helpful to enhance psychological adaptation and coping self-efficacy of international students (Delgado-Romero & Wu, 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2014). Even without meeting a therapist, bibliotherapy using an acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) self-help book was found helpful to improve mental health of international students (Muto, Hayes, & Jeffcoat, 2011). So how can we make sense of this discrepancy?

Contributing Factors Behind Underutilization

There have been quite a few studies investigated the factors that can help to explain the underutilization of counseling services among Asian international students including students from China. Personal stigma associated with psychological disturbance can be an avoidance factor for Asian international students to seek counseling services as well for U.S. students in general (Hyun et al., 2007; Mori, 2000). Personal stigma is defined as an individual's negative stereotypes and prejudices about mental illness (Griffiths, Christensen, Jorm, Evans, & Groves, 2004). Although the stigma of mental illness is common in all cultures, it is much more severe among Asians than among White Europeans and U.S. citizens (Fogel & Ford, 2005). Asian students were also found to have the highest level of personal stigma associated with mental illness when compared with students from other race and ethnic groups on U.S. colleague campus (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009). Furthermore, these stigmas were found to be significantly associated with a lower likelihood of various measures of help seeking

including perceived need and use of psychotropic medication, therapy, and nonclinical sources of support (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Chen and Lewis (2011) investigated East Asian international students' perceptions of therapy. They found many East Asian students had primarily negative views of therapy before they came to the U.S. and many of these negative stereotypes were generated from and reinforced by culture and family of origin, which included seeing therapy as a sign of weakness, having different definitions of sickness, worrying that others would treat them differently, and going to therapy as an excuse for escaping responsibilities. In addition, Chen and Lewis (2001) found through interviews with their participants that therapy resources have been nonexistent or limited in some East Asian communities; therefore, many international students from East Asia were not familiar with counseling or talking therapy. Research showed that international students who are more acculturated to American culture are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward seeking professional counseling services (N. Zhang & Dixon, 2003). In contrast, Chinese international students with a strong Chinese identity were found less likely to seek professional counseling services (Li, Marbley, Bradley, & Lan, 2016). However, value acculturation often occurs at a slower rate than behavioral acculturation (B. Kim et al., 1999). Therefore, stigmas of psychological disturbance and negative notions of therapy under the influence of East Asian cultures and family of origin still exist and can keep influencing students even after entering the U.S. (Chen & Lewis, 2011).

Asian cultures have been reported to value self-control and the restraining of emotions (Leong, 1986; Wei et al., 2012), which may conflict with the counseling's values of verbal self-disclosure and emotional catharsis (Uba, 1994). Yip (2005) suggested that Chinese culture has a tradition of introverted inclinations, which imply the characteristics of valuing self-absorption or

self-demand, but also not being demanding of others or trying to change the external environment. People who grew up in a culture that values internal requirements are more likely to restrain emotions (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2016) and to form a passive egocentric preservation (D. Sue, 2006). Consistent with these notions, Asian cultures are considered to have a tradition of valuing emotional self-control (B. Kim, Atkinson, & Yang 1999; B. Kim et al., 2005). Moreover, keeping problems to themselves may allow Chinese students to save face (Sheu & Fukuyama, 2007) and is more consistent with the forbearance coping style (Moore & Constantine, 2005; Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006) that are important in Chinese culture. Liu (2009) suggested that this introverted nature in culture may help explain why Chinese international students tend to underuse mental health services. Many international students believe that their problems are not sufficiently serious or important enough for treatment (Russell et al., 2008). Even when they are struggling, Chinese international students may believe that they should use their inner willpower to resolve their emotional disturbance in acculturation (Wei et al., 2007) and thus are more likely to seek services when their distress is intolerable and impairment is more significant (Mitchell, et al., 2007). However, some acculturative stressors such as discrimination or language barrier cannot be easily handled by inner sources alone.

In addition to the stigma of and unfamiliarity with counseling, language barrier might be another avoidance factor in cross-cultural counseling (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2016). In Yoon and Jepsen's study (2008), more than half of their Asian international student participants indicated their concern of not being able to communicate effectively in English with their counselor. University counseling centers in the U.S. lack counselors or psychologists who can provide bilingual counseling services (Li et al., 2016). Therefore, in many cases, this language barrier becomes a barrier for mutual understanding between international student clients and their U.S.

therapists. Counselors' use of standard English is considered as a barrier for clients seeking mental health services who do not speak English or are bilingual (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2016). This language barrier might partially explain why international students often place professional assistance at the end of their list of helping resources and would not seek professional assistance until they have exhausted other support systems (Yi, Giseala, & Kishimoto, 2003). Many of them first turn to friends for help, followed by family members and professors before counselors (Bradley et al., 1995).

Moreover, counselor and their practice of counseling and psychology also play a significant role in the underutilization of services. Professional counseling has been characterized as a western or Euro-American conceptualization (Moodley, 1999). The practice of counseling psychology has been criticized as ethnocentric and is not always applicable to people in non-European cultures (Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015). For example, the traditional practice of counseling often uses diagnostic labels to locate the causes of psychological disturbance within the client and thus neglect the factors in the societal-cultural-political context as sources of dysfunction (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). However, as discussed earlier, the changes in the external environment is always one of the main stressors to Chinese international students. To many them, they were members of the majority in China and the sudden change of their social status to a minority after coming to the U.S. might be a very challenging and uncomfortable experience. Therefore, an exclusive emphasis on identifying intrapersonal factors can make counselors lose the opportunity to have a comprehensive understanding of their international student clients, which thus might lead to a premature termination. Fouad (1991) stated that compared to intrapersonal factors, social and environmental factors can be more predictive of international students' acculturative outcome.

A tendency to overemphasize pathology in therapy can be another barrier to international students seeking counseling. Pedersen (1991) claimed that too many studies of international students overemphasized on identifying their adjustment problems and these studies demonstrated a tendency to overemphasize pathology. A pathological perspective may make counselors stereotype international students as problematic and deficient (Yoon & Portman, 2004). This along with the experiences of being discriminated in the U.S. may make international student clients feel patronized in their interactions with counselors. For example, in Chen and Lewis's study (2011), one participant reported her unwillingness to seek therapy as avoiding leaving mental health professionals with an unfavorable impression of her ethnicity. Therefore, it has been suggested that international students be viewed from a developmental perspective rather than from a pathological perspective (Yoon & Portman, 2004). Instead of viewing as intrapersonal pathologies, counselors who practice with a developmental perspective can view the presenting issues of international student clients as a result of a lack of learned skills. The goals of counseling will also be switched from fixing the student and pushing them to assimilate to U.S. culture to facilitating the student's development and fostering their bicultural competence (Yoon & Portman 2004). In addition, a developmental perspective will also help counselors to better acknowledge the unique strengths of their international student clients such as their bilingualism, biculturalism, and having different perspectives. With a better acknowledgment, counselors are able to better empower international students by helping them identify their strengths and their significant roles in helping enrich a diverse educational environment on U.S. campuses (Yoon & Portman, 2004).

Furthermore, university counseling centers can do a better job to make their services visible to international students. Most international students would prefer using the resources

available on campus rather than seeking help from the outside community. Therefore, university counseling centers always work on the front line addressing international students' mental health issues. However, many international students, particularly those who have come to the U.S. recently, are not informed of how to locate the resource (Mori, 2000). In Yoon and Jepsen' study (2008), 50.8% of Asian international student participants endorsed agree or strongly agree with the notion that the university counseling center existed to serve domestic students rather than international students. Even if international students are aware of the counseling services on campus, some of them are reluctant to go to seek help if the services are located in health center or university hospital (Mori, 2008; Robertson et al., 2015). Some of the international students in Robertson et al.'s study (2015) reported that they turned to "western counseling" only after the service was offered through the International Student Center. Therefore, there is a need to conduct outreach to international students that informs them of available services. In addition, psychologists must leave their offices to reach out to international students to make them feel welcome, normalize psychological services and to learn more about the context in which international students live.

In addition to the effort to reach out to international students, the shortage of culturally knowledgeable and sensitive counselors and the insufficient representation of cultural diversity on the staff at university counseling centers might be another obstacle to international students' use of services (Mori, 2000). Over fifty percent of the international student participants in Yoon and Jepsen (2008) study expressed a concern that they would not be able to communicate effectively in English with the counselor and 77% of students expressed a concern that their counselor would not have the sensitivity or expertise to help them because of cultural differences. Current multicultural education for mental health professionals focuses on U.S.

minority populations and excludes international populations, thus creating providers who have not been trained to work effectively with international students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Interpretive Framework

A social constructivist interpretive framework (Schwandt, 1994) guided this study. Social constructivism claims that reality is not an externally objective singular entity but is constructed in the mind of the individual (Hansen, 2004; Schwandt, 1994). Ponterotto (2005) holds that this ontological distinction is the fundamental philosophical difference between positivism and postpositivism of quantitative methods and constructivism-interpretivism of qualitative methods. The reasons why I implemented a social constructivist interpretive framework are: (a) I believed that there could be multiple realities about Chinese international students' acculturation experiences in the U.S. and their perceptions of counseling services on campus. These various realities are constructed through the lived experiences of each individual both in their home culture and in the U.S.; b) I believed that only through interactions such as in-depth interview between researcher and the participants can these realities be reflected, discovered, and excavated; c) my own bias, values, and experiences could not be avoided to influence the research but were bracketed in the process of research. Creswell (2012) claimed that the constructivist worldview often manifests in phenomenological studies, which aim to describe individuals' experiences.

Research Method/Approach

I implemented the transcendental phenomenological research approach (Moustakas, 1994) in this study and investigated the essences of acculturation experiences of six Chinese

international students in the U.S., how they coped with acculturative stress, and how they perceived professional counseling services on campus in the context of acculturation. Transcendental means “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas admits that this state is hardly ever achieved, and thus he emphasizes the importance of epoche, which is the step researchers take to describe their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others (Creswell, 2012). Meaning is the core of transcendental phenomenology of science (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). As one of the major approaches of phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology aims to acquire and collect data that explicates the essences of human experience and it has become the most widely used phenomenological approach in the field of psychology (Creswell, 2012). Moustakas (1994) suggests the procedures for conducting phenomenological research consist of several essential steps: (1) identifying a phenomenon to study; (2) bracketing out the researcher’s experiences, (3) collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon; (4) analyzing the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combining the statements into themes; (5) developing a textual description of what participants experienced and a structural description of how they experienced it; and (6) combing these two descriptions to form a description of an overall essence of the experience. I followed this procedure in conducting this research.

Sample and Recruitment

The six co-researchers in this study were international students who identify as Chinese and were enrolled at a public university in southeast of the U.S. by the time they completed the first-round interview. Students of any gender, sexual identities, programs of study, lengths of

residency in the U.S., and with or without an experience of seeking counseling on campus were welcomed.

I recruited these six co-researchers by sending out a recruitment email to the Chinese Student Association at the university and asked the Association to forward the email to their members through their list-serve. In the email, I included detailed information about what the study was about, its purpose, method, anonymity, and how the data would be used. Six students who showed interest in participating in the study contacted me through email. All six participants were from mainland China and spoke Mandarin as their first language. Five of them identified as female and one identified as male. Two of them were undergraduate students and four were graduate students at the time they completed the first-round interview. They were in various programs of study including finance, statistics, mass media study, health medical journalism, educational psychology, marine science, and undecided. Their lengths of residence in the U.S. ranged from 8 months to 3.5 years by the time of the first-round interview and ranged from 2.5 to 6 years. Table 1 presents detailed information of these co-researchers.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Co-researchers

Pseudonyms	Gender	Major	Degree
Cheng Si	Female	Educational Psychology	Graduate
Cao Lin	Female	Mass Media Study & Health Medical Journalism	Graduate
Wang Lei	Female	Statistics & Finance	Undergrad
Jia Ling	Female	Educational Psychology	Graduate
Li Jie	Male	Undecided	Undergrad
Li Na	Female	Marine Science	Graduate

Data Collection

First, I conducted a one-hour in-depth semi-structured individual interview in Mandarin with each co-researcher in spring 2016. Goals of this interview were to establish rapport and allow co-researchers' experiential data to emerge on its own. To ensure that every co-researcher was provided with similar opportunities to address certain topic areas, pre-established questions was used to facilitate participants' description, thoughts, and feelings of their experiences. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their acculturation experiences in the U.S.; how they cope with acculturative stress; their perceptions of counseling services; and their experiences in counseling if they had (see Appendix B).

Second, I transcribed our first-round interview into Chinese and provided the transcription to each co-researcher respectively at the beginning of the second-round individual interview, which were completed in spring 2018. Co-researchers were provided time to review their transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the data. In the second interview, I asked co-researchers to elaborate on the changes if there were any that they wanted to make about the transcriptions of the first interview. Moreover, each co-researcher and I had a chance to discuss the areas raised in the first interview that either them or I thought needed further exploration or clarification. It was noteworthy that the U.S. has experienced a dramatic change in its sociopolitical environment due to the government general election in between our two rounds of interview, which might have had impacts on some co-researchers' experiences and feelings in the U.S. as international students. Therefore, in the second-round interview, I also asked each co-researcher to describe how they had experienced the sociopolitical changes and the consequential impact on their life in the U.S. In order to protect anonymity, pseudonyms were used in transcriptions.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

I followed the method proposed by Moustakas (1994) to analyze data for significant statements, meaning units, textual and structural description based on the transcriptions of the interviews. The concrete steps will be as follows:

First, I transcribed the audio records of both rounds of interview into Chinese. Each co-researcher completed two rounds of interview. Therefore, there were altogether twelve transcriptions.

The Second step was horizonalizaton (Moustakas, 1994), which was a phase that I read through each transcription carefully, treated every statement as having equal value, and listed every expression relevant to the experience and the topic of this study.

The third step was reduction and elimination, at which I determined the invariant constituents (i.e. nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping significant expressions and statements that are mapping the topic as essentially as possible). To determine the Invariant Constituents, I tested each expression for two requirements: 1) Does it contain a moment of the experience of acculturation or counseling or an element of perceptions of counseling services that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding them? 2) Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, I kept these expressions and statements for subsequent analyses; if not, I eliminated them. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions and statements were also eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms (Moustakas, 1994).

Fourth, I clustered the invariant constituents (i.e., nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping significant expressions or statements) into larger meaning units or themes based on a rigorous comparison and consideration. In this phase, the larger meaning units and themes were generated into English for the purpose of subsequent analyses and writing.

The fifth step was final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application, which was a validation check. Specifically, I examined the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of each co-researcher by asking myself two questions: 1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? 2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? If they were not explicit or compatible, they were not relevant to the co-researcher's experience and should be deleted.

Sixth, using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, I constructed an individual textual description for each co-researcher and then a composite textual description for the whole group of co-researchers about their acculturation experiences in the U.S. and their perceptions of and/or experiences with counseling services at their American university. I also included verbatim examples from the interview transcriptions in this part.

Seventh, I constructed an individual structural description of the experience and perceptions based on the individual textual description and imaginative variation to describe "how" these experiences and perceptions were formed. Then, based on the total six individual structural descriptions, I also developed a composite structural description for the whole group of co-researchers. According to Moustakas (1994, p. 101), "The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the "how" that speaks to conditions that illuminate the "what" of experience. How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?"

Last, based on the two composite descriptions (i.e., composite textual description and composite structural description), I developed a synthesis description, representing the group as a whole, to describe the meanings and essences of their acculturation experience in the U.S., their perceptions of counseling services, and their experiences in counseling if they had ever sought such services at the university.

Subjectivity Statement

As a Chinese international doctoral student in counseling psychology in the U.S., my interest in the psychological wellbeing of Chinese international students inspired me to conduct this research. During the whole investigation process, I acted as the research designer, interviewer, data analyst, and finding presenter as well. Within a constructivist theoretical framework, I was put in a position as co-constructor of meaning, and as integral to the interpretation of the data. Therefore, I tried my best to strike a balance between these roles. In order to maintain such a balance, I kept self-reflective and was aware of my own acculturation experiences in the U.S., my perceptions of counseling, and my implicit assumptions and predispositions of this topic and how they influenced my research.

I am currently a fourth-year doctoral candidate in counseling psychology at the university where the co-researchers were at. I have lived in the U.S. for five and half years so far. Before I came to the U.S, I studied at Nanjing University in China for a bachelor's degree in psychology. Before college, I had little knowledge about psychology or counseling. Nobody in my family has an education background in psychology and nobody except me has ever sought counseling services. My mother has suffered from neurasthenia for many years but has never sought therapy. She would rather rely on food regimen or psychotropic drugs than see a counselor. Before college, I thought psychologists could read people's mind and this thought scared me

because I did not want my mind to be read by another person. I also did not know where to seek counseling if I need it. I thought seeking counseling is not something people would like to share with friends because of a risk of being negatively judged. I also did not know the difference between psychiatric services and counseling services until I studied psychology in college.

In Chinese, counselor or therapist are often translated as 心理医生, which literally means mental health doctor. Therefore, it was uncommon to hear people ask me if I could prescribe medicine after they heard that I am studying counseling psychology. I still remember my high school classmates asked me if I could read their minds in our first gathering after one semester in college. Portrayals of mental health professionals in U.S. TV shows or movies such as Lie to Me and The Silence of the Lambs seem to play a significant role in forming the imaginations of counseling among many Chinese people including me.

My knowledge about and perceptions of counseling gradually changed after I became a psychology major in college. A systematic training of psychology in college helped me understand that psychology is not psychics and it is related to the daily life of all of us. As an applied branch of psychology, counseling provides people with an opportunity to work with a psychotherapist on goals of regulating emotional disturbance, improving communication and coping skills of daily distress, gaining insights about life, and promoting behavioral change and mental health. Therefore, I learned that people who seek counseling are not necessarily insane. As a part of training, I sought counseling when I was in college and found it very helpful to my adjustment in college. As a part of training, I also did a counseling practicum for two years during which I provided individual and group counseling services to other fellow students at my university. The practicum program was called peer counseling, which was initiated and supervised by Prof. Karen Gabe, who is from the U.S. We had difficulty promoting our program

at first due to students' unfamiliarity with counseling. However, we were still able to have several student clients in the end. Many of them were more curious about and interested in learning counseling itself.

These experiences with counseling promoted my decision to seek further training in the field of counseling psychology abroad. I decided to come to the U.S. because counseling psychology was still underdeveloped in China in 2012. Currently, U.S. psychologists are the most influential and leading force in the field of counseling psychology worldwide. In China, majority of our textbooks were written by U.S. psychologists. Most of the influential figures in this filed in China have an education background in the U.S. Even the most interesting courses I took were taught by U.S. professors. It seemed that I had a lot of choices of country for studying abroad; however, in fact, I did not. I think this reflects the current development of the field of counseling psychology and also reflects the political, economic, and cultural power differential in the world.

As an international student, I have lived in the U.S. for over five years. I love my experiences in the U.S. and I am appreciative of the support from my family in China and friends, cohort members, and mentors here in the U.S. However, acculturative stress has never gone away in my life in the U.S. I still remember the awkwardness the first time when I heard an U.S. student greeting me with asking "what's up?". I had no clue about how to answer it. I also remember how homesick I felt my first semester in the U.S. The English barrier has always been a challenge to me. It still takes me way more time than my American cohort members to do readings and writings for course work. Therefore, I remember I did not have weekend during my years in my master's program because in order to finish homework I had to spend whole weekend studying; otherwise I could not finish my homework and would fail exams. I also

experienced language discrimination at a grocery store where I was teased because I could not say the names of fish in English. At that moment, I felt shamed and angry, and I also felt helpless because I did not know how to defend myself. Even to argue for myself required a good competence of English. Although my U.S. friends and cohort members are nice and friendly, sometimes I still feel hesitant about hanging out with them because I often feel cognitively overwhelmed by the content of our conversation that I do not know and thus easily feel exhausted after socializing. Like many of my Chinese friends here, homesickness, discrimination, academic stress due to language barrier and unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system, struggles in social life due to English barrier and unfamiliarity with American culture are the main acculturative stress that I have been facing here in the U.S.

I am fully aware of the available counseling services on campus. However, I have not sought on-campus counseling services in the U.S. partially because I received a lot of great social support from my family, friends, cohort members, and mentors. The other reason is because I am doing my counseling practicum at the university and thus to avoid the potential risk of participating in inappropriate multiple relationships, I decided to not use the resources on campus.

My training experience in counseling psychology in the U.S. has changed my perceptions and understandings of this field. The biggest change is related to multicultural competency in counseling. Before, I thought everybody can benefit from counseling in all circumstances. The training experience I have had in the U.S. has challenged this thought. Now I understand that a counselor's multicultural competency plays a significant role in successful cross-cultural counseling. Those counselors who cannot understand the unique stress of international students not only cannot work effectively with them but also can potentially bring more stress or even

harm to international students. I have several Chinese friends either at my university or at other universities in the U.S. turned to me asking me suggestions about how to deal with their own or their friends' psychological distress in the U.S. Some of them mentioned a difficulty locating counseling services in their institutions and some others told me their unsatisfying experiences with their U.S. counselors.

Another factor promoted me to do this study was a tragedy occurred last year with a Chinese international graduate student at my university. The student was found deceased in a wooded area near a river two days after Chinese New Year. Police investigation suggested that the manner of death was self-inflicted. This tragedy made me and many of my Chinese friends very shocked and sad. It also elicited a discussion of mental health in the international student community at the university. Moreover, I have been serving as a committee member on the International Student Advisory Board since fall 2016. I have heard from many international students their appeals for more and better mental health support from the university. All these experiences made me believe that there are some ways that we can better serve international students and their mental health needs.

I assume many Chinese international students might have some common acculturative experiences and coping strategies and might have some common assumptions or perceptions of professional counseling services. However, not all of them have a good awareness of their mental health needs or are familiar with counseling. Some of them might have similar stigmas associated with counseling as I had before. If someone thinks counselors can read minds, the person might be more reserved in terms of what to share with me in the interview because I am a counselor. However, in my interviews, I will not confront these beliefs because my confrontation might interfere with participants' authentic answers. In addition, I am aware that as a counselor, I

hope campus-based counseling services can better reach to and serve international students. This is one of the main purposes of this study. However, I will not advocate counseling in our interview because it is not the purpose of this study. These are my subjective bias, values, and experiences that I can think of at current stage of proposing this study. I expect to have more reactions and emerging thoughts and awareness in the process of doing my study.

In order to better bracketing my subjectivity, I kept a self-reflective journal during the whole research process from the inception to the completion of the investigation. In the journal, I kept an ongoing record of my experiences, reactions, and emerging awareness that came to the fore during the study (Morrow, 2005). Different from a quantitative approach, my values were not deliberately suppressed in this study. It was important to make it clear what value I had and its influence along with the comparatively objective information obtained from my co-researchers.

As mentioned above, an obvious characteristic of this study is the fact that I, as a researcher, am also an "insider" with respect to the topic investigated in both areas (e.g., Chinese international student and mental health professional). This helped me better connect with my co-researchers and understand their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. However, it was also important for me to fairly represent participants' realities rather than mine. Some of the strategies that were used to enforce the co-researchers' realities were asking for clarification and delving more deeply into the meanings of them at interview and data analysis phases. In order to explore participants' genuine reactions toward counseling, I did no share my thoughts about counseling in interview.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Cheng Si

Individual Textual Description

Cheng Si had mixed feelings toward studying abroad before she started her journey. On one hand, she expected to experience a different culture, meet with different people, and improve her English skills. On the other hand, Cheng Si was nervous about the uncertainties of her journey. Specifically, the uncertainty whether the upcoming journey would bring a good change or a bad one. When asked to elaborate on the good and bad changes, Cheng Si said, “My knowledge about the U.S. was only based on TV shows. U.S. only existed in my imagination. I had no idea what might happen when I am in the U.S. It might be a good opportunity for me to have more experiences and to be better, stronger, and realize my dreams. However, I also worried that what if it turns out that life in the U.S. is different than my expectations or I fail to deal with the stress. It’s like I was facing a challenge and I failed and lost, which is bad.”

Cheng Si expected herself to be integrated into the U.S. culture and American life when she first came to the U.S. Specifically, she expected to make many American friends, go to the places where they usually hang out, learn about their life styles, and behave like them. “I thought that if I could make many American friends, I would be proud of myself and feel more self-confident.”

Overall, Cheng Si had a smooth transition from China to the U.S. at the beginning with the help and support from her host family in the U.S. According to Cheng Si, there are some

Christian families in Athens that have a connection with the Chinese Student Association at the university and would take some incoming international students each year and become their host family in the U.S. Cheng Si initiated contact with her host family before leaving for the U.S. through the Chinese Student Association. She stayed in their house for a few days after she arrived in Athens before she moved into her own apartment. Cheng Si appreciated her host family's hospitality, help, and support. "They tried to introduce Christianity to me, but they were not pushy. They respected my habit and cultural tradition." Cheng Si still kept in contact with her host family after she moved out.

As an international student coming from a culture that's distant from the U.S., Cheng Si experienced difficulties in socializing and communicating with Americans due to a language barrier and cultural difference. For example, Cheng Si mentioned that growing up in two different cultures, she and her American friends see different movies and listen to different music. Therefore, it's difficult to have "resonance" together in conversations. Due to the communication barrier, Cheng Si felt a lack of confidence in expressing herself in communications with Americans. She was afraid that people might judge her because she could not express her thoughts clearly. "Lacking this self-confidence made me feel inferior and set a limitation for myself. It felt like I built up a ceiling for myself, which blocked me from achieving cultural adjustment or integrating into American society. If I had this self-confidence, I could overcome the barrier. Nobody but me set up this hurdle." Communication barriers and lack of confidence prevented Cheng Si from having more personal and meaningful conversations with American friends, which is a prerequisite for the development of a closer and more meaningful relationship. "They [American friends] are very nice, they would say "It's okay, your English is very good." But I still couldn't find my confidence." "Most of the time, my conversation with

Americans are just most simple and descriptive dialogues. We won't talk about our feelings or any deeper or complicated emotional needs."

Cheng Si observed a difference of self-confidence between her and her American fellow students. "I think I have a comparative self-confidence, which means the level of my self-confidence would change based on who I am with and the situation I am in. If the other person is excellent, I will immediately feel that I am small or weak. It changes in different contexts…The Americans who I encountered with left me an impression that their self-cognitions are stable and consistent across different environments. When they meet a person, who is more knowledgeable about or experienced with something they won't have difficulty admitting they know less and asking for help. When they meet with people who are less knowledgeable they will also help the other person patiently."

Communication with Americans was not easy to Cheng Si. Therefore, Cheng Si started to change her acculturative strategy to engage more in communication and relationships with other Chinese international students at the university. Cheng Si started to think about what integrating into a culture should look like and what the standard of a successful cultural integration is. "I realized that integrating into American culture does not necessarily mean that I have to hang out with Americans every day. What is most important is that I live happily." Cheng Si also said, "Later, I became aware of the limitations of the goal of integrating myself into America. For example, I have to give up something or change some of my behaviors and I have to force myself to hang out with Americans." Instead of having fun with more American friends, it is more important for Cheng Si to find her research interests and to achieve academic success. Cheng Si would rather go with the flow and enjoy her personal growth. Cheng Si also found that

many Americans she encountered respected her habit and culture, which solidified her choice to keep being who she is rather than force herself to change.

As an international student, Cheng Si was also facing academic challenges and had stress from self-expectations. Cheng Si's work load at school was heavy, and therefore, she spent most of her time studying at school. Since her major was related to statistics, she spent a lot of time working on statistics problems and thus did not have much opportunity to communicate with other fellow students. Additionally, Cheng Si had difficulty understanding lectures in English at first. She also had no background in statistics. Therefore, she was anxious and stressed out at the beginning of her study in her program. Although Cheng Si was able to pass her classes with a decent grade, she wished that she could learn more from her classes and had a better understanding of the content. Moreover, Cheng Si experienced a cultural difference in her classes in terms of the way her professors taught. It was easier for her to follow her Korean professor whose thought process was more similar to Cheng Si's compared to some American professors whose train of thought was more typical Western, more creative, and more jumping. Cheng Si expected herself to become a productive scholar and working on this goal was stressful. Cheng Si was afraid of exposing her weakness to her professors at first. However, she received support and encouragement from professors in her program. She never felt judged by her professors when she asked "stupid" questions. This support and encouragement from professors helped Cheng Si better adjust to the academic environment in her program.

Cheng Si experienced a difference of education between the U.S. and China. For example, Cheng Si encountered a challenge in thinking independently or thinking of and about oneself in the context of what one is studying. She said, "Compared to Chinese higher education, the education in the U.S. emphasizes more on the development of each individual. You study

what you want, and professors give you support. Hopefully, you can change the world through your work. It feels like superhero movies…You must have your own thoughts and ideas about your study, which has been challenging to me. When I first came here, professors asked me what my interests are. I didn't know how to answer because I didn't have an interest. Many American doctoral students can talk a lot about their ideas, but I couldn't. Here in the U.S., you need to strive for what you want, you need to state what you want. I am not used to doing so. I don't have the courage to do so. I would feel embarrassed if I do so. For example, it was so hard for me to ask my professor to write me a letter of recommendation."

Furthermore, Cheng Si also experienced a difficulty in food adjustment. Cheng Si missed authentic Chinese food living in Athens, GA. There are few options of authentic Chinese restaurants in town. Therefore, Cheng Si had to spend a lot of time cooking. Otherwise, she could only eat out at American restaurants, but the food could hardly make Cheng Si happy.

In terms of acculturative and coping strategies, Cheng Si tried to observe how Americans behaved or reacted in certain situations. When she was stressed out, she would seek support from her friends at the university who were also international students from China or talk to friends and parents in China on the phone or social media. Cheng Si usually would receive different responses from her friends when she talked to them about her stress or feelings. "Some of them would encourage me by saying "It's okay, slow down, things will get better" or "This is not important if you look at it from a long run." Some other friends would try to help me solve the problem by asking me where my problems are and lead me to find a solution. And my parents would ask me to quit my study and go back to China, I know they were joking." No matter what kind of responses she could receive from her friends and family, Cheng Si thought their listening, company, and support were helpful and thus she was grateful.

Cheng Si not only observed how Americans behaved but also paid attention to how other Chinese international students acted. Cheng Si found two role models in her program. One of them was also a Chinese international student and the other person was a professor from China. Cheng Si saw them speaking English slowly but fluently. Because they spoke slowly, they were able to speak more confidently and to express their thoughts more clearly. To Cheng Si, instead of caring too much about others' perceptions, these two role models were focusing more on what they were doing such as research and were willing to share their ideas with others. Therefore, Cheng Si decided to try the same strategy. Seeing other Chinese international students and scholars being successful and confident also encouraged Cheng Si to change her acculturative strategy from integrating herself into the so-called American culture to more accepting her own Chinese cultural identity and being who she is. "I saw some very confident and successful Chinese here. They didn't force themselves to change too much in the U.S. Instead, it felt like they were able to be themselves freely. I think this is cool to stay in your comfort zone. You know what you want…Integration into American society is not the only standard of being successful."

In general, the steps Cheng Si typically took to deal with acculturative stress were trying to solve problems by herself first; then seeking help from friends and family; if that was still not enough, she would try to solve the problem again by herself. "I won't seek professional mental health help until my distress is really severe and I can't handle it by myself. It [seeking professional help] is usually my last option."

Cheng Si said that she was sad to hear that a fellow Chinese international student killed himself a few days after Chinese New Year at the university. Cheng Si said, "I think if the student could receive some mental health services it might be helpful to him."

Cheng Si also shared her reactions to the current sociopolitical environment in the U.S. Specifically, Cheng Si felt that the environment became less friendly and more antiforeign since the new administration. Cheng Si said that she was anxious when she heard that the tax reform might ask graduate students who have assistantships to pay more taxes. Cheng Si said that financial strain has always been a stress to her studying in the U.S. In addition, she was concerned that it might be more challenging to find a job in the U.S. as an alien and might be treated unfairly in the job market.

Cheng Si had never thought about seeking mental health services when she was studying abroad, and thus had no experience with it in the U.S. However, Cheng Si said that she would be open to seeking professional mental health services if she had a need and she would also recommend and support her friends to seek such help if they need it.

Although Cheng Si denied any bias against mental health or seeking professional mental health services herself, she saw a stigma toward this topic that is ubiquitous in China. Cheng Si said, “I feel like many people think it [having mental health problems and seeking professional mental health services] is not acceptable. Some people might be able to accept the fact that they have mental health problems but other people around them and their parents in particular can’t accept it. Many people don’t have objective knowledge about counseling. They might think it is a scary place and assume the person is insane…I’ve also seen some news report about people who have severe mental problems. In the news, they were portraited as insane and killing people, etc. I want to say that their homicide can’t be easily explained solely by their psychiatric diagnoses. You need to explain why they developed these mental disorders. Some news reports in China might leave the audience a biased and negative impression about mental health

problems." Cheng Si mentioned that if her parents hear someone's kid has clinical depression, they might think that the whole family would be hopeless.

However, Cheng Si also mentioned that in the recent years, there are more and more articles about publicity of mental health that are written and posted by professionals in this field so that people can read on Chinese social media. Cheng Si said, "There are more and more people who share their experiences with mental health on Chinese social media such as WeChat and on traditional media such as news reports and talk shows…I feel like people with mental diseases were isolated from us before. They were locked in psychiatric hospitals. Now, I feel I've started to know more about them. They don't feel as scary as I imagined after learning more about them."

Since Cheng Si took psychology training courses, she had more knowledge about counseling than ordinary people and saw the importance of this service to some people. She thought that counseling might help people to look at things and their life experiences from different perspectives. In addition, Cheng Si thought that if people can seek professional help timely, many problems can be solved quickly. She was also aware of the difference between talking to a therapist and talking to a friend. Specifically, Cheng Si thought of a therapist as a professional who is not involved in a client's life, and who can use different theoretical approaches to help the client find the answers to their problems or change their thoughts in the right way. Therefore, in terms of her expectations toward counseling, Cheng Si expected that her therapist would objectively help to pinpoint the "errors in logic" she might have that lead to her struggles and change her perspectives.

Cheng Si also mentioned a few potential barriers for her to seek counseling services on campus in the U.S. First of all, Cheng Si was unaware of the resources of services on campus.

Second, Cheng Si was concerned about a potential language barrier between her and an American therapist in communication in English in therapy. She preferred seeing a therapist in Mandarin because she believed that it would be easier to express herself such as her feelings and emotions in Mandarin. “I think some emotions are quite complicated. But to me, the most often used English vocabulary about feelings and emotions are happy, sad, and etc. They are very general and can’t convey my thoughts as accurately as I want.” Third, Cheng Si did not know how to schedule an appointment for counseling services. She said, “I don’t know how to schedule a counseling appointment; therefore, I will have to figure this out first, which I am afraid of being troublesome…I am also concerned if there are any terms that I don’t understand.”

In terms of the potential benefits Cheng Si could think of from seeking counseling services, she mentioned a potential improvement in knowledge about self through self-reflection in counseling. Cheng Si said, “I think it will help a person better understand themselves. I don’t think therapists will instill a value or lifestyle to clients. I think therapists will help clients know better about themselves, so they can better live in the society and better respond to their life experiences. Clients might have some problems with their thoughts before. Through talking and self-reflecting in therapy under the guidance of a therapist, they can think through their struggles, gain insights into themselves, and become clearer about how to cope and how to live.”

Cheng Si gave a few suggestions to improve mental health services to Chinese international students at her university. Specifically, Cheng Si suggested that the university and the mental health clinics specifically do a better job to reach out to international students at the university and let them know what mental health services they can provide to students. Moreover, Cheng Si mentioned the importance of word of mouth marketing among Chinese international students at the university. Therefore, if the clinics can develop a liaison with the

Chinese Student Association or the International Student Life Office, it might be more efficient for their services to get publicity in this population. Cheng Si said that in this case, the Chinese Student Association or the International Student Life Office can be a bridge between Chinese international students and the mental health clinics on campus. Additionally, Cheng Si also hoped that the scheduling process for mental health services won't be too complicated. Furthermore, Cheng Si also mentioned that within-group difference among Chinese international students in the U.S. based on level of education, visa status, age, region of origin in China, etc. She thought that these various factors can impact people's acculturative experiences in different ways, which clinicians who work with Chinese international students need to be aware of.

Individual Structural Description

Cheng Si was looking forward to "融入美国文化" (infusing and integrating into the culture in the U.S.). This expectation seems to be related to a belief she held that the U.S. is more advanced compared to China in many areas. This belief seems to be formed under the influence of the education Cheng Si received in China. She said, "We received the education in China since we were little that Western developed countries are more advanced, so we need to learn from them. For example, TV news in China often report Chinese people's bad public manners. Sometimes the news will compare Chinese with people from Western developed countries. I feel that I have been infused with the belief that Western countries are better." Holding such belief, Cheng Si looked forward to integrating into American culture by making many American friends, going to places where they hang out, learning their life styles, and behaving like them.

However, holding this belief seemed to impact Cheng Si's confidence in interactions and communications with Americans. She was self-conscious. According to Cheng Si, her self-confidence varies in different contexts with different people. If she thought someone was better

than her, she would be less self-confident in their relationship. Therefore, believing that the U.S. is more advanced or better than China, Cheng Si was self-conscious when she was interacting with Americans, concerned they would judge her English skills and worrying if she behaved inappropriately even though her American classmates and American friends were encouraging and non-judgmental. Cheng Si said, “Nobody but I set up this hurdle.” Moreover, Cheng Si said, “I thought that if I could make many American friends, I would be proud of myself and feel more self-confident.” At first, Cheng Si’s self-confidence in the U.S. seemed to be greatly determined by how much she could be Americanized.

The academic challenge and stress Cheng Si experienced in the U.S. might be partially attributed to the language barrier, but it might also be caused by the difference of education between China and the U.S. Cheng Si described the higher education she received in China as an “assembly line.” She said, “I feel the goal of education in China is to teach you the right answer, while in the U.S., the goal of education, at least in my field, focuses more on the creative process in which you find your answer.” Cheng Si grew up in a small city in Gansu, which is an inner province in northwest of China. Compared to those big cities such as Shanghai, she felt there were less educational resources in her hometown and the education she received did not value the cultivation of students’ interests, hobbies, critical thinking, or creative thinking. When asked about the influence of the education she received in China on her study in the U.S., Cheng Si said, “I often feel that I don’t know which direction to go academically here in the U.S. Although I complain about the “assembly line” type education back home, I didn’t need to think independently in that system, which was less stressful. What you needed to do was to follow the directions that you were told and then you would be able to graduate. However, you can’t do the same thing here in the U.S.”

Cheng Si demonstrated more knowledge about counseling compared to some other participants even though she had no experience of receiving counseling services. This is because Cheng Si passed a licensing examination and was granted a license to practice counseling as an "assistant psychological counselor" in China although she had never practiced counseling. Cheng Si was curious about counseling when she was an undergraduate in college in China, so she took some training courses organized by a local training school that claimed to have qualified trainers. Cheng Si saw a problem of lacking rigorousness in the licensure system in China based on her own experience. For example, Cheng Si said it did not require any clinical practicum hours to be eligible to take the licensing exam. In China, individuals with a minimum educational qualification of a junior college degree in any major could enroll in a government-sanctioned, 200-hour, continuing training course and on completion take a licensing examination (Hou, Leung & Duan, 2009).

Cao Lin

Individual Textural Description

Cao Lin was pursuing master's degrees in Mass Media Study and Health Medical Journalism at the time she completed our first interview. Cao Lin experienced lots of cultural differences in the U.S. compared to China, which required her to adjust. However, cross-cultural adjustment was not always easy. Socialization was one of the areas that Cao Lin faced the biggest challenge in adjustment. She identified as an introvert and did not party very often when she was in China; therefore, she did not know how to socialize or make friends with Americans after coming to the U.S. finding partying and hanging out at bars is one of the most common ways for people to socialize in college. She said, "I don't know how to start a conversation or join in a conversation with people. I don't know how to chat with people. I think this might be

due to a language barrier, but also might be related to the difference of interpersonal styles." For example, she felt that Americans are more direct and open in communication compared to Chinese. Cao Lin also stated that when American friends talk about American politics, she did not know how to join their conversation as a foreigner even if she had some interest. In contrast, Cao Lin felt more confident in establishing relationships with Chinese fellows because she does have the language barrier and is more familiar with the social norms and the common interpersonal styles in Chinese culture.

In addition, Cao Lin was facing academic challenges, which brought her stress. One of the courses Cao Lin took in the fall semester of her second year required her to interview people and write a report. However, Cao Lin experienced anxiety and therefore she kept procrastinating. She sat in front of her laptop doing nothing for four days before the deadline. She could not concentrate and had anxiety toward picking up her phone and contacting her interviewee. Cao Lin wrote an email to her professor the day before the deadline and described the hardship she was facing. The professor thus invited Cao Lin to her office to have a meeting. At the meeting, Cao Lin was referred to counseling by her professor.

While facing the aforementioned acculturative stress, Cao Lin also had social support both in the U.S. and in China. The professor who referred Cao Lin to counseling provided her emotional and academic support, which meant a lot to Cao Lin. In addition, Cao Lin also had a few close friends at the university who she could talk to and ask for support especially a friend who was studying psychology. However, Cao Lin was reluctant to talk about mental health with friends due to a concern about her own privacy and others' judgement as well as a belief that talking with friends could not help her problem solving. Sometimes, their conversation made her

realize that everyone is feeling helpless to some extent as an international student, so she would rather not pass more “negative influence” to her friends.

Moreover, Cao Lin received support from her parents in China. However, Cao Lin was hesitant to tell them too much about her stress in the U.S. because she did not want them to worry. Cao Lin tried to tell her parents once that she sought psychotherapy in the U.S. However, it was hard for her parents to accept that their daughter sought mental health services. Therefore, the sequence of coping for Cao Lin was trying to “digest” the problem by herself first; then reach out to seek help from friends; if talking to friends didn’t help, she would turn back to herself and try to solve the problem on her own again. Cao Lin won’t seek professional help including mental health services until the problem is too severe to control. “Now looking back at that four days of sitting in front of my computer doing nothing, it feels so scary.”

Cao Lin also mentioned her reactions to the suicide of a Chinese international student at her university. Cao Lin saw the student about two months before his suicide at a dinner party with some other Chinese international students. Cao Lin recalled that the person looked very depressed and remembered that she was shocked when she heard of his death. Additionally, Cao Lin also disagreed with the way the university dealt with this incident. “I tried to search the news about his death on the university website, but I found nothing. This didn’t make me feel good. I think the school could have dealt with the incident more appropriately and school administrators should have paid more attention to the mental health of international students.” Cao Lin thought that the university could have used it as an opportunity to help international students increase their awareness of their mental health. For example, Cao Lin said, “The university can send emails to students regularly to remind them of the mental health resources on campus or do other things to make more students realize the importance of their psychological wellbeing.”

Cao Lin had an experience with counseling by the time she completed our first interview. However, her first counseling experience in the U.S. was not as good as she expected. First of all, Cao Lin delayed seeking professional help until the severity of her problem was high. When she decided to take the action to seek counseling, she felt that she almost “lost control” of herself. In addition, Cao Lin was unclear about the difference between counseling and psychiatric service. She feared medication would be suggested to treat her mental health problems and she expressed a concern about relying on medication. Moreover, to Cao Lin, taking psychiatric medication would mean her problem was too severe to manage by herself, thus she would never be able to get rid of the problem without medication. She had a friend who took psychiatric medication before and had heard about bad side effects.

Her professor confronted her thoughts about mental health and tried to help Cao Lin understand that it is common for people to feel mentally sick. However, it took Cao Lin another two days before picking up a phone to contact a mental health clinic on campus. She was scared of facing her problem and making phone calls in English. Finally, Cao Lin made a phone call to the clinic after realizing that “I must solve the problem, but I really can’t deal with it by myself, so I really need some help.” However, Cao Lin was shocked and frustrated to hear that she had to wait for about a month before being assigned to a therapist. Cao Lin contacted a few other clinics on campus but was informed of similar wait lists. One of the clinics she called told Cao Lin that they would call her back; however, Cao Lin never heard back from them again.

Cao Lin’s first real counseling experience was different from what she imagined or expected. First of all, Cao Lin realized that the speed of the progress in counseling was much slower than what she expected. “It wasn’t a quick diagnosis. You got to talk with your therapist for a long time.” This slow treatment process together with not knowing and lack of control

meant uncertainty to Cao Lin. “I was coming for help, but I wasn’t told if I received any diagnoses. This made me feel uncertain. I was not sure how severe my problem was and whether it was solvable or not.” Second, Cao Lin was looking for more concrete guidance and suggestions from therapy, which was not something her therapist provided in their first session. Third, Cao Lin experienced a language and communication barrier in therapy with her white male therapist. “There were so many subtle differences of my feelings and emotions that I could not express well in English. My English vocabulary about emotions was limited to angry, happy, sad, and upset.” “Also, actually, I didn’t quite understand what aspects he wanted to know about me. I didn’t know whether I answered his questions or not. At the same time, I was worried that if I missed something important in my answer that might impact his evaluation about me. For example, when he asked me about my recent mood, I could answer in two brief sentences or I could give a long talk. Therefore, if he didn’t respond to my answer even just by simply saying “I got you” rather than jumping into the next prepared questions on his form I wouldn’t know whether my answer met his expectation.” This communication barrier made Cao Lin anxious.

In addition, Cao Lin felt that her therapist could not understand her living and educational experiences in China; which, however, Cao Lin thought was a major source of her current stress in the U.S. and which she wanted to fully address in therapy. Cao Lin’s therapist was leading the conversation to focus on Cao Lin’s academics and recommended Cao Lin to see another therapist who specialized in working on procrastination and academic issues. Cao Lin tried to give her therapist feedback about her opinion on work direction. However, her therapist did not respond well to Cao Lin’s feedback, and Cao Lin wondered if it was because of a language barrier. These aforementioned experiences made Cao Lin feel a lack of mutual understanding between her and her therapist. Cao Lin also wished that her therapist could understand that it was

challenging for her to make a phone call in English. Cao Lin never contacted that therapist, who she was referred to. Moreover, Cao Lin noticed that her therapist would ask some of the same questions again in the second session. All these aforementioned experiences in counseling made Cao Lin question whether her therapist was really willing to help her.

Although Cao Lin's first counseling experience was different from her expectation and was not as good as what she expected, she still identified several benefits she received from counseling. Frist of all, this counseling experience helped Cao Lin break some stereotypes about mental health issues and their relationship with herself. "Making the decision to seek counseling meant that I started to admit and face my problem. I had never thought that I would have a psychological problem such as depression. I used to think that once someone has depressive symptoms, it means the problem is already too severe to be managed by themselves." This counseling experience helped Cao Lin understand that actually everyone can have a mental health issue sometime. Second, this counseling experience helped objectively evaluate Cao Lin's mental health status in a comparison with others. "It helped me know where I am compared to other students on a continuum of mental health. For example, how severe my problem is; is my problem a common issue among fellow students; is it treatable?" This comparison between self and other students was meaningful to Cao Lin. Cao Lin noted that these are the benefits that she could not get from talking to nonprofessionals. Third, this experience helped Cao Lin pay more attention to herself and helped increase her awareness of the need of her own mental health and needs of people around her. She paid more attention to articles about psychology and mental health on social media after counseling and would think more about her childhood experience, her interaction with parents, relationships with other early significant others, and how these experiences have influenced her.

Cao Lin also referred two friends to counseling. However, she also observed that many Chinese people either in China or in the U.S. showed the stigma they hold against mental health and their distrust in counseling. “Many people would avoid contact with someone who has a mental health issue. They think it is risky. At the same time, they don’t realize that they have a mental health issue. Even if they have a realization, they don’t think that a mental health issue can be easily solved by someone else; therefore, they would rather rely on themselves for problem solving.”

Cao Lin also talked about her suggestions to improve mental health services on campus to Chinese international students. Specifically, she mentioned that it is important that the mental health clinics help Chinese international students understand that they don’t have to delay help seeking until their problems get too severe. “Clinics on campus can do a better job to address and challenge the bias people have against seeking mental health services. They can help students better understand that mental health, just like physical health, is a component of our overall health.” “I think to those people who didn’t grow up in this [U.S.] culture, it might be helpful to help them know what counseling is and what the treatment process looks like.” In order to help more Chinese international students become aware of mental health and the helping resources on campus, Cao Lin suggested that clinics give out handouts at places where most students would go such as the main library and send out emails to international students introducing their services. Cao Lin also suggested mental health clinics on campus form liaisons with the Office of International Education and International Student Life, which are the hubs of international student affairs on campus.

By the second time I interviewed Cao Lin, Cao Lin had already graduated from her program and had gone back to China for a job. Cao Lin sought counseling services again at

another mental health clinic on campus in 2017 when she was going through stress related to graduation and job applications. Cao Lin liked her second counseling experience better than the prior one and she also liked this therapist better. Cao Lin did not expect her therapist to help her solve the problem (i.e., job application). Instead, she was expecting her therapist to help her to find a way to gain more insights into her distress at that time and to find a better a way to cope with her distress and similar stressful situations in the future.

Cao Lin had a good therapeutic relationship with her second therapist. Cao Lin said, “I really like her.” Cao Lin stated that her therapist took the time to understand her, which made Cao Lin feel that she genuinely cared about her. “This made me feel that she was interested in learning about me comprehensively and to discover where my problem was rather than asking me to fill out a bunch of questionnaires and telling me this is your problem.” Additionally, the therapist asked Cao Lin’s language preference and tried to incorporate helping methods that are more familiar to Cao Lin’s East Asian cultural background in their treatment. For example, the therapist mentioned Tai-Chi and the theory of Yin and Yang. Cao Lin laughed when the therapist mentioned and recommended these Asian health theories and practice because they are very stereotypically Asian to Cao Lin. Cao Lin did not think that many people practice these theories even in China. However, Cao Lin still appreciated her therapist’s endeavor and her being “culturally considerate” in their work together. Moreover, this therapist also invited Cao Lin to create a treatment together and informed Cao Lin of the steps of their treatment and the tasks they would complete together to achieve their goal. The therapist also informed Cao Lin that there might be a discrepancy between their expectations toward the ultimate outcome of therapy, so both of them need to be prepared to adjust accordingly. “I think being informed about a treatment plan is extremely important to clients like me who had no prior counseling experience.

Otherwise, if I can't get the things I expected in the first one or two sessions I would most likely to drop out." "I think the lack of knowledge about what counseling would look like was a major barrier I was facing toward seeking counseling." All these early mutual communications helped with the establishment of Cao Lin's trust toward her therapist. "I think it crucial if people can quickly establish a mutual trust in the first one or two meetings." Cao Lin said this mutual trust feels like a "click" between her and her therapist. "I realized that you have to try different therapists until you find the one who is a good fit for you."

When asked what else her therapist did that made Cao Lin feel the "click", Cao Lin said, "I think first of all, she did not show that she was in a hurry in our work together. She didn't say, "Ah, I found where your problem is, and this is the help you need." Instead, she would ask me follow-up questions after I said something. I felt the pace of our work was perfect. She was also very willing to listen to me and guided me to talk in more details or talk about other relevant things. I think this is very important because sometimes your therapist asks you a question but you're not sure what exactly she wants to know or how much she wants to know. She asked questions in a tentative way and she would ask me follow-up questions if she wanted to know more about what I said. This made me feel that my answer was effective. I really appreciate that she didn't read a form and ask questions one after the other according to a set form."

Individual Structural Description

Cao Lin self-identified as an introvert. This introverted personality made it challenging for Cao Lin to make new friends in a new environment at first. Moreover, the experienced language barrier could make it more intimidating. These two factors together with a change of social norm made socialization challenging to Cao Lin in the U.S.

Difficulties in socialization made Cao Lin feel less confident and even scared in interacting with Americans either in a face to face interaction or a communication on the phone. Therefore, Cao Lin encountered anxiety toward picking up her phone and contacting people for her interview project. Compared to talking face to face, talking on the phone in English can be more difficult because there are no cues such as facial expression or body language that Cao Lin could rely on for communication. This might be a reason why Cao Lin did not follow her therapist's recommendation to call another therapist while miscommunication, lack of trust, and lack of multicultural competence of the therapist might be other reasons behind.

Growing up in China, Cao Lin did not have much knowledge about counseling and had no experience of receiving services either. Therefore, she did not know the difference between counseling and psychiatric service. Language might be another barrier. She was unfamiliar with the two English words, counseling and psychiatry. The university where Cao Lin attended could have done a better job of introducing mental health services to international students like Cao Lin, who come from a country or culture where people historically hold bias and stigmas toward mental illness and are unfamiliar with counseling or psychiatric services that originally developed in Western countries. Additionally, under the influence of the stigmas about mental illness and bias against relevant services in Chinese society, Cao Lin was scared to admit that she had a mental health issue and that she needed external help. She said, "It's hard to admit that I lost control of myself."

Cao Lin had no experience with counseling before but mentioned that she had a psychology teacher in high school and learned about counseling from her for the first time. Cao Lin's imagination about or expectation toward counseling was that "therapists can help you find the root of your problem quickly through inquiry just like seeing a physician, who can give you a

quick diagnosis." Moreover, Cao Lin expected that clients would talk about their personal experiences, private thoughts and feelings as well as their weakness and vulnerability in therapy, which made Cao Lin feel resistant at first. Not surprisingly, Cao Lin's first counseling experience was very different from what she expected.

Cao Lin also mentioned that it was important for her to have an evaluation about the severity of her distress compared to other Chinese international students before she made a decision to seek help. It seems Cao Lin's help seeking behavior and decisions were influenced by a comparison with other people. Rather than relying on her own feelings, Cao Lin was not ready to seek counseling until she knew that her distress was more severe than most of her fellow nationals.

As someone who studied in Health Medical Journalism and also had several experiences with counseling, Cao Lin started to realize that just like physical health, mental health is a component of her overall health. It seems that to Cao Lin, physical illnesses and their treatment were more acceptable than mental health issues and their treatment, which demonstrated a dichotomy of physical health and mental health.

Wang Lei

Individual Textual Description

Wang Lei was full of expectations toward studying abroad before she left China. She expected that she would be able to integrate herself into U.S. culture and American life even if she was unfamiliar with the U.S. She wanted herself to "be American."

In the beginning of the honeymoon stage of acculturation, in order to "be American," Wang Lei pushed herself to talk to American students, join their parties, clubs and student organizations, and even date with American students. Wang Lei also chose American students to

be her roommates in her first three years in college. This experience of living together with Americans provided Wang Lei an opportunity to encounter the "real" U.S. culture. This experience was full of gains and challenges. Being roommates with three different American students gave Wang Lei her first exposure to the variety of U.S. culture. Wang Lei's first American roommate in college had a good relationship with Wang Lei even though they had a communication problem due to a language barrier. This roommate invited Wang Lei to meet her family, which made her feel welcomed. This positive experience encouraged Wang Lei to talk to other American students and to embrace a new life. Wang Lei's second roommate was an immigrant; therefore, Wang Lei felt they were more able to understand each other's experiences. Wang Lei's third roommate would make racist comments about other racial/ethnic minorities but was fine toward Chinese according to Wang Lei. This roommate also often brought men home at night, which made Wang Lei feel uncomfortable and inconvenient. These experiences of living with three different American fellow students made Wang Lei see the diversity of Americans and the different aspects of the so-called U.S. culture and American life.

However, it was not easy to integrate into U.S. culture or to "be American" as an international student from China. Wang Lei felt that her university could have encouraged and supported more cross-cultural/racial/national communications on campus. Wang Lei kept trying to acculturate but also kept encountering difficulties, challenges, and stress in this process no matter how hard she tried, which made her feel frustrated, powerless, and incapable. One of the acculturation barriers Wang Lei faced was language. She stated that she could not fully express her thoughts or understand what other people said. "When I am speaking in English, I am concerned the accuracy of my expression, which causes a big burden." In addition, Wang Lei experienced a communication barrier in acculturation, which is associated with the language

barrier mentioned above but is not only limited to the limitation of English vocabulary. For example, communication with Americans requires background knowledge of conversations and culturally appropriate communication skills, which Wang Lei did not have at first. Additionally, even if her roommate's racist comments were not toward her, these racist comments to other minorities made Wang Lei feel uncomfortable and stressed. Wang Lei recalled, "I felt like she was cursing every day." Wang Lei also felt that some of her experiences in China were not validated in the U.S. For example, when Wang Lei was interviewing for an investment banking club in her school, she was told that her knowledge about and experiences with Chinese market were not applicable in the U.S.; therefore, she was not accepted.

As an international student, Wang Lei did not have as many internship or job opportunities as her U.S. fellow students due to the restriction for work under her student visa and a lack of networking and social capital. This immigration status made Wang Lei feel that she was less competitive compared to her U.S. fellow students. "Many American students received referrals from alumni for job positions in big companies; however, as an international student, I only received referral from Chinese alumni, which was a limitation." Even if she was able to find an intern position, she was disappointed that her employer did not show much trust to her and thus would assign tasks, which she was capable of doing to domestic student interns.

All these barriers together with a stress from school work brought Wang Lei a feeling of powerlessness in her sophomore year. Wang Lei stated, "I started to ask myself why I must do this [forcing herself to be American], why I must force myself do the things that seemed irrelevant to me." "I added a second major in sophomore year, I felt powerless and incapable of integrating into American society, even if the language barrier became less impactful than before." Wang Lei started to change her acculturation strategies since then. Specifically, Wang

Lei started to feel that “Having Chinese friends became more and more important.” Thus, she initiated more contact with her fellow Chinese nationals on campus and found a “comfort zone”. Wang Lei said, “I felt it much easier to communicate with Chinese who speak the same language and share the same culture with me. Additionally, there was no racist comments. Those communications made me feel more comfortable.” Therefore, most of Wang Lei’s friends were her fellow nationals; American friends only accounted for a very small percentage of her social group.

However, interactions with fellow nationals were not always joyful. It turned out that the relationship problem with some other Chinese international students became the biggest stressor to Wang Lei. Wang Lei experienced conflicts within the group of Chinese international students in college. She said, “Many Chinese international students are the only child in their wealthy families; therefore, many of them think they are wealthier and better than others or have received better education.” “There is always some gossips and scandals among Chinese international students.” Wang Lei experienced a rumor bullying when she was in freshman and early sophomore year. Specifically, some Chinese international students were making a rumor about Wang Lei’s sexual relationships. Wang Lei was furious after she overheard the rumor and felt deeply hurt. In addition to furiousness and hurt, Wang Lei also felt a strong powerlessness. “I did not know what I could do in that situation. Later, I cut off the contact with those people who made and spread the rumor. I closed off myself and had nobody to talk with. I chose to forbear silently.” “I remember that semester I was feeling sad and powerless about socialization and school. As a result, my GPA dropped 0.5.” “I tried to ignore their defamatory comments about me even if I knew they were still making some.” Wang Lei identified this incident as the most stressful experience in the U.S. Wang Lei was unsatisfied with her relationship with her fellow

nationals in college. She said, “I felt I was living in a besieged fortress, I was struggling in a small group, I tried to get out, but I couldn’t.”

While facing the various acculturative stress mentioned above, Wang Lei also received social support and developed strategies to cope. In terms of social support, Wang Lei identified her boyfriend and a small group of close Chinese friends in college. Wang Lei’s boyfriend is from China, who has a green card and has lived in the U.S. longer and thus is “better acculturated and has many American friends.” Wang Lei also sometimes visited her friends’ and had meals with them. Additionally, Wang Lei had some Chinese alumni friends, who gave her support in intern/job applications. In addition to the social support from peers, Wang Lei also received guidance and advice from some elders who were introduced by her parents and who had studying abroad experiences before. They were all Chinese and Wang Lei rarely received social support from Americans.

In terms of coping strategies, in addition to the aforementioned forbearance, sometimes Wang Lei would also see a movie, talk to some close friends, or have a dinner together to distract herself from stressors and relax. Wang Lei wished that she could have an American family member who is in their 40s and had many life experiences and wisdom to share with her just like the elder mentors she had back home. However, Wang Lei does not have such a person in the U.S. She stated, “I feel in China, parents, older relatives and friends would like to give you suggestions and guidance. However, I don’t have such as a person like that in the U.S. I want to have such an elder mentor so bad.”

As for the reaction toward the suicide of the Chinese international student at the university, Wang Lei stated that she felt extremely sorry for him and his family. She thought that the school could have done a better job to introduce mental health services to Chinese

international students. “The university is recruiting more and more international students; therefore, the university has an obligation to provide better services and help to this group. I don’t think it was a responsible way to respond to this tragedy by only sending out two emails. The school’s response to this incident made me feel neglected, disrespected and thus I felt sad and powerless.” Wang Lei said that she sent an email to the president of the university after hearing this tragedy to show her frustration and to ask for an appropriate response; however, Wang Lei did not receive any reply, which made her feel even more helpless and powerless.

Wang Lei graduated from the university and had just started her master’s program at the University of Southern California when she received my second ground interview. Wang Lei reported a very different acculturative experience in Los Angles compared to the one in Athens, Georgia. Wang Lei said over 40% of the students at USC are Asian and there are thousands of Chinese international students there, which sometimes made Wang Lei feel that she was not a minority. Moreover, she felt that she was receiving more support from both school and the local community in LA. “I see many possibilities here. In contrast, I experienced less collective power of Chinese students at my prior university.” These comparisons made Wang Lei to think about which one can represent the U.S. “Every place is unique. It’s hard to define which one represents the U.S. Can New York City represent the U.S.? Maybe not. What about Los Angles? Maybe not either. These two places are probably the most diverse cities in the world, I don’t think they can represent the whole U.S. or the whole world. When asked to share her thoughts about “融入美国” (infusion and integration into the U.S.) at this time, Wang Lei said, “I hope cultural integration will become mainstream. Cultural integration is not to force Americans to celebrate Lunar New Year with you. Ideally, when Chinese celebrate Lunar New Year, Americans won’t ask us how we celebrate it. Instead, they will say, “Oh, Happy Lunar New Year” or even more

ideally, they will ask if they can join your celebration." In addition, when asked about reactions to the new government administration and the change of the sociopolitical environment in the U.S., Wang Lei denied she experienced much substantial impact so far; however, she mentioned that other international students who are looking for jobs in the U.S. might encounter more difficulties than before.

Wang Lei had no experience with counseling. Even when she was suffering from the distress mentioned above, she never thought about seeking professional mental health services on campus. Wang Lei denied any bias against such services. Instead, Wang Lei showed her curiosity and was even "looking forward" to receiving counseling in a "suitable situation". Wang Lei stated, "Older generations in China might think that professional mental health services are only for people who are insane; however, as a post-90s generation, I don't have any barrier in perception. Instead, I think the problem is that this service hasn't been popularized." Wang Lei was unaware of the resources for mental health services on campus and identified it as a major reason why she did not seek counseling when she was suffering the distress from the peer bullying in freshman year. "I was 19 and had no idea about the resources on campus. I didn't see any advertisement about mental health services on campus and not even to mention any services in Mandarin Chinese."

Even if Wang Lei had no experience with counseling, she had some imagination about and expectations toward counseling. Specifically, Wang Lei imagined that a counselor would "persuade you, tell you that you're good, or help you to relax in some nice ways; however, I don't think that might be very effective because Americans might be unable to understand the societal background where I grew up in China and the stress I experienced in the U.S." Thinking about counseling, the first picture emerged in Wang Lei's mind was a scene in an American TV

show in which a female character received hypnosis by her therapist and thus her memories of her childhood trauma were deleted, which made the character stronger and unassailable. Wang Lei also mentioned the importance of being understood by a therapist. “Being understood by a therapist will help a person to decrease her stress.” Wang Lei denied that she knew much about what treatment in counseling would look like, but she expected that “counseling will help a person forget about her trouble and those bad things temporarily. Or if she has difficulty integrating into American life, counseling may help her integrate more quickly.” In addition, Wang Lei also had a high expectation toward receiving guidance and suggestions from a therapist. For example, she expected a therapist would provide her with solutions such as recommending some student organizations to her where she can have more communications with Americans if she has difficulty with integration into American life.

In terms of preference of a therapist, Wang Lei preferred to work with a therapist who can speak Mandarin or who had similar immigration or study abroad experiences like herself. She stated that “I would not like to work with someone who holds the value of white supremacy.” Wang Lei denied that the race or ethnicity of therapist is the most important factor. Instead, the most important factor is whether the therapist can understand Chinese international students and their struggles. Even if therapists know scientific ways to work on stress, if they can’t understand her, Wang Lei would question the effectiveness of their treatment. Wang Lei hoped that her therapist would respect and appreciate diversity. “This will help me feel more confident to speak English in counseling.” If possible, Wang Lei preferred to receive counseling in Mandarin because it would be easier and better to express her thoughts and feelings in her mother tongue.

Individual Structural Description

Wang Lei aspired to studying in the U.S. when she was in China. Her expectation went beyond experiencing a different culture and having a good higher education. She showed aspirations to the U.S. and to "be American." Behind this expectation, there seemed to be an imagination and belief that the U.S. is better than China in many ways even if Wang Lei did not have much knowledge about the U.S. However, this imagination set up a high expectation toward studying and living in the U.S.

As someone who grew up in a collectivistic culture, Wang Lei might believe that a criterion of success living in a new environment is to be able to be accepted and included by people in the new environment. Therefore, she used the Chinese word "融入", which means to infuse and integrate till becoming a part of a group. This might influence her initial goal of being assimilated to the U.S. society and its culture at first.

Specially, Wang Lei expected that she would make many close American friends. However, her interactions with Americans including her roommates made her realize that it was not as easy as she thought. The cultural distance between these two countries, the language barrier, and the roommate's racist comments made it challenging to communicate with American students in a deep level. Moreover, Wang Lei felt that the school environment was not as much encouraging for cross-cultural communications as she would wish. Therefore, she felt a sense of powerlessness and incapability, and felt low confidence in the U.S.

As a consequence, Wang Lei decided to change her acculturation strategies by initiating more contact with her fellow Chinese nationals who shared the same cultural background and who spoke the same language. Wang Lei felt more comfortable and found a sense of belonging

from this group at first. However, the issues within Chinese international students around her made her experience unfriendliness and even hurt, which later became the biggest stressor to her.

On one hand, Wang Lei encountered barriers in developing close relationships with Americans. On the other hand, she struggled in relationships with her fellow nationals. Wang Lei felt that she was like being trapped in a “围城” (besieged fortress) where she was struggling in a small circle, trying to get out, but couldn’t.

It is noteworthy that moving from a comparatively small college town in Southeast to Los Angeles, California brought Wang Lei a very different culture experience. Wang Lei experienced more diversity in L.A. and felt that the environment in L.A. both on campus and off campus as more welcoming to her. Thus, she felt more comfortable and confident living and studying there as a Chinese international student. This difference in experience made Wang Lei start to think about what the so-called American culture is.

Growing up in China, Wang Lei often received teachings from elders such as her parents, parents’ friends, elder family members, and teachers in school. Wang Lei liked to seek suggestions and guidance from these experienced elders. However, she did not have such mentors in the U.S. who could teach her life wisdom. The education Wang Lei received in China, which was characterized as didactic seemed make her regard elder and authority figures as the answers to questions. Therefore, although Wang Lei had no experience of receiving counseling services, she expected that a therapist would be in her parents’ age, who could give suggestions and guidance, just like how her parents and teachers helped her back home.

Wang Lei had no experience with counseling by the time she completed my interviews. Her expectation about counseling was mainly influenced by TV shows and movies. Wang Lei saw a scene in an American TV show in which a female character received hypnosis by her

therapist and thus altered her memories. This was the first image came to Wang Lei's mind when she thought about counseling. Under the influence of TV shows and movies like this, Wang Lei formed her expectation about counseling: "Counseling will help a person forget about her trouble and those bad things temporarily."

Jia Ling

Individual Textural Description

The university Jia Ling attended in China had an exchange program with an American university in Tennessee; therefore, she came to the U.S. in her junior year in college with about other 20 fellow Chinese students. At the beginning, Jia Ling stayed in an American host family with two other Chinese international students. Later, all the students moved into dorms on campus. Jia Ling and her Chinese friends took some classes together at the first semester. After school, they sometimes had meals together. According to Jia Ling, students in this small group hung out together a lot. Jia Ling even did not have much opportunity to speak English outside of class. However, Jia Ling was eager to leave her comfort zone to learn more about U.S. culture. Therefore, different from many of her Chinese friends, Jia Ling decided to be roommate with an American student in her first semester. At the time Jia Ling completed this interview, she had already graduated from the university in Tennessee and was pursuing a doctoral degree at her current university.

Jia Ling encountered a language barrier in the U.S. She recalled that at first, she had to study menu by checking her English-Chinese dictionary and Googling the names of the food at restaurants. This language barrier also impeded her from having deep communications with American students. Jia Ling said, "Most of the time, I felt my conversations with Americans were superficial." Jia Ling had to rely on a basic English vocabulary to express her thoughts and

this made her feel “less intelligent.” Jia Ling felt frustrated when she could not fully express her thoughts in English. “This frustration made me become less willing to speak English. Therefore, most of the time, I only had deep discussions and communications with my Chinese friends.”

In addition to the problem of lacking English vocabulary, Jia Ling also experienced a cultural difference in communication styles and norms between China and the U.S. Jia Ling said, “I feel differences in the way we think, the way we talk, and even the way we joke between Chinese and Americans…When I was in China, in that cultural context, my emotional intelligence was well developed. I was also competent in communication skills. I know what words and tones to use on different occasions to express my thoughts and feelings. But I am not familiar with these norms in the U.S…I feel my main goal in conversations with Americans is to express my thoughts clearly without too many mistakes. I could not care too much how other people might feel or whether my words would offend others.” Jia Ling said, “I feel that after coming to the U.S. I had to learn everything from the beginning just like a kid.” As a result, Jia Ling felt stressed in socialization with Americans.

However, Jia Ling also mentioned that sometimes, not very often, she was able to feel some deeper connections with some American friends although the language barrier was still there. Specifically, Jia Ling thought that in order to have a stronger connection, they needed to have some common hobbies or interests, such as the types of music they both liked, which could create opportunities to do things or talk together. Jia Ling’s first American roommate in college had a same interest with Jia Ling. “We had a similar preference for a music genre, so we talked a lot about music. She also took me to a music festival and took good care of me. She was interested in Asian culture, so she was very willing to talk to me. I felt like she was genuinely interested in my culture. However, I think she is an atypical American. She looked like an

American, but she felt like an Asian in her mind." However, Jia Ling noted that it was not easy to meet with Americans like this young lady.

Consistently facing the aforementioned difficulties in socialization with American peers even after trying very hard, Jia Ling changed her acculturative strategies to spending more time hanging out with other Chinese international students. Jia Ling said, "It felt very frustrating if you could not communicate in English. Therefore, later, I spent more time with my Chinese friends at the university." As a result, most of Jia Ling's friends in the U.S. are Chinese international students.

However, Jia Ling also faced strains in her relationships with her fellow Chinese nationals in the U.S. Jia Ling recalled that "We came to be the U.S. together, which was good. However, I also felt I was trapped in that small group. We had issues in the group. When I had relational problems with people in the group, I could not talk to others because we were all in the same group. It also felt unhelpful to talk to my friends in China because they could not fully understand my experience in the U.S."

In addition to the difficulty in communication with American peers and the relational problems with other Chinese international students, Jia Ling also experienced academic challenge, specifically due to the perceived high expectations from both herself and her advisor. As a graduate student, Jia Ling experienced a difficulty in her relationship with her advisor. Jia Ling was afraid that she might disappoint her advisor because she was not good enough. "I feel I am falling far behind my advisor in our academic goals. We have different educational backgrounds. I have a high expectation for myself and I feel a similar high expectation from my advisor as well. However, I feel that I am not good enough to meet these expectations, which makes me very disappointed. I am frustrated almost every time after meeting with my advisor."

Facing the aforementioned stress, Jia Ling had her own ways to cope. First, Jia Ling would try to solve the problems by herself. She said, “I would rather try to change myself first since I’ve already seen the problem.” Being able to solve problems by herself means self-sufficiency to Jia Ling. In addition, Jia Ling would talk to some Chinese friends, see a movie, or listen to music to relax and distract herself from stress. Jia Ling said that the social support from her Chinese friends was important. Their company and support made Jia Ling feel that she was not alone and boosted her confidence. Jia Ling also sought professional help such as the nutrition kitchen at the university health center, which offered healthy cooking classes. However, when Jia Ling was under significant stress like the aforementioned combination of relational problems and communication barrier with her advisor, Jia Ling would engage in some maladaptive coping methods such as binge eating. “In those situations, I would binge eat, which made me feel a little better.” If none of these aforementioned coping methods or helping resources is helpful, then Jia Ling might seek counseling services.

Jia Ling also shared her thoughts about and feelings toward a recent suicide of a Chinese international student at her university. She said, “I hope that the university could report this tragedy on the first page of school website, but I didn’t see it. Moreover, I wish they would also introduce the mental health services on campus along with the news report, telling people how to get access to the services, but they didn’t. Some people might pay more attention to their own mental health after hearing the tragedy and thus might be more willing to seek help at that time. The fear that I might experience a similar distress will foster my willingness to seek help.” Additionally, with an education background in psychology, Jia Ling also recommended professional mental health services to her Chinese friends who she thought might have a need. She said, “I tried to tell people that they need to seek help from the counseling center if they have

problems. I saw most people's reactions on social media toward this incident were like "why did he kill himself?" or "what problem did he have?" People didn't think what they could do if they were in a similar predicament facing similar distress. Most people commented, "What a pity! RIP." I don't think most people have a sense [that they might experience a similar distress and what they can do]. Only when most people know that they need to seek help in those situations will we see less tragedies like this happen."

Jia Ling sought counseling twice in the U.S. She sought therapy for the first time when she was experiencing a relationship issue with some other Chinese international students when she was an undergrad. The second time was when she was in graduate school at her current university. Jia Ling expected to have an outlet for her emotions and seek suggestions from a professional authority. Moreover, Jia Ling also had an expectation that her therapist would ask her about prior life experiences such as her early childhood experiences and relationships with her family. She expected that she would gain insights into the influence of these prior experiences on her current distress through a psychoanalysis offered by a therapist. Jia Ling did not have much knowledge about the difference between counseling and psychiatric service. However, she preferred talk therapy over medication treatment.

In terms of the format of counseling, Jia Ling's experience in therapy was consistent with her expectation. However, Jia Ling encountered language and communication barriers in therapy and thus, dropped out after her first session. Jia Ling said, "I felt like I was practicing my English skills rather than expressing myself. I was exhausted, and I could not pay attention to my emotions. It felt like my therapist had a hard time understanding my English and my experience. I didn't feel she was focusing on understanding how it happened, why it happened, or the reasons in depth. Maybe I didn't explain clearly. I didn't feel she could understand what I was talking

about." Moreover, Jia Ling was disappointed that she and her therapist did not spend time analyzing her issue in their first appointment. She said, "we didn't get into the stage of analysis within a one-hour session. Rather, most of time, she was checking consistently to make sure that she understood what I said, and most of my effort was put on searching for the right words to express what I wanted to express."

Language and a communication barrier prevented Jia Ling from developing a mutual understanding with her therapist, which was crucial for the development of trust toward her therapist. Plus, her therapist did not offer psychoanalysis in the first meeting. This first counseling experience made Jia Ling feel their work was not as helpful or effective as she expected, which resulted in her early drop out. Jia Ling recalled that the cultural difference between her and her therapist was secondary to the language barrier back then. Jia Ling faced a similar language and communication barrier with her therapist at her current university, which made her decide to discontinue after a few sessions.

Jia Ling denied that she ever brought up her concerns about this communication problem and the experienced discrepancy between her expectations and her real experience in therapy to her therapists. She said, "it was because I didn't have a trust toward my therapists. If we had trust, I would be more willing to tell them my feelings about our work and relationships. But we didn't, so I gave up."

Although the two experiences of receiving counseling services did not meet her expectations, Jia Ling still identified a few indirect benefits from seeking counseling. First, Jia Ling felt that receiving help brought her a hope for betterment. "I felt I was on my way to become better. Although therapy didn't bring me a significant change, I took a step forward to receive help. That was positive to me. It brought me confidence…It affirmed my strength."

Moreover, Jia Ling appreciated the opportunity to talk about her problem and let some of her emotions out in therapy even if it was not as much as she would have liked. She said, “No matter if language is a problem or not, you can talk to another person, find an outlet for your emotions, or distract yourself a little bit.”

Jia Ling was open to seek professional mental health services. However, Jia Ling heard about the stigma of mental health and seeking professional help from her Chinese friends. Jia Ling had recommended counseling to some of her Chinese friends at the university. However, her friends were not very acceptive of her suggestion.

Jia Ling also talked about her suggestions to improve mental health services to Chinese international students at her university. First, Jia Ling wished that the university could show more care toward the psychological well-being of international students. She said, “I feel we are isolated here at the university. We are excluded from the local American culture. I don’t feel like many people care about our mental health.” Second, Jia Ling wished that the university counseling center could hire therapists who can provide services in Mandarin. Third, Jia Ling hoped that there could be more therapists working at the clinics on campus, so students would not have to wait for too long for services. Fourth, Jia Ling suggested the university and the mental health clinics on campus in particular do more outreach to Chinese international students and help them know the existence of their clinics, know what type of services they provide and what counseling looks like, and clarify the difference between counseling service and psychiatric treatment. “It is important to let Chinese international students know that the university counseling center in the school health center is not a psychiatric hospital.” Jia Ling also recommended the mental health clinics to form a liaison with the Chinese Student Association and use their platforms on social media such as WeChat (a Chinese multi-purpose messaging and

social media app that is popular among Chinese), Weibo (a Chinese microblogging website), and Facebook to spread the information and news about international student psychological well-being, so students might increase their awareness of their mental health.

Individual Structural Description

The exchange program between Jia Ling's Chinese university and American university helped her transition smoother at first than many other Chinese international students who come to the U.S. alone. Under this circumstance, Jia Ling had already formed a group of friends at the very beginning of her studying abroad.

Jia Ling mentioned that in order to develop closer friendships with Americans, they needed to have some shared hobbies or interests such as the types of music they both like. However, hobbies, interests, and leisure activities are strongly influenced by culture. Jia Ling grew up in China, and therefore had formed different hobbies and interests compared to her American friends. For example, they listened to different songs and saw different movies growing up in two distant cultures. Cultural distance was a barrier for Jia Ling to develop close relationships with Americans.

Academically, Jia Ling had a high self-expectation for achieving an academic success and was afraid of disappointing her advisor. This might be related to the education Jia Ling received growing up in China, where a common and usually the only criterion of being successful for students is their grade. Moreover, the relationship between teachers and students in China can be more hierarchical with a bigger power differential compared to the one in the U.S. especially in graduate school where professors and students are more likely to form an equal and collaborative relationship. Therefore, Jia Ling experienced a difficulty in adjusting to the academic environment and establishing a relationship with her American advisor at first. She

said, “I was often afraid to meet with my advisor because I was afraid that I was not doing good enough. I was afraid of making him disappointed.” This fear might indicate that Jia Ling applied the norm that she was familiar with in education in China to the relationship with her American advisor.

Jia Ling also regarded her therapist in counseling as an authority. She said, “Even if it’s the same suggestion, I would be more acceptive if it is from a therapist compared to a friend because I would think a therapist is more professional and has more authority. What they say would have more impact on me.” Regarding a therapist as an authority influenced Jia Ling’s interpersonal style in their relationship. Specifically, she was hesitant to express her needs and did not choose to let her therapist know of her disappointment when their work direction was different from her expectation. It seemed hard for Jia Ling to challenge a professional who she regarded as an authority.

Jia Ling also had an expectation that her therapist would provide psychoanalysis to her in counseling. This expectation toward counseling might be attributed to Jia Ling’s education background in psychology and to the fact that Freud and his psychoanalysis are most well-known in China compared to other psychologists and theories.

To sum up, Jia Ling’s prior knowledge about psychology formed her expectations about counseling. Her upbringing and the education tradition she was familiar with in China shaped her attitude toward authority figures and thus influenced her relationships with her advisor and therapists in the U.S. who were unfamiliar with the relevant Chinese culture, values, and interpersonal styles in certain contexts.

Li Jie

Individual Textural Description

Li Jie attended an international high school in China, which taught AP courses to prepare students like him for studying in Western universities. Therefore, Li Jie knew that he would leave home for higher education in the West. Li Jie was looking forward to integrating into the U.S. culture and making many American friends when he came to the U.S. at first.

The first challenge Li Jie faced was language, which prevented him from having deep communications with American students. Li Jie said, “I remember I hung out with Americans and if someone talked a joke, everyone was laughing. However, I couldn’t understand the joke at all, but I felt I had to laugh like everyone else. It was exhausting and made me feel awkward at those moments.” Moreover, Li Jie also faced this language barrier in class as a student whose first language was not English.

In addition to the language barrier, Li Jie also experienced a cultural difference between him and American students, which brought a challenge in forming close friendships. Li Jie had an American roommate in freshman year. Li Jie was shocked to see this roommate and many other American college students using cannabis for a recreational purpose. They invited him to join their smoking party, but he declined.

Li Jie expected to integrate into U.S. culture but did not know how. He started to feel frustrated in acculturation after many unsuccessful endeavors. He said, “I have few American friends and we are not that close. I also studied with a few classmates together, but we didn’t have other interactions. I feel it is difficult to integrate into American culture, maybe because of language barrier, differences in our cultural background, or other reasons.”

Most people whom Li Jie felt close to were Chinese international students at the university. However, his relationships with other Chinese students were not always positive. They could be strained and even hurtful. For example, Li Jie experienced online bullying by some other Chinese international students at his university. According to Li Jie, they gossiped about him and posted it on a public account on Weibo, which is a Chinese microblogging website like Twitter. That public account was followed by over 5 million people, most of whom are Chinese who are living or studying in North America. What made it even worse was that Li Jie's Chinese roommate wrote down Li Jie's name in the comment area. Therefore, lots of Chinese international students at Li Jie's university knew the rumor about him and many friends thus blocked him on social media. Li Jie felt angry and hurt. He wondered what laws in the U.S. could protect his rights. However, he had no knowledge and no resources.

When Li Jie faced challenges and stress studying in the U.S., usually he would ask his Chinese friends for help or support. Specifically, he might chat online with his friends in China or call his local friends out for a meal together or playing basketball together. In the aforementioned online bullying, Li Jie also sought help and support from his Chinese friends. However, he found that many friends were trying to exclude him from their groups. Those close friends who were willing to listen were trying to give him suggestions to deal with the issue. For example, Li Jie was suggested to forget about the incident, care less about how others talked about him, and do not fight back on the internet since he was already in the eye of the storm. Friends also suggested him focus on his study, which was more important. Li Jie's parents suggested him keep silent and let the time to cure everything. Li Jie said these suggestions were unhelpful. One friend suggested Li Jie seek counseling services. Li Jie remembered that his first reaction was "Why do I need counseling?" After that, Li Jie struggled alone for another few

days. He relied on alcohol to cope with the distress. Li Jie was intoxicated one night at home alone. When he woke up the next day, he realized that he needed some professional help.

Li Jie expected that his therapist could give him concrete suggestions to deal with the online bullying and its repercussions in counseling. He also expected that he would "feel better" after counseling. However, his experience in counseling did not meet these expectations. Instead, Li Jie recalled, "I shared lots of my personal stories and areas that I thought I needed to improve, but his [Li Jie's therapist] suggestions were not proportionate with how much I talked in counseling. He barely gave suggestions. I felt like we were just chatting. Maybe that was a way of doing counseling? But I didn't find it very helpful."

Li Jie was also disappointed by "the lack of structure" in his counseling experience. Li Jie said, "It might be more helpful if we could make a list on a piece of paper of the main points we had talked about at the end of each session. He [therapist] also could have remind me what my problems were and what I could do, so I could go back and read these suggestions later and see which ones I had tried, which I hadn't, and which ones were helpful, which were not."

Moreover, Li Jie experienced a language and communication barrier in therapy with his American therapist, which he identified as another big obstacle in therapy. Li Jie recalled, "I could not find the right word to express what I wanted to say, so it took me lots of time to explain. However, I still didn't think he understood what I said. Maybe this was why he didn't give me too many suggestions?" Li Jie recalled an experience in one session. He said, "We talked less than thirty minutes and then we had a silence for five minutes. In that five minutes, he [therapist] said nothing. Neither did I. In the end, he suggested we stop there…It felt like we had nothing to talk about…And I was like I have told you all my problems, what should we talk next? He didn't say anything."

Facing the discrepancy between his expectations and the experience in counseling, Li Jie did not choose to tell his therapist about his disappointment. Li Jie said, “I never thought I could tell him my feelings about our work. He didn’t ask me to share. Would it be too rude if I told him?” Despite the ineffectiveness of counseling, Li Jie was still suggested by his parents to continue his therapy on and off for about a semester.

In terms of benefits from receiving counseling, Li Jie had a hard time affirming his answer. On one hand, Li Jie said, “I felt better after talking about my problem in counseling especially after he gave me some suggestions.” Additionally, Li Jie also regarded counseling as an opportunity for “自我反省” (introspection and self-examination). He said, “It’s hard to describe…It felt like you examined why you did somethings wrong; why my roommate wrote my name in his comments…You got a chance to examine these things.” However, on the other hand, Li Jie demonstrated a hesitation and uncertainty while he was talking about these benefits. He said, “Are you asking me if it was helpful to me? I think there was some help. For example…To be honest, I think...Was it really helpful? I think the biggest help I received was that he suggested me buy a white noise machine because I mentioned I had a sleep problem.”

In our interview, Li Jie gave a few suggestions to the university to improve mental health services to Chinese international students. Specifically, he suggested that the mental health clinics on campus collaborate with the university international student office and the Chinese Student Association to introduce their services more to Chinese international students through emails. Moreover, he also suggested clinics on campus hire clinicians who can provide counseling in Mandarin. However, at the same time, he also said, “If they can do it [hiring clinicians who can speak Mandarin] that would be great, but if not, that’s fine. We cannot ask for

too much from school…I would use it [seeing a therapist in English] as an opportunity to practice my English."

Individual Structural Description

Li Jie had an expectation that his American therapist would gave him specific suggestions in a clearly structured psychotherapy to help him deal with the consequences of the cyber bullying. These expectations might be influenced by Li Jie's prior experience with therapy in China.

Li Jie was referred to a mental health therapy by her parents when he was in high school in China. Instead of counseling, Li Jie called it emotion guidance because his therapist had no credentials in counseling or psychology. Back then, Li Jie had a strained relationship with his parents who were divorced. In spite of his resistance, Li Jie's parents brought him to see the therapist, who was a friend of Li Jie's parent. According to Li Jie, they, including him, his parents, and the therapist had a meal together. After that, he and his parents had a therapy session together, in which they talked to each other about their thoughts and feelings. In the end, the therapist asked Li Jie and his parents to do a ritual together. Li Jie recalled, "She [the therapist] placed a ring on my head and each of us took a ring from her hand. Then she took out another object from her bag and put it there. She asked one of my parents to kneel down and say something to the other and they switched roles. I stood aside and watched them while they were doing that. I saw both of them were crying while being intermediated by the woman [the therapist]." When asked how he felt in that experience, Li Jie said, "I didn't have much feelings or reactions. To be honest, I didn't feel it was very helpful to me…I was forced to go there with them (Li Jie's parents) and listen to the doctrine…I think it was more helpful to my parents…Maybe it helped me relieve a little bit."

Although this experience was not as helpful as Li Jie expected, it might have set an expectation that therapists would provide something more concrete than just talking. Therefore, when his American therapist did not provide a concrete intervention such as a specific and concrete suggestion in a structured therapy session to help him deal with his issue quickly, Li Jie felt disappointed.

Moreover, Li Jie mentioned “自我反省” (introspection and self-examination) as a potential benefit from therapy. Specifically, he introspected and examined “what I did wrong and how I did it wrong” that led people bully him on internet. Li Jie’s preference of introspection and self-examination demonstrated an internal locus of responsivity. Introspection and self-examination are also a moral practice that is valued in traditional Chinese culture and in school education in China.

Li Na

Individual Textural Description

Li Na came to the U.S. to pursue her master’s degree in marine science. Li Na chose to study abroad because her field in China was still behind the U.S. in its development. Therefore, Li Na had an aspiration that she would learn a lot in her field in the U.S. and have many opportunities for research and jobs. Moreover, many senior students in Li Na’s major in her university in China went abroad for graduate school, which made Li Na look forward to following their steps. Additionally, Li Na was expecting to experience a different culture and life abroad.

When Li Na first came to the U.S., she was excited, but at the same time she also experienced a culture shock due to the difference between China and the U.S. Specifically, she experienced a difference in interaction and communication style with Americans. Li Na

experienced American's style as more enthusiastic and direct. Additionally, Li Na experienced a difficulty adjusting to the drinking culture at her American university. Li Na found that many of her American friends liked to hang out at bars and drink alcohol, which was a new experience for her. In order to make more American friends, Li Na pushed herself to go to bars with her friends even though she did not like drinking that much. Gradually, Li Na found herself enjoying hanging out and chatting with her American friends even at bars. It gave Li Na and her friends an opportunity to know more about each other outside of the classroom. Later, Li Na realized that it was not about what they did together; instead, what mattered the most was if people genuinely wanted to know about each other, which helped a relationship develop further.

Li Na encountered language and cultural barriers in communication with American friends. She said, "I didn't quite understand what they were talking about, especially when topics were about American culture such as American TV shows or politics. I had no idea what they were talking about because I had no exposure to these things growing up in China. However, when they were very enthusiastic in having these conversations with each other I felt bad to interrupt them and ask them what they were talking about." At these moments, Li Na felt awkward. However, Li Na never felt that she was excluded by her American friends. She felt that with more time living in the U.S., her English skills had improved, and she became more familiar with certain topics and issues in American society; therefore, she felt less awkward.

While Li Na was trying to adjust herself to the new environment and make new friends in the U.S., studying abroad also brought an impact on Li Na's relationship with her friends in China. She said, "I have been in the U.S. for about a year. It might be due to the distance and time difference, I started to lose contact with many old friends in China."

As mentioned earlier, Li Na came to the U.S. with a goal for academic success. She was able to gain more knowledge but at the same time also experienced a difference in academic norm between China and the U.S, which brought her challenges in self-efficacy. First of all, studying and conducting research in English was a big challenge to Li Na. Li Na encountered many terminologies in her field and colloquial people used in daily conversations, which she had never learned when she studied English in China. Facing the barrier in English, Li Na had to spend more time studying compared to her American cohort. Therefore, Li Na faced a dilemma when her American friends invited her to hangout, but she had to finish her study first. Li Na complained about the efficiency of her studying and doing research in the U.S. She said, “I feel like I am not working hard enough.”

Moreover, Li Na experienced a difficulty in relationships with her advisor and her cohort in the U.S. Specifically, Li Na’s American advisor respected and valued Li Na’s autonomy and initiatives. Li Na had difficulty adjusting to this mentoring style at first. As a result, she did not have much communication with her advisor and felt unsure about the direction of her research. However, at the time of our second interview, which was about two years later, Li Na realized that she could have communicated more with her advisor in her first year. She said, “[Back then] I preferred to solve problems all by myself…I worried about asking a stupid question…Now I realized that it was not helpful to my work efficiency. After having more interactions with my advisor, I realized that he is a really good advisor. He wants you to have and share your own thoughts and ideas. He is very willing to help you if you ask him for help.” In terms of the relationship with other students in the same program, Li Na was appreciative that they were all friendly and thus she was very willing to hang out with them. However, due to a difference in

research topics, Li Na did not receive much help from senior students in the program, which was different from her experience in China.

Studying abroad fostered Li Na's personal growth. Instead of relying on parents in China, Li Na had to learn how to take care of herself and plan her life, which means she needed to be more responsible for herself. For example, she cooked every day. Li Na had two car accidents in the U.S., and she had to deal with everything by herself. However, as an international student, she did not have much knowledge about insurance and relevant laws in the U.S. Therefore, it was stressful to Li Na. Although the process was challenging, Li Na was appreciative of her experiences and felt that she had grown up a lot.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges and stress, as an international student, Li Na also experienced barriers and challenges in internship and job application in the U.S. Specifically, Li Na experienced a language barrier as a disadvantage, which impacted her confidence. Moreover, many of the internship or job opportunities in her field in the U.S. are positions working for the government, which are only open to U.S. citizens. Li Na spent a lot of time preparing her application for a fellowship last year. However, she was not chosen in the end because she was not a U.S. citizen. Li Na also failed to find a job in her field in the U.S. before she graduated.

In terms of coping strategies of stress, most of time Li Na would talk to her partner who is also in the U.S. and her sister who is in China for catharsis and emotional support. However, Li Na denied that she would talk to her friends too much about her stress because she did not want it to be a burden to them, who also have their own struggles to deal with. Moreover, Li Na would relax by doing chores on weekends.

Li Na had no experience with counseling by the time she completed our interviews. She denied that she had ever felt a need. Li Na said, “I won’t seek counseling unless I can’t solve problems by myself.” The aforementioned coping strategies were sufficient for Li Na to overcome the challenges and to manage the stress she faced in the U.S. However, Li Na also mentioned her curiosity about counseling and stated that she would seek counseling services if she feels a need.

When asked about her first reaction to counseling, Li Na said, “I think it’s an interesting field. It is a high-end and classy job…I think it is new to China and people living in some big cities might need it.” Li Na expected that people could find solutions through counseling for problems such as marriage issues, childhood trauma, neurasthenia, overwhelming stress, or for forensic purposes. Li Na said, “I think that family and friends may not be able to give you much constructive suggestion but they can give you company. Counseling may help you find the reason why you have a problem. It can analyze the problem more rationally and try to solve the root of it.”

When thinking about seeing a therapist in the U.S., Li Na did not show much concern about language barrier; instead, she was concerned that American therapists do not know much about the society and culture in China, thus they are unable to understand the deep issues behind a presenting concern. Li Na said, “For example, many Chinese students want to make a lot of money, which can be a stressor. I think many people in China today are mammonites. However, if you talk about this with Americans, many of them won’t understand or agree. This is my feeling based on my communications with my American friends. They value living their lives in the ways they like. For example, doing the things they like to do and hanging out with friends.

Living a life that they like is most important to many of my American friends. Differences in values like this might be a barrier for me and an American therapist to understand each other."

As for barriers to seeking counseling services in the U.S., Li Na was unaware of the resources of mental health services on campus. One factor contributed to her unawareness was that she did not feel a need for such services and thus she never looked up information. Second, Li Na could not remember if she ever saw any introduction of such services on campus. She said, "Undergraduates might get more exposure to information like this than graduate students. As a graduate student, most of the time I work in the building of our department. All my classes are in the same building." Additionally, Li Na described herself as an introvert, and therefore, she said, "I typically don't like to talk to someone who I am not familiar with."

When asked to give suggestions to the university and the mental health clinics on campus so they can better serve Chinese international students like her, Li Na had multiple ideas. She suggested that they reach out more to international graduate students, help them become aware of the resources, what services they can provide, and the costs of their services.

Individual Structural Description

The difficulty that Li Na faced in developing relationships with Americans seems to be partially related to the cultural differences in leisure activities between China and the U.S. The town where Li Na's American university is located has a prevalent drinking culture. Many American students like to hang out in local bars. However, college students in China do not have this drinking culture and they have different leisure activities. For example, when Li Na was an undergraduate student in China, she liked to visit local scenic spots, go window-shopping, eat out, and sing karaoke with her friends. They rarely hung out at a bar. Therefore, it was difficult

for Li Na to adjust to the American university drinking/bar culture when she first came to the U.S. searching for potential American friends.

Under the academic challenge and stress, Li Na blamed herself for not working hard enough. She also would feel guilty if she complained of external barriers such as language and the cultural difference. Doing so made Li Na feel she was “finding excuses” for herself. Therefore, Li Na demonstrated an internal locus of responsibility, which is an attribution orientation that tends to attribute hardship to an individual’s personal inadequacies and shortcomings (Jones, Kanouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, & Weiner, 1972; Sue & Sue, 2016).

The relationship Li Na had with her professors in China set her with an expectation that she would have a similar relationship with her American advisor in the U.S., which turned out to be wrong. The mentoring style, which Li Na was familiar with in China was that her advisor would teach her to do research step by step and even micromanage her study. Therefore, the guidance from her advisor in China was specific. Li Na was playing a more passive role and was sort of dependent on her advisor in that relationship. Li Na tried to transfer that experience to the U.S. and expected that her American advisor would have a similar mentoring style. However, it turned out that she was wrong. Li Na’s American advisor valued and respected Li Na’s autonomy. If Li Na did not initiate contact with him, he would not reach out to her or assign work to her very often. Moreover, the concern about losing face (丢脸 in Chinese) impeded Li Na from asking for help. She worried about asking “stupid questions.”

Li Na also experienced a difference in relationship with fellow students in the same program. In China, both undergrads and graduate students typically live in residence halls on campus through their academic career at the university. Moreover, students who study the same major are arranged by the university to live together. Therefore, Li Na’s roommates in her

Chinese university were all students studying her major and people who lived next door were also in the same major. This arrangement motivated students from the same major to get to know each other more than fellow students from other majors. Thus, it was more likely for Li Na to develop close relationships with students in her major. This residence hall arrangement also applies to graduate students in China, which is very different from the situation in the U.S.

Li Na felt that she had grown up a lot living and studying in the U.S. Part of this personal growth came from the opportunities she had in the U.S. to interact with people outside of the university. Li Na experienced a difference in the relationship between herself, university, and society. Li Na's university in China was located in a suburb area, which is very common in China. Different from the U.S., suburbs in China are usually less developed in every aspect. Therefore, Li Na said, "My life was simpler in college in China. Basically, I stayed in the dorm, went to classes, ate at the dining hall, and did homework. It didn't feel much different compared to high school…I didn't have too much interactions with the society outside of the university campus because the university campus was isolated…My social circle was small—only other fellow students and my professors. Therefore, interpersonal relationships were simpler." In contrast, Li Na experienced a closer relationship between herself and the community outside of school in the U.S. She mentioned that universities in the U.S. do not have a fence or wall that separate them from the community. Additionally, Li Na experienced a culture here for students and professors to do voluntary outreach in local community for the purpose of popularization of sciences. Li Na liked this open academic environment and culture and liked the involvement in local communities.

However, Li Na faced a big challenge in internship and job application in her field in the U.S. as an international student. This difficulty might be related to the current sociopolitical

environment in the U.S. with current presidential administration. Li Na felt that the sociopolitical environment in the U.S. was not as friendly to international graduates as before in the job market. Additionally, she felt many recent relevant policies in the U.S. were not as supportive to her field as before. Li Na hoped that she could stay in the U.S. after she completed her master's degree, but she could not find a job. Therefore, she decided to pursue a doctoral degree in statistics, which was thought to be a more practical field, so that she may have more job opportunities in the U.S. in the future.

Although Li Na had no experience with counseling either in China or the U.S, she showed a curiosity about this field. The psychology class Li Na took back to high school in China seemed to have planted a seed of her interest in psychology and counseling. There was a psychology teacher in Li Na's high school, who gave student psychology classes once a week. Li Na liked that teacher because her class was relaxing, and students could play games in class, which was a big relief in the extremely stressful academic environment in her high school. The psychology teacher was also a school counselor. Although Li Na was curious about counseling, she never sought counseling because she did not feel a need. Moreover, she thought it would be embarrassing to seek counseling. Li Na said, "I thought it would be awkward to tell the darkness of your mind to someone who you were not familiar with. Also, I was introverted, so I rarely reach out for something like that actively." When asked for further clarification of the "darkness of your mind," Li Na said, "I meant things like personal shortcomings such as selfishness and laziness. My shortcomings that I was not willing to tell a stranger." Unfortunately, the psychology class, which were liked by most students was not offered in senior year in high school, a year that students were supposed to completely focus on the preparation for their college entrance exams.

As for attitudes toward seeking counseling services, on one hand, Li Na said that she would be open to seek such services if she felt a need. On the other hand, Li Na expressed her hesitance. Part of her hesitance was related to her concern about potential communication and culture barriers in counseling. Moreover, hearing some friends talking about their counseling experience also played a role in her attitude formation and decision making about seeking such help. Li Na had a Chinese friend at her university who shared with Li Na her experience of seeing a therapist on campus. According to Li Na, her friend did not have a good counseling experience with her therapist who demonstrated a lack of multicultural competence in counseling. Hearing stories like this made Li Na hesitant to seek help even though she knew that it was just her friend's experience.

Composite Textural Description

After studying the experiences of each co-researcher individually, the next step of data analysis was to depict the experiences of the group as a whole. Therefore, I developed the following composite textural description by summarizing and synthesizing the invariant meanings and themes of all six co-researchers as a whole group to demonstrate what they experienced in acculturation and their perceptions of professional mental health services.

Studying in the U.S. was experienced as a journey that was full of excitement, challenges, and changes to the co-researchers. As international students from China, they experienced acculturation and personal growth with a mixture of laughs and tears in the U.S.

The journey started with a mixture of excitement and nervousness about studying abroad. Every co-researcher was excited about the opportunity to study in the U.S. They packed their dreams and aspirations, which took great courage. They started their journey in a country that is distant from home both geographically and culturally. Even though none of them had any prior

experience of visiting the U.S., each had their own imaginations and expectations about the U.S. Most of these imaginations and expectations came from media, books, and friends who had visited the U.S. Some co-researchers imagined the U.S. as more developed and advanced, and therefore, as a desirable country.

At the beginning of their journeys, every co-researcher was excited about experiencing the U.S. culture and was looking forward to integrating themselves into the U.S. society. One participant even mentioned that she was looking forward to "being American" at first. Specifically, they expected to have many close American friends, go to places where Americans usually hang out, and even behave like Americans. Therefore, many of them especially those who were undergraduate students preferred to have American roommates during their first semester in the U.S. with a hope that they would have more opportunities to interact and communicate with Americans. Some of the co-researchers even intentionally chose to reduce the amount of time spent with other Chinese international students.

While they were busy with getting exposure to the society and culture in the U.S., which was exciting, every co-researcher started to face the first barrier in their acculturation and that was the barrier of language. English was a second or third language to all of them. This language barrier prevented them from having deep and meaningful conversations with their American friends. It can feel exhausting and frustrating to immerse into an unfamiliar language environment. Overnight, they found that they could not express themselves as smoothly and clearly as before. This not only impacted communication but also impacted their confidence. A lack of confidence prevented co-researchers from having more personal and meaningful conversations with Americans, which is a prerequisite for the development of a closer relationship. Therefore, it was a vicious circle.

In addition to the language barrier, co-researchers also faced a cultural barrier in communication with Americans. For example, many co-researchers mentioned that they were unfamiliar with the topics their American friends were interested in such as music, books, TV shows, movies, and politics in the U.S. Knowledge in these areas can hardly be learned in short time. Many co-researchers oftentimes felt left out and awkward in group conversations with American friends. One co-researcher experienced a difference in the way people think, talk and even joke between Chinese and Americans. She said, “When I was in China, in that cultural context, my emotional intelligence was well developed. And I have well developed my skills in communications as well. I knew what words and tones to use on different occasions to express my thoughts and feelings appropriately. But I don’t know these norms in the U.S…I feel that after coming to the U.S. I have to relearn everything from the very beginning just like a baby.”

Facing the aforementioned language and cultural barriers, some co-researchers felt exhausted, incapable, and powerless in acculturation to the U.S. One co-researcher said that she felt powerless because no matter how hard she tried, she was not American enough. Therefore, many co-researchers started to question themselves what it meant to be integrated into the U.S. culture. As a result, they changed their acculturation strategies by shifting focus from making American friends to making friends with their fellow nationals at the university. They found it easier to communicate with Chinese students who spoke the same language and shared the same culture. From there, many co-researchers found a sense of belonging.

While some co-researchers found a comfort zone with their Chinese friends at the university, some other co-researchers, their experience with fellow nationals were not as good as they expected. It was strained and sometimes even hurtful due to competitions between each other. For example, two undergraduate co-researchers experienced rumors and cyber bullying

from other Chinese international students at their university, which brought them tremendous distress. One co-researcher described her experience with other Chinese international students at her university as being trapped in a besieged fortress, where she was struggling in a small group, trying to get out, but found she could not.

Every co-researcher had an expectation that they would receive a high quality higher education in the U.S. However, every co-researcher experienced a difference in academic norms and requirements between the U.S. and China, which, as a consequence, brought them stress. The first challenge they faced at school was English. Even though all participants passed the TOEFL test with a decent grade, they still encountered a difficulty in understanding lectures in English at first. In addition, they required them more time to study after class compared to most American students due to this language barrier. This additional study time may have taken time away from socializing and self-care activities. For some graduate student participants, they also experienced a challenge in their relationships with advisors. Some co-researchers reported a fear of asking for help from their American advisors. Achieving academic success played a significant role in most co-researchers' self-worth. However, they were conscious of making mistakes and were afraid of asking "stupid" questions.

Facing the aforementioned challenges studying and living in the U.S., co-researchers formed their coping strategies. Some co-researchers would like to talk to their Chinese friends and partners for a catharsis and emotional support. They would also try to relax by watching TV, seeing movies, working out, or doing some chores on weekends. However, some co-researchers chose to not to talk about their difficulties and stress with their parents in China with a concern of making them worried. Some co-researchers also mentioned that sometimes they were hesitant to talk about their stress with their friends especially when the stressors were relationship

problems that were related to some other Chinese international students. Some co-researchers mentioned that they preferred to solving problems by themselves. They would not seek help from friends unless they failed to solve the problem by themselves. If friends' support and help still could not solve the problem, they would try to solve the problem by themselves one more time. Only after all these options were tried out but failed would they reach out and seek professional help such as counseling services.

Some co-researcher expressed their sadness toward the tragedy of the suicide of a Chinese international student at the university. One co-researcher even met that student two months before the tragedy occurred. She was shocked to hear his death. Some co-researchers felt disappointed about the way the university dealt with this incident. One co-researcher felt that the university did not show enough care to the psychological wellbeing of Chinese international students. Another co-researcher wrote an email to the principal to express her frustration after this incident, but she did not receive any reply from the principal. Some co-researchers thought that the university should have used this tragic incident as an opportunity to reach out to Chinese international students at the university, give them emotional support, help them increase the awareness of their mental health, and introduce the helping resources that were available on campus. They were disappointed that none of these actions were taken.

Co-researchers reported that they would seek counseling services at the university if they felt a need. Some co-researchers reported curiosity about counseling. However, they were aware that their attitudes could not represent all Chinese students. One co-researcher referred her friends to counseling, but her recommendation was not well-accepted. One co-researcher talked about her experience of receiving counseling with her parents once. Her parents were unhappy about her seeing a counselor. One co-researcher mentioned a possible generation difference in

attitudes toward mental health. She said, “I don’t think most young Chinese adults who were born in and after 1990s would have much bias against mental health problems.” Another co-researcher mentioned a possible regional difference in people’s attitudes toward mental health problems and relevant services. Specifically, she thought that people who grew up and lived in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai in China were more likely to accept professional mental health services such as counseling.

Every co-researcher had their own imaginations and expectations about counseling. These imaginations and expectations included that therapists would help clients get their accumulated emotions off their chest through talk and activities; therapists would help correct the “logic errors” of clients; therapists would guide clients do a psychoanalysis of their problems; and therapists would persuade clients to forget their trouble and distress temporarily. Moreover, many co-researchers demonstrated an expectation that clients could receive concrete suggestions and guidance for problem-solving in counseling.

As for barriers to seeking counseling services, a common barrier that most co-researchers identified was a lack of knowledge about helping resources on campus. Every co-researcher mentioned that the university and the mental health clinics on campus in particular could have done a better job to reach out to Chinese international students. Language was another common barrier. Almost every co-researcher mentioned a concern about communication problems with an American therapist who did not speak Mandarin, did not know much about Chinese culture, and does not understand the influence of that culture and their prior experience in China on their current distress in the U.S. Some co-researchers had already experienced many difficulties in their daily conversations in English, and they did not want to create an extra challenge for themselves by talking to a therapist in English.

Three out of the six co-researchers in this study had an experience of receiving counseling services at the university. Each of them experienced significant language and cultural barriers in their communication with their American therapists. In counseling, they were not communicated well in terms of what their treatments would look like. Some therapists did not demonstrate enough multicultural competence in therapy. These factors altogether impeded these co-researchers from forming a mutual understanding with and a trust toward their American therapists. Moreover, some of them experienced the progress in therapy as slower than the problem-solving treatment they expected. These co-researchers failed to gain what they wanted in the first one or two sessions in therapy. As a result, many of them dropped out of therapy quickly.

One co-researcher had a good counseling experience the second time she sought counseling at another clinic on campus. She experienced her second therapist as helpful and genuinely caring. This therapist spent lots of time trying to understand the co-researcher and her specific goals for therapy. She was invited to collaborate with her therapist to create a treatment plan together; therefore, she had clear understanding about the progress of their treatment. In addition, this therapist was trying to take this co-researcher's Chinese cultural background into consideration and thus incorporated theories and practice such as Yin ang Yang from the Chinese culture into their treatment. Although the therapist's understanding of Asian culture was quite stereotypical from this co-researcher's perspective, this co-researcher still appreciated her therapist's endeavor and her being culturally considerate in their work together. These aforementioned factors fostered the establishment of an effective communication and a trusting therapeutic relationship.

Although many of their counseling experiences in the U.S. were not as successful as expected, these co-researchers still identified some benefits from therapy. One co-researcher's experience of receiving counseling services helped break her prior bias against mental illness. She said, "Making the decision to seek counseling signified that I started to admit and face my problem." Receiving counseling also helped this co-researcher evaluate her mental health status compared to other students. This comparison was important and meaningful to her in a sense that it confirmed the necessity for an external help and it reassured her issue was not outrageously problematic. It instilled a hope for betterment. Another benefit some co-researchers identified was having an outlet for emotions through processing in therapy. Moreover, receiving counseling helped increase these co-researchers' awareness of their mental health needs. For example, some of the co-researchers mentioned that they started to read more articles and news about mental health on social media after their therapy. All the co-researchers who had an experience of counseling said that they would refer their friends who they think might need professional help to counseling.

Composite Structural Description

Based on the total six individual structural descriptions, I developed a composite structural description for the whole group of co-researchers through the utilization of imagination, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the co-researchers' experiences from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at the underlying and precipitating factors that account for co-researchers' experiences; in other words, "how" co-researchers experienced their acculturation and "how" they formed their perceptions of professional mental health services.

Every co-researcher showed aspirations to study in the U.S. before they started their journey. Their excitement was not limited to a yearning for a better education or experiencing a different culture. Most co-researchers expected to “融入美国” (infuse and integrate into the U.S. culture and thus be accepted and become a part of it). One co-researcher even explicitly stated that she wanted to “be American.” Being Westernized or Americanized seemed to be a goal for some co-researchers that they expressed either explicitly or implicitly in the interviews.

These aforementioned aspirations to the U.S. might be attributed to a belief that the U.S. is better than China in many aspects. The information and education these co-researchers received in China about Western countries and their superiority since they were little might have played a significant role in the formation about these ideas and beliefs about the superiority and thus desirability of the U.S. One co-researcher shared her experience: “We received an education in China since we were little that Western developed countries are more advanced than China in many areas, so we need to learn from them. For example, TV news in China often reports on Chinese people’s bad public manners. Sometimes those news will compare these inappropriate public manners with the good ones shown by people in Western developed countries. I feel that I have been instilled with a belief that Western countries are better and superior.” Even today, Western developed country is a term that is commonly used in media and school education in China while China is categorized as a developing country.

Holding such beliefs, together with a language barrier might impact some co-researchers’ confidence in communicating with Americans. One co-researcher described her confidence as varying in different contexts with different people. Specifically, when she thought someone was stronger, better, or superior, she would be less confident and be more self-conscious about her “weakness” such as her English skills and unfamiliarity with etiquette in the U.S.

It is noteworthy that there is a big cultural distance between China and the U.S. (Berry, 1997; Shi & Wang, 2011). This big cultural distance influenced the acculturation of every co-researcher. It brought many new experiences, which was one of their initial main goals for studying abroad. However, a big cultural distance could also act as a barrier for adjustment in a new culture. For example, due to the cultural distance, it was less likely for the co-researchers to have shared interests, hobbies, and tastes of music or movies, etc. with American students. However, having something in common like this is essential for the development of a long-term close relationship. For example, one co-researcher mentioned a difference in leisure activities between China and the U.S. Specifically, she experienced a difficulty in adjusting to the drinking/bar culture in the U.S. at first. Another undergraduate co-researcher was shocked by the prevalence of drug (i.e., cannabis) use among American college students, which he could not appreciate.

Co-researchers also experienced a cultural difference in education between China and the U.S., which brought them challenges to adjust to and stress to deal with. One co-researcher described the education she received in China as an "assembly line," the goal of which was to teach students the right answer. In contrast, she felt the goal of the education she received in her graduate program (i.e., Educational Psychology) in the U.S. as more focusing on cultivating students' creative and critical thinking. Therefore, she encountered challenges at first in the U.S.

The difference of the education between China and the U.S. also impacted the Chinese students' relationships with their American professors and advisors. Some co-researchers experienced more of a power differential in their relationships with professors and advisors in China. These co-researchers imposed a pressure on themselves to be excellent as a way to please and satisfy their professors and advisors. One co-researcher mentioned that she had high self-

expectations and also felt a high expectation from her American advisor. Therefore, she was fearful that she was not doing good enough, so her advisor might be disappointed with her.

This cultural difference in power differential also contributes to a difference in mentoring style between China and the U.S and thus brought challenges to co-researchers who were graduate students. One co-researcher's prior Chinese advisor had a micromanaging/parenting mentor style and gave the co-researcher specific tasks and guidance. In contrast, her American advisor valued and respected students' autonomy, independent thinking, and initiatives. Switching and adjusting to a more relaxing mentoring style and equal relationship was difficult to some co-researchers at beginning.

Additionally, growing up in China, many co-researchers were also influenced by the face (面子 in Chinese) culture (Hwang, 1987) and thus were concerned about losing face (丢脸 in Chinese) especially in interactions with a person such as a professor or advisor who had authority to evaluate them. Therefore, it was not uncommon for many co-researchers to mention fears of making mistakes in their work, asking "stupid questions" in class, or asking advisors for help, which could be regarded as signs of self-insufficiency.

Although the academic norm in the U.S. is different from the one in China and thus brought challenges and stress to co-researchers. The new academic environment also fostered personal growth to some of them. Part of the growth could be attributed to the opportunities students have at American universities to interact with people outside of the university and to involve in community activities. Universities in China are typically located in suburb areas, which usually means less resources and less developed in every aspect compared to the city center. Moreover, universities are typically surrounded by fences or walls that might isolate students from the outside community. College students rarely drive cars to school because most

of them live in residence halls on campus throughout their academic career in college. One co-researcher said that her life in college in China was simpler and “it didn’t feel much different from high school.” In contrast, just like most universities in the U.S., the university where the co-researchers were at has an open campus where students have more opportunities to get involved in the local community and society outside of the university. For example, one co-researcher mentioned that she liked a culture here that scholars at universities do voluntary outreach to the local community for the purpose of popularization of their research and sciences.

Many co-researchers demonstrated high self-expectations for academic success in the U.S. and meanwhile, they showed an internal locus of responsibility. This internal locus of responsibility might be related to a traditional moral practice of introspection/self-examination in Chinese culture. Most Chinese have heard about the self-examination story of the ancient philosopher Tsang Zi (505 BC – 435 BC) who was a follower of Confucius. Tsang Zi examined himself on three points daily: “whether, in intercourse with friends, I may have been not sincere; whether I may have not mastered and practiced the instructions of my teacher." Although the story occurred over two thousand years ago, it was recorded in the Analects of Confucius, which is a collection of sayings and ides attributed to Confucius and his followers. The Analects is the “bible” of Confucianism and is still influential today to Chinese all over the world.

Geographic locations in the U.S. also impact acculturative experience of Chinese international students. One co-researcher had graduated from college and was pursuing a master’s degree at the University of Southern California by the time she completed our second interview. According to her, she experienced more diversity and felt more welcomed and confident living and studying in L.A. as a Chinese international student compared to her prior experience in Georgia. After four years of living in the U.S., she might be more acculturated at

the time she started her program at USC. However, it was also undeniable that the different regional cultures brought her different experiences. She was the one who had aspirations to “be American” four years ago when she came to the U.S. for the first time. This different cultural experience prompted her to consider what the so-called American culture is.

Another large-scale factor that influenced the experience of the co-researchers in the U.S. was the sociopolitical environment in the U.S. They experienced the transition from Obama administration to the current Trump administration. Some co-researchers felt that the current sociopolitical environment in the U.S. was not as friendly as before. As international students, they experienced more barriers such as their visa status in the job market and thus felt more helpless, powerless, and less competitive compared to American students. One researcher also noticed a negative impact of the new administration and relevant new policies on her study area in natural science. The changes in the sociopolitical environment made co-researchers especially those who planned to find a job in the U.S. feel anxious.

Some co-researchers mentioned that they had psychology class in their high schools in China, and that was the first time they learned about psychology. Although different from psychotherapy, the psychology class cultivated them a curiosity about relevant areas such as psychotherapy. However, none of these co-researchers ever received counseling services before coming to the U.S. Therefore, watching TV shows and movies especially the ones from Western countries helped tickle their curiosity about psychology and psychotherapy. The theory and practice of psychoanalysis are often portrayed in movies and TV shows; therefore, they were most often mentioned by the co-researches when they were asked to talk about their knowledge about counseling. However, a problem here was that not many movies or shows portrayed psychotherapy accurately. One co-researcher watched a character receiving hypnosis in a TV

show and the character's memory was altered by her therapist. Therefore, this co-researcher formed an idea that counseling would help people forget their trouble.

In therapy, every co-researcher who had an experience of receiving counseling services at the university felt that counseling with their American therapists was not as helpful as they expected. Language barrier was universal across individuals. English was the second language to all co-researchers. They were not confident about their English skills and thus might feel more nervous when spoke English, not to mention talking to a therapist who they regarded as an authority figure in therapy. For those co-researchers who were looking for an emotion catharsis, they encountered difficulties in finding the right English words to describe their feelings. Additionally, due to a cultural difference, co-researches did not feel that their American therapists could understand their cultural background and values. On the other side, some therapists demonstrated a lack of multicultural competency in their work with Chinese international student clients. For example, they could have helped their Chinese clients better understand what counseling is and invited clients to create a treatment plan collaboratively considering the cultural difference between them and their Chinese clients. All these factors contributed to a failure of establishing a working alliance between these co-researchers and their American therapists. As a result, these co-researchers dropped out of their therapy quickly.

Many co-researchers demonstrated a preference of forbearance coping style and regarded counseling as the last option on their list of coping-strategies and helping resources when having distress. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear one co-researcher said that she did not take the action to seek counseling until the issue she was facing became very serious. There could be many other reasons behind her delay of help seeking, but the unfamiliarity with counseling and the unawareness of helping resources on campus could definitely be counted as two contributing

factors. Almost every co-researcher mentioned that they were unfamiliar with the mental health resources on campus. Thus, many of them suggested that the university and the mental health clinics on campus in particular do more outreach to Chinese international students to help them know what services they can provide, what counseling is, who can benefit from it, when is the time to seek help, how different it is compared to psychiatric services, where their clinics are, and how to schedule appointments, etc. Only with a better understanding about what professional mental health services are, more Chinese international students like these six co-researchers will be more likely to utilize these services.

Textual-Structural Synthesis Description

Based on the two composite descriptions, I developed the following synthesis description, representing the group as a whole. The goal of creating a synthesis description is to describe the meanings and essences of the co-researchers' experiences of acculturation in the U.S. and their perfections of professional mental health services.

Studying abroad was an adventurous journey to the six international students from China who participated in this study. The journey began with a person who was longing for personal growth, willing to leave home and was aspiring and adventurous to experience a different culture. An imagination about the U.S. and a yearning for studying at an American university was the start point of this journey.

Although none of the co-researchers had visited the U.S. before their studying abroad, they were all looking forward to learning U.S. culture and seeing themselves being infused and integrated (融入) into the U.S. society, and even "be American" in some aspects. Either explicitly or implicitly, many co-researchers expressed a thought or belief that the U.S. is more developed, advanced, and even superior, and thus is desirable. Therefore, being Westernized or

Americanized became a goal to some Chinese international students at first. The successful export of the U.S. culture to China and the education and information the younger generation received in China about the U.S. seem to play a significant role in the formation of such belief and aspiration to the U.S.

Having such belief and expectations influenced the acculturative strategies Chinese international students may have at the beginning of their journeys in the U.S. Specifically, many co-researchers spent more time hanging out and making friends with American students in their first semester in the U.S. Some of them even intentionally reduced the amount time they spent with fellow Chinese students.

However, every co-researcher experienced challenge in socialization and communication with American students, which impeded them from developing a meaningful and close relationship with each other. English is the second or third language to every co-researcher in this study. They felt that the English education they received in China did not prepare them well enough to communicate fluently with Americans.

In addition to the language barrier, Chinese students may also face a big cultural distance between China and the U.S. On one hand, this cultural distance can be fascinating and meet their expectation of experiencing a different culture. On the other hand, it can also act as a big challenge and barrier in acculturation of Chinese international students. Due to the cultural distance, it is less likely for these Chinese international students to have things in common with their American fellow students such as interests, hobbies, tastes of music or movies, leisure activities, etc., which are essential for the development of a close relationship.

Due to these aforementioned barriers and challenges, most co-researchers encountered a bottleneck in the development of relationships with Americans, which made them feel exhausted

and powerless. No matter how hard they tried, they could not fully “融入美国” (infuse and integrate into the U.S. culture and thus be accepted and become a part of it) if the expected standard of success was making close American friends and knowing the so-called American culture well. Therefore, later some of them started to consider what the so-called American culture is.

Facing the bottleneck in socializing with Americans, some people may start to reevaluate their original goal of “融入美国” (infuse and integrate into the U.S. culture and thus be accepted and become a part of it) and what it really means to them. In this study, some co-researchers started to realize the importance of their Chinese cultural identity. Under this circumstance, many co-researchers chose to change their acculturation strategies and started to seek support and a sense of belonging from their fellow nationals at the university. It was easier to communicate with fellow Chinese due to the share of the same language and cultural background. Just like the situations in most American universities today, Chinese international student is the biggest subgroup of international students at the co-researcher’s university. There were over a thousand Chinese international students at the university. Therefore, it was not too difficult to find people who they could make friends with.

However, there can be lots of competitions among Chinese international students. Some co-researchers in this study had never thought that their relationships with fellow Chinese would become a major source of distress abroad. The relationships with some fellow Chinese students were strained and even hurtful to some co-researchers who experienced competitions, cyber bullying, and harmful rumors from other Chinese students at the university. To these co-researchers, their experience of personal relationships in the U.S. was like being trapped in a besieged fortress, where they were struggling in as small group of Chinse student, trying to get

out, but found there was nowhere to go because they also encountered an enormous difficulty in forming meaning relationships with Americans.

Every co-researcher was looking forward to receiving a good higher education at their American university. While they were receiving good education, they also faced a challenge in adjusting to the education system and academic norm in the U.S, which are very different from the ones in China. The differences Chinese international students may experience include but are not limited to language, arrangement of student housing, teaching and learning styles, relationships with professors and advisors, power distance between teacher and student, interactions and relationships among student, university and the outside community, and the values and ultimate goals of education. Therefore, when the co-researchers tried to transfer the ways they were familiar with in the education system in China to apply in the new environment in the U.S., they encountered difficulties, frustration, and stress.

Facing the aforementioned challenges and stress while studying and living in the U.S., every co-researcher found their ways to cope, which included asking help and support from friends (most of the time from Chinese friends) and partners, talking to parents in China, and doing leisure activities. However, sometimes they were hesitant to talk to friends or parents with a concern of making them worry or feel burdened. In those situations, they preferred a forbearance coping style (i.e., rely on themselves to “digest” and solve the problem). To most co-researchers, seeking professional help including counseling oftentimes was the last option on their to-do list.

Many co-researchers demonstrated an appreciation of internal locus of responsibility and a practice of introspection/self-examination when they faced difficulties. In other words, they were inclined to find the “problem” within themselves and fix it by themselves. This might be

influenced by the traditional Chinese moral practice of 自我反省 (introspection and self-examination) that was valued in Confucianism. Additionally, an unfamiliarity with helping resources on campus seemed common to all the co-researchers and thus might be another factor contributed to the underutilization of professional helping resources.

The two rounds of interview in this study were conducted during the transition of the U.S. presidential administrations. Therefore, inevitably, the co-researchers experienced an impact from the changes of the sociopolitical environment in the U.S. Some co-researchers felt that the environment in the current presidential administration was less friendly than before. Specifically, they experienced by themselves or heard other friends' experience of facing more barriers in internship and job application as international students due to their visa status and the cut of federal funding in certain fields such as nature science. The uncertainty of the proposed changes to H-1B visa (a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise) program made those co-researchers who were looking for a job in the U.S. feel anxious.

Three co-researchers had an experience of receiving individual counseling services at the university in the U.S. Most co-researchers did not know much about counseling before they sought the service. Counseling psychology as an academic discipline and professional practice originated in Western culture; therefore, it is still regarded as exotic to most Chinese today and thus is unpopular in Chinese society (Lim, Lim, Michael, Cai, & Schock, 2010). According to Lim and colleagues, Western psychotherapy was first introduced to China in the early 20th century but its development was halted during the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) when psychology and psychiatry were considered counterrevolutionary, bourgeois disciplines that exploited the masses. Western psychotherapy was not re-introduced to China until the 1980s, but

the bias against this discipline and its practice is still haunting in China today. Although the co-researchers did not hold as many biases like their parents' generation against mental health and related professional services, they still did not know much about psychotherapy or counseling.

However, many co-researchers demonstrated their curiosity toward psychology and counseling, and each co-researcher had their own imaginations and expectations about counseling. These imaginations and expectations included that counseling provides catharsis and psychoanalysis; therapists give quick diagnoses just like doctors, therapists help clients correct "logic errors"; therapists help clients forget their trouble and distress; and clients would receive concreate suggestions for problem-solving in therapy.

Taking psychology class in high school seemed to plant a seed of curiosity about psychology and counseling to some co-researchers. Watching TV shows and movies especially the ones from Western countries where psychotherapy is more common became a major access to tickle their curiosity about psychotherapy and thus played a role in the formation of their imaginations and expectations about psychotherapy.

The co-researchers identified several barriers to seeking counseling services at the university. For example, a lack of knowledge about mental health resources on campus and a lack of knowledge about the professional mental health services in general seemed to be two barriers faced by most co-researchers. International students are often underrepresented at American universities, which may place them in a vulnerable place. In these situations, they are less likely to trust something they have little knowledge about, not even to mention showing and talking about their vulnerabilities to a stranger. Language was another barrier that every co-researcher was concerned about in communication with a therapist in English. There was no therapist who could provide counseling in Mandarin at the university where these co-researchers

were at by the time this study was conducted. However, there were over one thousand Chinese international students at the university. In addition to language, some co-researchers also mentioned the cultural difference between them and American therapists might act as a barrier for therapists to understand their values and personal meanings of their prior life experiences in China and the cross-cultural experience in the U.S.

Three co-researchers had not felt a need for counseling services by the time they participated in this study. For the other three co-researchers who had an experience of seeking counseling services at the university, everybody encountered significant language and cultural barriers in communication with their American therapists in therapy. Moreover, some of them did not feel that their American therapists demonstrated enough multicultural competency in their work together, which impeded them from forming a good therapeutic relationship in counseling. As a result, most of these co-researchers dropped out of their therapy quickly.

It is noteworthy that a better multicultural competency can make a different experience on the side of clients. After the first unsatisfying counseling experience, one co-researcher sought counseling with a different therapist at a different clinic on campus about a year later. Different from her first therapist, her new therapist spent lots of time listening and trying to understand the co-researcher's experience, her needs, and goals for therapy. The co-researcher was invited to create her treatment plan together with the therapist. The therapist also took the co-researcher's Chinese cultural background into consideration at the very beginning of their work and tried to incorporate some Asian theories and practices into treatment. These endeavors made this co-researcher feel genuinely cared and thus they were able to establish a good therapeutic relationship despite a language barrier. The language barrier was no longer a determinant of the ultimate success of therapy in this experience.

Although not every co-researcher who sought counseling services at the university had a satisfying experience, they all said that they would recommend counseling to their friends if necessary. Although not as much helpful as they expected, some of these co-researchers still identified some benefits from receiving counseling. Receiving counseling helped co-researchers admit and face their issues. It helped break their prior bias against mental health and instilled a hope for betterment. Receiving counseling also helped them evaluate their mental health status compared to other people, which was important and meaningful to some co-researchers. Although facing a language barrier in therapy, these co-researchers still had a catharsis to some extent in therapy especially when they could not talk to their friends or families for certain reasons. Moreover, receiving counseling service helped increase these co-researchers' awareness of their mental health needs. Some of them sought bibliotherapy afterwards.

However, it is noteworthy that most of the aforementioned reported benefits were not directly from therapists' interventions in therapy. Instead, most of the positive changes that co-researchers experienced occurred outside of therapy due to what they did on their own. This puts a huge question mark on the effectiveness of psychotherapy to international students. Not experiencing the direct help or effectiveness in therapy may contribute to the early drop-out from therapy. As a consequence, it may make it less likely for co-researchers to seek such services again in the future.

All the co-researchers gave their suggestions to improve mental health services to Chinese international students on campus. Specifically, they suggested the university counseling center hire clinicians who can provide counseling in mandarin considering the steadily increasing number of international students from China at the university. Additionally, participants also recommended the university and the mental health clinics on campus initiate more outreach to

Chinese international students to introduce mental health and the professional services they provide. Moreover, they suggested that the mental health clinics on campus offer services that are specifically targeted to international students and improve the multicultural competency of their clinicians and staff so that they can better serve the mental health needs of international students who are from different cultures.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE STUDIES, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

In chapter one, I gave a brief introduction to this study. Specifically, I introduced the current population size of international students who are studying in the U.S. and their steady and rapid growth in size in the past two decades. I also detailed the big diversity within this group and narrowed down the focus to Asian international students and then to a specific subgroup-- international students from China, which was the target group that this study focused on. Further, I briefly introduced the cultural distance between China and the U.S. and the consequential acculturative challenges and stress, which Chinese students typically would experience studying and living in the U.S. Additionally, I also briefly mentioned the underutilization of counseling services at American universities among Asian international students including students from China. Moreover, I pointed out a deficiency of qualitative studies in the existing research in the area of acculturation of Chinese international students and their utilization of counseling services. I also discussed the necessity and potential meanings and benefits of conducting qualitative studies in this field, which led to a statement of the purpose of this study and the specific research questions.

In chapter two, I systematically reviewed the existing relevant studies in four areas (i.e., under four headings): 1) Who are Chinese international students? 2) Acculturation, 3) Acculturation and acculturative stress of Chinese international students, and 4) Psychological wellbeing of Chinese international students. Specifically, I reviewed the demography of Chinese international students in the U.S. in 2016, their rapidly growing trend in the past decade, and

their contribution to the U.S. society and economy. Additionally, I reviewed the literature in acculturation and the Acculturation Process Model, which was developed by Berry and his colleagues (1987) as well as the literature about the acculturation of Chinese international students. Furthermore, I reviewed the literature in psychological wellbeing of this population in the U.S. and their help seeking behavior. The existing studies in this field revealed an underutilization of professional mental health services in this population. Therefore, I reviewed articles that addressed the potential factors that might have contributed to this reported underutilization.

In chapter three, I introduced the conceptual framework and methodology that I used in this study. Specifically, I concisely reviewed the philosophical tradition behind social constructivism and explained why I chose to implement a social constructive interpretive framework in this study. Further, I also briefly examined the transcendental phenomenological research approach that I employed in this study. Then, I introduced the sample of this study (i.e., six international students who identified as Chinese at a southeast public university in the U.S.) and the recruitment methods that I used to locate these co-researchers. I also introduced the methods and procedures in collecting the data and in organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data. Moreover, I also reflected and wrote a subjectivity statement at the end of this chapter with a purpose of setting aside my prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the topic of this study as much as possible. In the subjectivity statement, I also detailed how I became interested in studying the acculturation of Chinese international students and their help seeking behavior. This process is termed as “epoche” in phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter four elucidated the textures and structures of my research findings. I used phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) to analyze the data and developed a textual

description for each co-researcher and then composed a composite textural description to describe what these co-researchers experienced in their acculturation in the U.S. as Chinese international students and their perceptions and experiences of receiving counseling services at an American university. Next, based on these textural descriptions, I employed imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994) to develop a structural description for each co-researcher and then composed a composite structural description to understand how the coresearchers experienced what they experienced. Moreover, I developed a synthesis of the meanings and essences of these experiences of the co-researchers.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, I will summarize what I have discovered about the experience of acculturation and the perceptions and experiences of seeking counseling services of my co-researchers. I will also distinguish my findings from prior studies in relevant areas, which I reviewed and summarized in my literature review. I will also critique my research methods and procedures, including the limits and advantages of my research design and methodology, as well as the future directions of research in this field. In the end, I will discuss the relevance of this study to me, to the field of counseling psychology, and to other areas of study such as administration and student affairs at universities in the U.S.

Distinguishing Findings from Prior Research

Having interviewed the six co-researchers and analyzed the transcripts of our interviews, I will now position my study and its findings in relation to my review of the literature. In Chapter Two, Literature Review, I reviewed relevant literature and categorized them into four areas: 1) Who are Chinese international students? -- an introduction to the basic characteristics of this population in the U.S., 2) Acculturation, 3) Acculturation and acculturative stress of Chinese international students in the U.S., 4) Psychological wellbeing of Chinese international students in

the U.S. I will comment on the similarities and also distinguish the differences between my study's findings and each of the above categories under separate subheadings.

Who are Chinese International Students?

In this category, I reviewed articles, news reports, and demographic statistics about the Chinese international students in the U.S. and some basic characteristics about this population. All of my co-researchers came from urban backgrounds in China and were the only child in their families except one co-researcher who has a twin sister. This is consistent with the situation of China's one-child policy. The one-child policy, a part of the family planning policy, was a population planning policy of China. It was introduced in 1979 and began to be formally phased out near the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. Therefore, all the co-researchers in this study were categorized as the one-child generation. Han and colleagues' study (2013) discussed the potential challenges this one-child policy may bring to the development of the single kids. Specifically, they listed the difficulties in areas such as interpersonal interaction, personality development, and a greater family expectation of success. Additionally, only children are often referred to as "little emperors" in China and there has been widespread concern within China about the social skills of this generation and the observation that these children tend to be more self-centered and less cooperative (Cameron, Erkal, Gangadharan, & Meng, 2013). However, there were no studies addressed the possible impact of these factors on the experience of Chinese young adults studying and living abroad.

In this study, some co-researchers especially undergraduate students experienced competition against each other between subgroups of Chinese international students at the university based on factors such as the area of origin in China and the socioeconomic status of their families. One co-researcher said, "Many Chinese international students are the only child in

their families and are from wealthy families; therefore, many of them think they are wealthier and better than others or have received better education." She and another co-researcher experienced rumor and cyber bully by some other fellow Chinese students at the university, which caused them significant distress. Only children are often viewed as disadvantaged as a result of "sibling deprivation," which may lead to their being self-centered, less cooperative, and less likely to get along with peers (Blake, 1981). Therefore, growing up as one children in their families may impact Chinese young adults' peer relationship both in China and abroad. On March 30, 2015, one incident of peer bullying and assaults among Chinese international students occurred in Rowland Heights, California (Chang, 2016). The victim in this case was an 18-year-old Chinese girl. The perpetrators who were all Chinese international students forced her to clean up ice cream smears and cigarette butts with her hand before taking her to a park, where she was stripped of her clothing, slapped, burned with cigarettes, and beaten. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon to hear tragic news like this about Chinese international students abroad in recent years.

The literature I reviewed demonstrated a big cultural distance between China and the U.S. The data collected from my co-researchers' self-reported experiences provided readers an opportunity to peak the impacts of this cultural distance on the acculturation of Chinese students in the U.S. For example, every co-researcher mentioned a language and cultural barrier in communication with Americans, which is consistent with findings from prior studies. (e.g., Hall, 1989; Lownger, He, Lin, & Chang, 2014; Mori, 2000; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Zhang, 2016). The co-researchers also experienced a difference in popular leisure activities between China and the U.S. and differences in hobbies, interest, and preference of music and movies between them and

their American friends, which impeded them from developing further connections with each other.

Acculturation

In this category, the foci of the majority of the studies I reviewed were introductions to the concept of acculturation and the acculturation process model proposed by Berry, his colleagues and their followers. The studies I reviewed at this part did not talk about the application of this model on any specific group of people. Instead, they were introductions to the concepts and model, which was different from this study. The goal of this study was to investigate the specific experiences of individual Chinese international students. Therefore, it is not applicable to distinguish my findings from prior research in this category.

Acculturation and Acculturative Stress of Chinese International Students

In the literature review, I divided this category into three subheadings: 1) the nature of the host society, 2) acculturation modes of Chinese international students, and 3) other characteristics of Chinese international students. I will comment on the similarities and differences between my data and each of the above subheadings.

The nature of the host society. Co-researchers were looking forward to studying in the U.S. with an expectation to receive a good higher education and experience a different culture. Further, many of them expected that they would “融入美国” (infuse and integrate into the U.S. culture and thus be accepted and become a part of it). One co-researcher even mentioned explicitly that her initial idea of integration meant “be American.” Being Westernized or Americanized seemed to be a desirable goal to some co-researches. Another co-researcher mentioned a belief she held about the cultural and national superiority of the U.S. Cultural and national superiority was discussed in Lee and Rice’s study (2007) about neo-racism. In their

study, they found that students from Asian are more likely to experience neo-racism compared to students from Europe and Canada in the U.S. They thought what underlies neo-racism are notions of cultural or national superiority. However, the co-researchers in this study did not mention receiving such neo-racism in their experiences of living in the U.S. This might be due to the fact that as students, they spent most of time on campus at the university, the culture of which, compared to other areas, was more liberal, progressive, and appreciative of diversity.

It is noteworthy that some co-researchers attributed the belief she held about the superiority of the U.S. to the information and education she received growing up in China. After China opened its door to the world and started its economic reform in 1978. Its relationship with Western countries has been improved. These countries were propagandized as more developed and advanced in many areas than China and thus are the examples that China wanted to follow and catch up. In such sociohistorical background, it is not surprising to hear the co-researchers developed a belief about the superiority of the U.S. and consequential aspirations to the U.S. and even "be American."

In terms of the perceived hospitality in the U.S. society toward Chinese international students, co-researchers had various experiences. Some co-researchers had good experiences of staying with their American host families, which helped with their adjustment tremendously at the beginning of their journey in the U.S. Some other co-researchers heard racist comments from American fellow students. None of the co-researchers reported experiences of being discriminated directly in the U.S. as international students. None of them ever used the word discrimination to describe their acculturative experience in the U.S. However, many co-researchers explicitly or indirectly described unsettling feelings of discomfort in the U.S. that are hard to specifically identify. This is similar to the findings from Lee and Rice's study (2007)

about the forms of discrimination that commonly experienced by international students in the U.S. In their study, they discovered feelings of discomfort (e.g., unsettling feelings of discomfort and inhospitality that are hard to specifically identify, feeling left out or excluded from peer study groups or social events) as a form of discrimination that international students might experience in the U.S.

The study conducted by De Wit and colleagues (2013) reported that for many international students, the propagandized values of freedom, democracy, open-mindedness, and the celebration of diversity in the U.S. are incentive to come to the U.S. For the co-researchers in this study, this notion was not all true. Most of them did not think at this macro level when they decided to study abroad. Instead, what initially attracted them to the U.S. were the opportunities for a better education and experiencing a different culture. The values that De Wit and colleagues argued did not seem to come into the co-researchers' awareness until they had lived in the U.S. for a while. This difference in findings might be related to the propaganda strategy by the Chinese government, who has been conserved and cautious in discussing topics such as democracy, freedom, human rights, diversity, and social justice (Buckley, 2018; Creemers, 2017).

All the co-researchers in this study experienced the transition of presidential administrations in the U.S. between their first and second interviews. This big change in politics provided us an opportunity to see the direct and significant impacts of the sociopolitical environment of the host society (i.e., the U.S. society in this study) on the experiences of international students. Specifically, many co-researchers reported that they felt that the environment in the U.S. was not as friendly to them as before in the new presidential administration. Especially for the co-researchers who intended to apply for internship or job

positions after graduation, they experienced more barriers in the job market. On Feb. 13, 2018, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee and told Congress that Chinese students in the U.S. may be covertly gathering intelligence for Chinese government and thus are a potential threat to the national security of the U.S. (Rogin, 2018). Eleven years ago, Rhoades and Smart (1996), in their study, argued that although international students make great contributions to the U.S. economy, they are still perceived by some people as threats to the U.S. and thus became "the foreign student problem." Eleven years later, unfortunately, this notion still exists today if not more commonly. Upon review, there was no empirical study being published that discussed the impact of the change of the current sociopolitical environment in the U.S. on the experience of over 1 million international students in the U.S. The findings of this study gave us a peak in this area.

There were many prior studies discussed the difference in academic norms and environment between China and the U.S. (e.g., Durkin, 2011; Wang & Kreysa, 2006; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). The co-researchers' experiences verified the findings from these prior studies. As students, the co-researchers spent most of time studying at the university. Therefore, the university was an important place where the acculturation of the co-researchers took place. Co-researchers experienced cultural differences and thus challenges in areas such as residence hall arrangement, classroom manners, learning styles, teaching and mentoring styles of professors, educational philosophy, and the triadic relation between self, and the university and society. Moreover, many co-researchers reported a difference in power distance in the U.S., which impacted their interactions and relationships with their American advisors. Power is perceived differently cross cultures and thus has different implications. Wetzel (1993) pointed out that in the West, power is often associated negatively with domination

or authoritarianism, whereas in Asia it is typically associated positively with benevolence, kindness, nurturance and supportiveness. Compared to the U.S., Chinese society might have a bigger power distance (Shi & Wang, 2011; Wetzel, 1993). Therefore, Chinese international student who were familiar with the Chinese perception of power distance may encounter a difficulty adjusting to schools in the U.S. where people have a different understanding and perceptions of power. Specifically, they may experience a challenge in relationships with their advisors due to the difference in respective understandings of the power distance between each other.

In terms of other cultural factors that may contribute to the differences in academic norms, Kim, Atkinson, and Umemtoto (2001) noted the virtues such as humility, emotional restraint, self-effacement, and saving face that are highly valued in Chinese culture and its education, which are different from the virtues that are valued in the U.S. Align with this notion, one co-researcher's self-reported experience and observation might give us more insights into the difference between the educations in China and the U.S. This co-researcher described the education she received in China as an "assembly line," the goal of which was to teach students the right answer. In contrast, she felt the goal of the education she received in the U.S. as more focusing on cultivating students' creative and critical thinking. This reported experience is consistent with what Wang and Kreya (2006) contended in their study that Chinese education is more characterized as teacher centered, content based, and test driven compared to the Western education. Although it is hard to say which education theory and practice is better, the transition from one to the other can cause lots of challenge for adjustment to international students from China.

Acculturation Modes of Chinese International Students. Under this subheading, I reviewed articles about the acculturation strategies and modes that Chinese international students may utilize in the U.S. Most research applied the bilinear acculturation modes (i.e., adherence to home culture and identification with the host culture) created by Berry and his colleagues (Berry, et al., 1987; B. Kim, 2007; Rudmin, 2009). Specifically, C. D. Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) found that adaptation to and identification with the U.S. culture significantly predicted the psychology adjustment of Chinese international students after controlling the covariant of English skills and length of residency in the U.S. In contrast, they did not find a direct and significant relation between adherence to the Chines culture and psychological adjustment.

Although my study was not a quantitative study, and therefore, its goal was not to discover which factor predict what outcome, the findings of my study were not completely consistent with what C. D. Wang and Mallinckrodt found in their study. The experiences reported by the co-researchers in this study suggested that the adaption to and identification with the U.S. culture were hard to achieve. Almost every co-researcher showed their aspirations to the U.S. culture at the beginning of their journey abroad. Many of them also put great efforts into achieving this goal. However, it was not uncommon to hear they felt incapable and powerless in the end. One co-researcher said that no matter how hard she tried, she still did not feel that she was good enough with her goal of “being American.” This difficulty in adaption to and identification with the U.S. culture might be attributed to the significant cultural distance between these two countries.

Additionally, there were scholars argued that the integrative mode of acculturation may be most beneficial to sojourners (Berry et al., 1987; B. Kim, 2007). However, the findings of this study suggested that acculturation is a dynamic process with necessary adjustments and changes

of strategies along the way. Many co-researchers experienced a change of their acculturation strategies from pushing themselves to infuse and integrate into the U.S. culture to returning to fellow Chinese students and searching for a sense of belonging and social support there. After living in the U.S. for a while, especially after experiencing challenges and frustration in acculturation, some co-researchers started to question what the so-called American culture they aspired to is in essence, which American culture can represent the U.S., and its relationship with them.

Co-researchers who had awareness and insights like this were more acceptive of changing their acculturation strategies compared to those who still regarded adherence to U.S. culture and making American friends as the standard of acculturative success but who failed in real practice. Based on the report of the co-researchers, such awareness and insights partially came from the observation of their role models and their accumulated exposure to diverse subcultures in the U.S. Therefore, instead of concluding that one specific acculturation mode or strategy is the best, it seems that each one can be adaptive in different contexts through different mediation and moderation mechanisms. This is consistent with the argument some scholars made that studies on acculturation and adjustment focused too much on the direct association between the two constructs (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2007; Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005; Rahman & Rollock, 2004). In this study, social connectedness either with Americans or fellow Chinese seemed to be a mediator. In order words, as long as these co-researchers were able to form healthy and close relationships with other people in the U.S., no matter it was with Americans or Chinese, they were more likely to feel satisfied with their life.

Du and Wei (2015) reported that students with higher levels of adherence to Chinese culture were likely to report less future negative affect through feeling close to other Chinese in

their ethnic community. The findings of this study could not fully agree with this notion. Some co-researchers felt it was easier to form closer relationships with fellow Chinese and gained a sense of connection and belonging as well as social support. As a result, they demonstrated more positive affect. However, some other co-researchers experienced strained peer relationships with their fellow nationals at the university and reported that these strained relationships as the biggest stressor they encountered studying abroad. Upon review, there were not many studies thoroughly investigated these competition, stress, and relationship issues with fellow nationals among Chinese international students even though they were frequently reported as source of stress for international students (see Mori, 2000; Yakushko et al., 2008). As the experiences of some co-researchers showed in this study, these competition with and stress from fellow nationals can be detrimental to Chinese international students especially those who encounter difficulties in adapting to the U.S. culture and thus turn to their fellow nationals for social support. Just like one co-researcher described, these circumstances felt like being trapped in a besieged fortress, where people were struggling in a small group. They tried to get out, but they found that they could not.

In literature review, there were several studies discussed changes of worldviews and value orientations on international students as a result of studying abroad (e.g., Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Yang, et al., 2006). In their study, Yang and colleagues reported that the worldview pattern (i.e., value orientations about human nature, human relationships, and man-nature relation) of Chinese international students who have been in the U.S. for 4 years or more was found to be more similar to that of their European American peers but different from that of the Chinese international students who have lived one year or less in the U.S. However, none of the co-researchers mentioned such changes in their experiences. This might be due to the fact that many

co-researchers in this study had not lived in the U.S. for that long by the time of completing the interviews. Therefore, this study could not provide any comments in this regard.

Other Characteristics of Chinese International Students. Under this subheading, I reviewed articles addressing the fourth factor in the acculturation process model-- the demographic, social, and psychological characteristics of Chinese international students that can impact their acculturation. Consistent with what prior studies reported (Mori, 2000; Zhang & Goodson, 2011b), the six co-researchers in this study faced a challenge in communication with Americans in the U.S. due to a language barrier. This language barrier brought most co-researchers a high level of acculturation distress. This finding verified the claim made by Yeh and Inose (2003) that higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree to which international students feel comfortable speaking English, predict lower levels of acculturative distress. It also suggested that Chinese international students who have higher self-rated English skills tend to feel more confident and comfortable in interacting in their daily lives (e.g., asking for help, ordering food, initiating social interactions, meeting new friends), which allow them to enjoy their cross-cultural communication with U.S. students or students from other countries. Smoother interactions oftentimes lead to greater feelings of adjustment. It is noteworthy that all the co-researchers started learning English in either elementary school or middle school and they all met the required TOEFL scores requested by the university; however, they did not feel that the English education they received in China prepared them well enough for studying in the U.S. Although the study by Senyshyn and colleagues (2000) showed a positive correlation between TOEFL scores and positive experiences of studying in the U.S., this study suggested that decent TOEFL scores alone cannot guarantee English proficiency.

The study by B. Kim and colleagues (2005) argued that academic success is often highly valued in some Asian cultures. The data from this study verified this notion. Many co-researchers in this study mentioned the important meaning of achieving academic success in the U.S. Even though professors and other people in the same program were friendly and encouraging, some co-researchers still had high expectations for their academic achievement. One graduate student co-researcher mentioned that she often felt that she was not doing good enough and was afraid of disappointing her advisor. This co-researcher often felt stressed out after meeting with her advisor and tended to rely on binge eating to cope with the stress. Mori (2000) argued that failures in academic performance can negatively affect psychological well-being of Chinese international students. The data of this study verified this notion. Further, it suggested that sometimes it was not necessarily an objective failure in academic performance but rather a failure in fulfilling a subjective high self-expectation of being academically successful.

Length of residency in the U.S. was another characteristic of the Chinese international students that was found to positively be associated with acculturative outcomes (see C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011b). This study is not a longitudinal quantitative study; therefore, it cannot verify this notion. However, some co-researchers experienced personal growth in individuation and improvement in areas such as English proficiency, communication skills, and their relationship with advisors after staying in the U.S. for a period of time. However, the length of time needed for a significant change varies and depends on each individual's characteristics, problem solving skills, and external factors such as the environment in their program.

In terms of coping styles, which is another factor that impacts international students' cross-cultural adjustment in the host society (Heppner, 2008), Moore and Constantine (2005)

argued that forbearance coping is a common coping strategy that are familiar to and are often used by Chinese students. They contended that the Chinese value harmony in interpersonal interactions; therefore, they tend to minimize or conceal problems or concerns to maintain this social harmony. Empirical studies such as the one conducted by H. Kim, Sherman, and Taylor (2008) found evidence to support this notion. They found that East Asians are more reluctant to explicitly ask for support from other people than European Americans. The data of this study are consistent with the argument of a preference of forbearance. Many co-researchers reported that they preferred to endure and "digest" their distress by themselves first. Many of the graduate student co-researchers in this study experienced hesitance in asking for help from their advisors. There are several factors that might contribute to this forbearance coping style. For example, some co-researchers were concerned about bothering their friends or giving them an extra burden by asking them for help. This is consistent with the finding from H. Kim and colleagues' study (2008), in which they contended that individuals in collective cultures are expected to be sensitive to others' feelings and needs.

Additionally, some co-researchers had a hard time adjusting to the mentoring style of their advisors at first. Familiar with the more micromanaging/parenting style of mentoring in China, these co-researchers expected that their American advisors would also sense their needs and reach out to them. However, many American advisors hold an egalitarian mentoring style and value students' autonomy. Therefore, this cultural difference leaves a space for miscommunication. Moreover, face, which refers to the positive public and self-image or personal prestige and success a person cultivates in a social context, is particularly important in Chinese culture (Sheu & Fukuyama, 2007; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). In order to save face, many Chinese would rather keep problems to themselves (Wei et al., 2012). These findings are

consistent with what the co-researchers experienced in this study. Under the influence of this face culture, together with a high self-expectation to succeed, some co-researchers would regard help seeking as a sign of weakness or even losing self-control. This fear of losing control might also partially explain the underutilization of professional mental health services among Chinese international students, which will be discussed more later.

Psychological Wellbeing of Chinese International Students

In the literature review, I divided this category into three subheadings: 1) psychological distress, 2) underutilization of counseling services, and 3) contributing factors behind underutilization. I will comment on the similarities and differences between my data and each of the above subheadings. Furthermore, this current phenomenological study also investigated Chinese international students' experiences in counseling if they had sought counseling at their university by the time they completed our interviews, which is an area that has not been addressed much by prior quantitative studies in this field. Therefore, I will also discuss these findings.

Psychological Distress. Through continuous exposure to the acculturative challenges and stress mentioned above, some co-researchers developed psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, frustration, a sense of inferiority, anger, isolation, helplessness, and powerlessness. This is consistent with the findings of prior studies about the most common psychological issues and symptoms that international students might struggle with while studying abroad (see Mori, 2000; Yakushko et al., 2008).

Underutilization of Counseling Services. Under this subheading, I reviewed articles, which revealed the phenomenon of the underutilization of counseling services among Asian international students including students from China in the U.S. Prior studies found that mental

health services have been consistently and significantly underused by Asian international students compared to American students (Pedersen, 1991; Bradley et al., 1995; Yakushko et al., 2008; Robertson, Holleran, & Samuels, 2015) and international students of other ethnicities (Hyun, et al., 2007). However, international students are found more likely than their U.S. schoolmates to make use of crisis appointments (Mitchell et al., 2007; Yakushko et al., 2008). This phenomenological study did not aim to measure any prevalence or rate of utilization of counseling services among the co-researchers. However, most of the co-researchers who received counseling in the U.S. dropped out from counseling quickly after meeting with their therapists one or two times. This is consistent with the findings from prior studies (Mitchell et al., 2007; Yakushko et al., 2008).

Contributing Factors Behind Underutilization. Russell and colleagues' study (2008) contended that being a student from China was a significant predictor of not acting on the perceived need for help from the health service. The findings of this study cannot fully agree with this notion because not every Chinese international student in distress can perceive a need for help. Perception of need for help is a subjective judgement that can be associated with many factors. Among these factors, the unfamiliarity with professional mental health services can definitely be counted as one. Many Chinese are unfamiliar with what these services look like, who can benefit from the services, and under what circumstances people are "eligible" for such professional help (Chen & Lewis, 2011).

Most co-researchers did not know much about counseling before they sought the service. This is consistent with what Chen and Lewis found in their study (2001) that therapy resources have been nonexistent or limited in some East Asian communities; therefore, many international students from East Asia are unfamiliar with counseling or talk therapy. Counseling is still

regarded as a novelty to most Chinese today although people who live in large urban areas such as Beijing and Shanghai might have heard a little more about this field. Western psychotherapy was first introduced to China in the early 1990s and was gradually developed in the next three decades under the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis and the Soviet-influenced Pavlovian behavioral science (Han & Kan, 2007). However, both the development and delivery of psychotherapy were halted when psychology and psychiatry were considered counterrevolutionary, bourgeois disciplines that exploited the masses during the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) (Lim, Lim, Michael, Cai, & Schock, 2010). Psychotherapy did not reemerge as a legitimate discipline until the 1980s (Leung, Guo, & Lam, 2000). Therefore, it was not surprising that most co-researchers did not know much about psychotherapy or counseling since they were also born in late 80s and early 90s. Due to the same historical reason, the parent generation of the co-researchers who experienced the Cultural Revolution themselves hold a strong bias against mental illness and psychotherapy.

Without much knowledge about counseling services, Chinese international students might have to rely on other "frames of reference" for their decision making of seeking help. One co-researcher mentioned that it was important for her to have a comparison with other peer Chinese students on the level of distress to decide whether she needed external help. In other words, rather than relying on her own feelings, this co-researcher's help seeking behavior was organized and determined based on others. This experience seems to be consistent with the interdependence self-construal that was thought to be typical among Chinese by Markus and Kitayama (1991). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991; 2010), for people who have an interdependence construal of the self, it is others rather than the self that serve as the referent for organizing one's experiences and behavior. This co-researcher's experience demonstrated how

an interdependence self-construal could impact the help seeking behavior of a Chinese international student. Based on my literature, this study was a first-of-its-kind study that discussed a potential influence of an interdependence self-construal on help seeking behavior among Chinese international students.

Many prior studies talked about the personal stigma associated with psychological disturbance that can be an avoidance factor for Asian international students to seek counseling services (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2009; Hyun et al., 2007; Mori, 2000). However, in this study, most of the co-researchers denied that they had negative stereotypes about or prejudices against mental illness. One undergraduate co-researcher thought that young Chinese adults of her generation (i.e., Post-90s) were more comfortable and open to talk about mental health issues. It seems that there is a generation or age difference in the attitudes toward mental health issues among Chinese. However, the thoughts of the co-researchers in this study cannot represent the overall current population of Chinese international students in the U.S. There are likely to be within group differences in this population based on factors such as age and region of origin in China. It requires more studies to make a conclusion about any changes of overall attitude toward mental health issues among today's young adults in China.

It is also noteworthy that attitude toward mental illness is different from attitude toward mental health services. In this study, the co-researchers' experiences suggested that a more acceptive attitude toward mental health issues did not necessarily lead to a more acceptive attitude toward seeking professional help. Even having a more open attitude toward mental illness, many other factors such as unawareness of mental health needs, lack of knowledge about professional mental health services, a concern about language and cultural barriers in communication with American therapists, culturally preferred coping styles, and an unawareness

of helping resources can impede Chinese international students from seeking professional mental help in the U.S. For example, as discussed earlier, to many Chinese, forbearance coping is a common coping strategy they are familiar with and often use (Moore & Constantine, 2005). Aligning with this, Yip (2005) suggested that Chinese culture has a tradition of introverted inclinations, which imply the characteristics of valuing self-control, self-absorption, and self-demand. Therefore, we can understand why a co-researcher was afraid of losing control at first after she was recommended to seek counseling by her professor. She did not choose to seek counseling until her issue became very serious. The experience of this co-researcher verified the findings from prior studies that many international students believe that their problems are not sufficiently serious or important enough for treatment (Russell et al., 2008; Wei et al., 2007) and that many Chinese international students are more likely to seek services when their distress is close to intolerable and impairment is more significant (Mitchell, et al., 2007).

Experiences in Psychotherapy. Three co-researchers reported that they had experiences with receiving psychotherapy at their university in the U.S. Their experiences provided a client's perspective of counseling services to Chinese international students. A language barrier in communication was a universal experience these co-researchers had in working with their American therapists. Specifically, they encountered a lack of English vocabulary to express affect and emotions; they had difficulty in understanding what their therapists said; they did not feel that their American therapists could fully understand their upbringing and cultural background. One co-researcher described that her conversation with her therapist in counseling was just like a 50-minutes TOEFL English test, which made her felt exhausted. These reported experiences of language and communication barriers verified the findings of some prior studies. For example, D. W. Sue and Sue (2016) contended that language barrier is an avoidance factor in

cross-cultural counseling. Similarly, more than half of the Asian international students in another study reported their concern about not being able to communicate effectively in English in therapy in the U.S. (Yoon & Jepsen, 2008).

In addition to language, cultural differences in communication style was also commonly experienced by these co-researchers as a barrier in counseling with their American therapists. For example, one co-researcher shared her experience: “Actually, I didn’t quite understand what aspects he [the therapist] wanted to know about me. I didn’t know whether my answer answered his questions or not. At the same time, I was worried that if I missed something important in my answer that might impact his evaluation about me. For example, when he asked me about my recent mood, I could answer in two brief sentences or I could give a long talk. Therefore, if he didn’t respond to my answer even just by simply saying “I got you” rather than jumping into the next prepared questions on his form I wouldn’t know whether my answer met his expectation.” This communication barrier might be related to the difference in self-construal between Chinese and the U.S. culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 2010). According to their studies, the independent self-construal is more common in Western cultures while the interdependence self-construal is more influential in Eastern cultures such as China, Japan, and Korea. Interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and the behavior of a person who holds an interdependence self-construal is more often determined by what the person perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship. This might help us understand the aforementioned communication problem between this co-researcher and her American therapist in counseling.

Moreover, co-researchers experienced differences in real counseling compared to what they imagined and expected. For example, one co-researchers experienced the pace of the

progress in counseling was much slower than what she thought. She thought counseling would look more like seeing a physician, where she could receive a quick diagnosis and receive recommendations for treatment in the first appointment. A slow treatment process together with not knowing and a lack of control meant uncertainty and provoked anxiety to this co-researcher in therapy. Further, another discrepancy many co-researchers experienced in counseling was related to receiving suggestions for problem-solving in therapy. Some co-researchers expected that their therapists would give them specific and concrete suggestions for problem-solving by the end of the first meeting. However, most therapists today are trained to not solve problems for clients; instead, a main goal of counseling is to help clients find solutions to their own issues, which takes time. This idea of helping people help themselves is not foreign to Chinese. In Chinese, most people are familiar with the proverb: “授人以鱼，一日享用。教人以渔，终身受用”, which means give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. However, in many people’s mind, this idea is not automatically registered with counseling if what they expect is to receive a quick diagnosis and concrete suggestions to solve problems.

Although some co-researchers reported benefiting from seeking psychotherapy such as breaking their prior bias against mental health and instilling a hope for betterment, it is noteworthy that they changed not because of the interventions therapists provided in therapy but was more because of what they did outside of therapy on their own such as seeking bibliotherapy. This was a new finding that has not been studied much by prior research in this field.

A shortage of multicultural competency on the side of their therapists was also experienced by the co-researchers in counseling. For example, due to the unfamiliarity with

counseling, most co-researchers expected that treatment will start in their first appointment. However, most of time, the first appointment is for a brief intake assessment. The co-researchers who were unfamiliar with the process of counseling and the difference between intake and a regular counseling session recalled that they were feeling confused, frustrated, and disappointed when they failed to get what they wanted from therapy after one or two sessions. They wished that their therapists could explain these things at the very beginning of their work together. Additionally, some co-researchers felt it was difficult for their American therapists to understand the impacts of cultural factors on their current distress. It is noteworthy that many co-researchers did not choose to tell their therapist their feelings about the perceived discrepancy between their expectations and the real experience in therapy. This might be due to a lack of initiation from therapists to create an open dialogue and a lack of mutual trust in the therapeutic relationship. As a result, many co-researchers did not feel that their counseling was as helpful as they expected and thus they dropped out of therapy quickly.

A shortage of multicultural competency in working with international clients might be attributed to a lack of training that can prepare professionals to work with this population in graduate counseling programs (Fouad, 1991; Davidson, Sanford-Marten, & Oksana, 2008; Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2008). Today, every CACREP-accredited counseling program and APA-accredited counseling psychology program in the U.S. require coursework in multicultural counseling. This requirement aspires to improve the multicultural competency of psychotherapists. However, this general training lacks specific training in regard to counseling international students (Yoon & Portman, 2004). Davidson and colleagues (2008) suggested that counselor training programs have greater emphases directed at multiculturalism and diversity, specifically with international students. A greater emphasis of training in this field will help to

promote and foster research in theories and practice of counseling with international students. However, in the current field of counseling, there is a lack of theory regarding counseling with international students (Yoon & Portman, 2004). The majority of theories used in college counseling centers were developed, piloted, and made for use in the U.S. for U.S. citizens (Heppner, 2006). Many psychological assessments were normed on Western samples and thus it is reasonable to question their reliability and validity when being administered for non-Western examinees (Pedersen et al, 2008).

Limitations and Future Studies

In this study, data was obtained during individual interviews. An outstanding feature of the design of this study was that I, the researcher, am also an international student from China who is currently studying in the U.S. As an insider, it was easier for me to understand some experiences of the co-researchers due to the same cultural background we shared with each other. In addition, we were able to communicate in Mandarin in our interviews, which not only brought convenience to our communication but also, to a certain extent, empowered the co-researchers by offering them an opportunity to tell their stories in their mother tongue. More than one co-researcher mentioned their appreciation of having the opportunity to share their experiences as sojourners in the U.S. Some of them mentioned the important meaning they could see of conducting this study investigating the psychological wellbeing of Chinese international student at the university especially after the tragedy of the suicide of a fellow national at the university occurred.

Although this study contributed to the literature in Chinese international students' acculturation in the U.S. and their perceptions and experiences in seeking professional mental health counseling services by offering a description of subjective experience, several limitations

exist that should be addressed. First of all, as with all qualitative research, the findings of the study were not optional for external generalizability. Interpretation of the findings should be carefully used since the emphasis of the study was on reviewing the experiences of six Chinese international students a pubic research university in southeast of U.S. Every phenomenon is multi-layered and thus is open to continual discovery. Additional investigation of this topic would reveal additional aspects and understandings of the phenomenon.

By design, the co-researchers in this study did not interact with one another. Some of them expressed a curiosity about their fellow nationals' experiences of studying at the university and their perceptions and attitudes about professional counseling services. Although it might be inappropriate to ask them to share their respective experiences with counseling in a focus group due to concerns of confidentiality, a study about acculturation that included group interaction might evoke reactions and aspects of co-researchers' experiences that were not tapped by the privacy of individual interviews. Furthermore, if possible, future clinicians and scholars could create a support group for Chinese international students, which might help empower the co-researchers by helping them with their acculturation, processing their distress, and offering group support while collecting data for a research purpose.

Moreover, this study offered a perspective from the side of Chinese international students in counseling. It might also be helpful if a qualitative study like this can be conducted from the side of clinicians and investigate their experience of working with Chinese international student clients in therapy. Only after having insights into the perspectives from these two sides can graduate and training programs better prepare future mental health professionals to sufficiently serve this population. Further, adding views of American students, faculty, and administrators

could lead to more profound findings and more holistic pictures of transition issues of these students.

Implications for Findings

The insights and understandings that emerge as a result of this study have tremendous potential value for utilization on a personal and professional as well as societal level. On a societal level, the findings of this study demonstrated a significant impact of the sociopolitical environment in the host society (i.e., the U.S.) on the experiences of Chinese international students studying abroad. Politicians should not use the wellbeing of any groups of people such as refugees, immigrants, or international students as a bargaining chip for the purpose of their own political gains. Any change of regulation and policies in immigration as a result of the transition from one presidential administration to the other can cause significant repercussions on the experience of over one million international students in the U.S. It is unjust to admit more and more international students each year but regard them as "the foreign student problem" (Rhoades & Smart, 1996, p. 142) who bring threats to the U.S. economic self-sufficiency and national security or contribute to a high unemployment rate in this country. Instead, the U.S. society needs to raise the social consciousness regarding the experiences of international students in this country and their contributions to the economy, development, and cultural diversity of the U.S.

On a professional level, the experiences of the co-researcher in this study implied that some American universities can do a better job of creating a university environment and a campus culture that celebrates cultural diversity, welcomes students from other countries, and fosters cross-cultural communications. An environment and culture like this can be beneficial to both international and domestic students. Specifically, it might help international students with

their acculturation. At the same time, it might also help American students develop an international perspective. International students should not be regarded only as a revenue stream to American universities. Instead, they must be treated as equals to their American fellow students. Such a goal cannot be achieved only by the endeavors of one or two offices at the university; instead, every university staff plays an important role. It also requires creativity and good strategies.

In this study, co-researchers shared their sadness toward the tragedy of the suicide of a Chinese international student at the university as well as their dissatisfaction with how the university responded and dealt with this incident. Specifically, many of them expressed a wish that the university could conduct a more transparent and thorough investigation of this incident and let other Chinese students at the university know the results of their investigation. In addition, they also wished that the university could reach out to the Chinese international student group and provide them with emotional support. This implies that universities can better deal with such incidents more from a standpoint of international students.

In addition to emotional support, many co-researchers in this study suggested that the mental health clinics at the university could have used this tragic incident as an opportunity to reach out to Chinese international students through collaborations with the Chinese student association and office of international life. It could have been used to increase the awareness of mental health, and to introduce the mental health resources that are available on campus. As discussed earlier, the lack of knowledge about professional mental health services is one of the major barriers for Chinese international students to seek such help. Therefore, professionals on campus need to provide educational outreach to help Chinese students know and understand what services they provide, what counseling is, who can benefit from it, when is the time to seek

help, how different it is compared to psychiatric services, where their clinics are, and how to schedule appointments, etc. Only with a better understanding about the answers to these questions will students who are not familiar with such services feel more comfortable to reach out for help.

The practice and advocacy of multiculturalism and social justice, which are highly valued in the field of counseling and counseling psychology should not be limited to the therapy room; rather, counseling psychologists need to consistently engage in social justice work such as ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients the tools to work toward social change (Goodman, et al., 2004). As Yakushko and colleagues (2008) advocated, counseling center staff and other professionals who work with international students need to create a greater resource network for international students by training faculty, physicians, and university administrators involved in the care of these students to recognize symptoms of psychological distress and to point them in the direction of valuable campus services.

The experiences of co-researchers in therapy also provided implication for therapists' practice of psychotherapy in sessions. Specifically, it would be very helpful if therapists explain at the very beginning of the first meeting with international student clients who seek counseling for the first time how therapy typically works and its procedure. It is also necessary for therapists to invite their international student clients to share their feelings toward their work together (i.e., giving voice), which might help with the establishment of a therapeutic relationship. One co-researcher had a good counseling experience the second time she sought counseling at another clinic. According to this co-researcher, her second therapist spent lots of time listening and trying to understand her and her goals in therapy. The co-researcher was also invited to create her

treatment plan collaboratively with the therapist. In treatment, the co-researchers' cultural background and values were considered and appreciated. Although they still encountered a language barrier in counseling, these endeavors by the therapist helped foster an effective communication and a mutual trust.

Sue and his colleagues (2009) argued that as services become more culturally sensitive, effectiveness and utilization tend to increase. It would be too late if all the aforementioned multicultural competence training only occurred in the real practice of psychotherapy. Instead, it is imperative that graduate counseling programs in the U.S. incorporate this training in both theory and practice in coursework in multicultural counseling. Heppner (2006) contended that the majority of theories used in college counseling centers were developed, piloted, and made for use in the U.S. for U.S. citizens. I hope that in the near future, when we discuss multiculturalism and diversity in counseling, we are also including international clients.

Another professional implication is about the necessity for university counseling centers to hire clinicians who can provide mental health services in Mandarin given the current big size of Chinese international students at American universities. The university where the co-researchers were hosted has over a thousand students from mainland China. However, there was no clinician either on the campus or in the community who could provide mental health services in Mandarin. Again, as American universities allege that they provide the best higher education and thus recruit more and more students from overseas, they have an obligation to provide the support and services that are corresponding with their alleged best quality education to these students.

On a personal level, the inception, execution, and completion of this study has had a profound impact on my life and contributed immeasurably to my professional development as a

therapist. Having had the privilege of hearing from these six fellow Chinese international students as they shared in Mandarin their experience of living in the U.S. as well as their perceptions and experiences of receiving counseling services at the university has given me a sense of affirmation and validation for what I have already experienced. It provided me with courage and implications to move forward toward becoming a more competent therapist who both comes from and works with this population. Hearing these co-researchers' stories also helped me see both the similarities and differences between us and the large group of Chinese international students in the U.S. In moving through the study, I was able to integrate my learnings and gain a perspective of the whole.

As my learnings have impacted my personal growth, I am looking forward to sharing these findings with other Chinese international students, university administrators, professors, and mental health professionals who work directly and indirectly with Chinese international students in the U.S. Furthermore, I feel pride and pleasure in developing and carrying out a dissertation study that is congruent with my beliefs and values about science, humanity, multiculturalism, and social justice. Moreover, I also feel tremendous pride for all the co-researchers who demonstrated incredible strengths, courage, adaptability, perseverance, and wisdom in their journeys abroad as Chinese international students.

References

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education, 5*(2), 131-154. doi:10.1177/1475240906065589

Atri, A., Sharma, M., & Cottrell, R. (2006). Role of social support, hardiness, and acculturation as predictors of mental health among international students of Asian Indian origin. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education, 27*(1), 59-73. doi:10.2190/IQ.27.1.e

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaption. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5-34. doi:10.1080/026999497378467

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*, 697-712. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013

Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *The International Migration Review, 21*(3). 491-511. doi:10.2307/2546607

Blake, J. (1981). The only child in America: prejudice versus performance. *Population and Development Review, 1*, 43-54. doi:10.2307/1972763

Boyer, S. P., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1989). Noncognitive predictors of counseling center use by international students. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 67*(7), 404. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1989.tb02101.x

Brown, L. I. (2004). Diversity: The challenge for higher education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 7*(1), 21-34. doi:10.1080/1361332042000187289

Buckley, C. (2018, March 21). China gives communist party more control over policy and media. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-jinping.html

Cameron, L., Erkal, N., Gangadharan, L., & Meng, X. (2013). Little emperors: Behavioral impacts of China's One-Child Policy. *Science, 339*(6122), 953-957. doi:10.1126/science.1230221

Cemalcilar, Z., Falbo, T., & Stapleton, L. M. (2005). Cyber communication: A new opportunity for international students' adaptation?. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 2*, 991-110. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.04.002

Chang, C. (2016). Fourth Chinese student sentenced to prison in "Parachute Kid" bullying Case. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-parachute-kid-sentencing-20160712-snap-story.html

Chen, H., & Lewis, D. (2011). Approaching the 'resistant:' exploring East Asian international students' perceptions of therapy and help-seeking behavior before and after they arrived in the United States. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal, 33*(3), 310. doi:10.1007/s10591-011-9154-6

Confucius. (n.d.). *Confucian Analects* (J. Legge, Trans.). (Original work published ca. 500 AD). Retrieved from http://www.cnculture.net/ebook/jing/sishu/lunyu_en/01.html

Creemers, R. (2017). Cyber China: upgrading propaganda, public opinion work and social management for the twenty-first century. *Journal of Contemporary China, 26*(103), 85-100. doi:10.1080/10670564.2016.1206281

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dao, T. K., Lee, D., & Chang, H. L. (2007). Acculturation level, perceived English fluency, perceived social support level, and depression among Taiwanese international students. *College Student Journal, 41*(2), 287-295.

De Wit, H., Ferencz, I., & Rumbley, L. E. (2013). International student mobility: European and US perspectives. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, *17*(1), 17-23. doi:10.1080/13603108.2012.679752

Du, Y., & Wei, M. (2015). Acculturation, enculturation, social connectedness, and subjective well-being among Chinese international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *43*(2), 299-325. doi:10.1177/0011000014565712

Duric, V., Clayton, S., Leong, M. L., & Yuan, L. (2016). Comorbidity factors and brain mechanisms linking chronic stress and systemic illness. *Neural Plasticity, 2016.* doi:10.1155/2016/5460732

Eisenberg, D., Downs, M. F., Golberstein, E., & Zivin, K. (2009). Stigma and help seeking for mental health among college students. *Medical Care Research and Review, 66*(5), 522-541. doi:10.1177/1077558709335173

Fiske, S. T., Harris, L. T., Lee, T. L., & Russell, A. M. (2016). The future of research on prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. In T. D. Nelson (Ed.), *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination* (2nd ed., pp. 487-498). New York, NY: Psychology Press. doi:10.4135/9781446200919

Fogel, J., & Ford, D. (2005). Stigma beliefs of Asian Americans with depression in an internet sample. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry-Revue Canadienne De Psychiatrie, 50*(8), 470-478. doi:10.1177/070674370505000807

Fouad, N. A. (1991). Training counselors to counsel international students: Are we ready?. *The Counseling Psychologist, 19*(1), 66-71. doi:10.1177/0011000091191005

Frey, L. L., & Roysircar, G. (2006). South Asian and East Asian international students' perceived prejudice, acculturation, and frequency of help resource utilization. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 34*(4), 208-222. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2006.tb00040.x

Fritz, M. V., Chin, D., & DeMarinis, V. (2008). Stressors, anxiety, acculturation and adjustment among international and North American students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 32*(3), 244-259. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.01.001

Goodman, L. A., Liang, B., Helms, J. E., Latta, R. E., Sparks, E., & Weintraub, S. R. (2004). Training counseling psychologists as social justice agents: feminist and multicultural principles in action. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*(6), 793-836. doi:10.1177/0011000004268802

Graves, T. D. (1967). Psychological Acculturation in a Tri-Ethnic Community. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, (4). 337. 23*(4), 337-350. doi:10.1086/soutjanth.23.4.3629450

Griffiths, K. M., Christensen, H., Jorm, A. F., Evans, K., & Groves, C. (2004). Effect of web-based depression literacy and cognitive-behavioural therapy interventions on stigmatising attitudes to depression: Randomised controlled trial. *The British Journal of Psychiatry, 185*(4), 342-349. doi:10.1192/bjp.185.4.342

Habu, T. (2000). The Irony of Globalization: the experience of Japanese women in British higher education. *Higher Education, 39*(1). 43-66. doi:10.1023/A:100380700

Hall, E. T. (1989). *Beyond culture*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Han, X., Han, X., Luo, Q., Jacobs, S., & Jean-Baptiste, M. (2013). Report of a mental health survey among Chinese international students at Yale University. *Journal of American College Health, 61*(1), 1-8. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2012.738267

Hanassab, S. (2006). Diversity, International students, and perceived discrimination: implications for educators and counselors. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*(2), 157-172. doi:10.1177/1028315305283051

Hansen, J. T. (2004). Thoughts on knowing: epistemic implications of counseling practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 82*(2), 131-138. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2004.tb00294.x

Hare-Mustin, R. T., & Marecek, J. (1997). Abnormal and clinical psychology: The politics of madness. In D. Fox, and I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp. 104-120). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Heppner, P. P. (2006). The benefits and challenges of becoming cross-culturally competent counseling psychologists. Presidential Address. *Counseling Psychologist, 34*(1), 147-172. doi:10.1177/0011000005282832

Hofstede, G. H. (2001). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hou, Z., Leung, A. S., & Duan, C. (2009). Counseling in China: Fast moving, but what is the destination?. In L. H. Gerstein, P. P. Heppner, S. Ægisdóttir, A. S. Leung, & K. L. Norsworthy (Eds.), *International handbook of cross-cultural counseling: Cultural assumptions and practices worldwide* (pp. 183-196). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hwang, K. K. (1987). Face and favor: The Chinese power game. *American Journal of Sociology*, (4), 944. doi: 10.1086/228588

Hyun, J., Quinn, B., Madon, T., & Lustig, S. (2007). Mental health need, awareness, and use of counseling services among international graduate students. *Journal of American College Health, 56*(2), 109-118. doi:10.3200/JACH.56.2.109-118

Ibrahim, F. A., & Kahn, H. (1987). Assessment of world views. *Psychological Reports, 60*(1), 163-176. doi:10.2466/pr0.1987.60.1.163

Institute of International Education (2017). *Open Doors 2017: Report on International Educational Exchange.* Retrieved from https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors.

Jones, E. E., Kanouse, D., Kelley, H. H., Nisbett, R. E., Valins, S., & Weiner, B. (Eds.). (1972). *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning. doi:10.2307/1959677

Kim, B. K. (2007). Acculturation and Enculturation. In F. L. Leong, A. Ebreo, L. Kinoshita, A. G. Inman, L. H. Yang, M. Fu, ... M. Fu (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian American psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 141-158). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kim, B. K., & Abreu, J. M. (2001). Acculturation measurement: Theory, current instruments, and future directions. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, C. M. Alexander, J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, ... C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed., pp. 394-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kim, B. K., Atkinson, D. R., & Umemoto, D. (2001). Asian cultural values and the counseling process: Current knowledge and directions for future research. *The Counseling Psychologist, 29*(4), 570-603. doi:10.1177/0011000001294006

Kim, B. K., Atkinson, D. R., & Yang, P. H. (1999). The Asian Values Scale: Development, factor analysis, validation, and reliability. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46*(3), 342-352. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.46.3.342

Kim, B. S., Li, L. C., & Ng, G. F. (2005). The Asian American values scale--multidimensional: development, reliability, and validity. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 11*(3), 187-201. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.11.3.187

Kim, H. S., Sherman, D. K., & Taylor, S. E. (2008). Culture and social support. *American Psychologist, 63*(6), 518-526. doi:10.1037/0003-066X

Lee, J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education, 53*(3). 381-409. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-4508-3

Leong, F. T. (1986). Counseling and psychotherapy with Asian-Americans: Review of the literature. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*(2), 196-206. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.33.2.196

Li, J., Marbley, A. F., Bradley, L. J., & Lan, W. (2016). Attitudes toward seeking professional counseling services among Chinese international students: Acculturation, ethnic identity, and English proficiency. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44*(1), 65-76. doi:10.1002/jmcd.12037

Lim, S., Lim, B. H., Michael, R., Cai, R., & Schock, C. K. (2010). The trajectory of counseling in China: Past, present, and future trends. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 88*(1), 4-8. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6678.2010.tb00141.x

Lin, J. G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. *College Student Journal, 31*(4), 473.

Liu, M. (2009). Addressing the mental health problems of Chinese international college students in the United States. *Advances in Social Work, 10*(1), 69-86.

Lowinger, R. J., He, Z., Lin, M., & Chang, M. (2014). The Impact of academic self-efficacy, acculturation difficulties, and language abilities on procrastination behavior in Chinese international students. *College Student Journal, 48*(1), 141-152.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the Self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*(2), 224-253. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224

Miller, M. J. (2007). A bilinear multidimensional measurement model of Asian American acculturation and enculturation: Implications for counseling interventions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(2), 118-131. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.54.2.118

Mitchell, S. L., Greenwood, A. K., & Guglielmi, M. C. (2007). Utilization of counseling services: Comparing international and U.S. college students. *Journal of College Counseling, 10*(2), 117-129. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2007.tb00012.x

Moerrer-Urdahl, T., & Creswell, J. (2004). Using transcendental phenomenology to explore the "Ripple Effect" in a leadership mentoring program. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(2), 19-35. doi: 10.1177/160940690400300202

Moodley, R. (1999). Challenges and transformations: Counselling in a multicultural context. *International Journal for The Advancement of Counselling, 21*(2), 139-152. doi:10.1023/A:1005347817892

Moore, J. L., & Constantine, M. G. (2005). Development and initial validation of the Collectivistic Coping Styles Measure with African, Asian, and Latin American

international students. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 27*(4), 329. doi: 10.17744/mehc.27.4.frcqxuy1we5nwpqe

Mori, S. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*(2), 137-144. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02571.x

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52(2),* 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Muto, T., Hayes, S. C., & Jeffcoat, T. (2011). The effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy bibliotherapy for enhancing the psychological health of Japanese college students living abroad. *Behavior Therapy, 42*(2), 323-335. doi:10.1016/j.beth.2010.08.009

Nilsson, J. E., Berkel, L. A., Flores, L. Y., & Lucas, M. S. (2004). Utilization rate and presenting concerns of international students at a university counseling center: Implications for outreach programming. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 19*(2), 49-59. doi:10.1300/J035v19n02_05

Nisbett, R. E. (2003). *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently and why*. New York, NY, US: Free Press.

Olivas, M., & Li, C. (2006). Understanding stressors of international students in higher education: What college counselors and personnel need to know. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 33*(3), 217-222.

Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. *Counseling Psychologist, 19*(1), 10-58. doi:10.1177/0011000091191002

Pedersen, P. B., Draguns, J. G., Lonner, W. J., & Trimble, J. E. (2008). *Counseling across cultures.,* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781483329314

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 126-136. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.126

Rahman, O., & Rollock, D. (2004). Acculturation, competence, and mental health among South Asian students in the United States. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 32*(3), 130-142. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00366.x

Rallapalli, K. C., & Montgomery, C. D. (2015). Marketing strategies for Asian-Americans: Guidelines based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. In *Minority marketing: Research perspectives for the 1990s* (pp. 73-77). Springer, Cham. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-17386-3_15

Rhoades, G. and Smart, D. (1996). The political economy of entrepreneurial culture in higher education: Policies toward foreign students in Australia and the United States. In Kempner, K. and Tierney, W. G. (Eds.), *The social role of higher education: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 125–159). New York: Garland Publishing.

Robertson, L. H., Holleran, K., & Samuels, M. (2015). Tailoring university counselling services to aboriginal and international students: Lessons from native and international student centers at a Canadian university. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *45*(1), 122-135.

Rogin, J. (2018, February 18). Waking up to China's infiltration of American colleges. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/waking-up-to-chinas-infiltration-of-american-colleges/2018/02/18/99d3bee8-13f7-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5_story.html?utm_term=.608f52ad8ff7

Ruble, R. A., & Zhang, Y. B. (2013). Stereotypes of Chinese international students held by Americans. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 37,* 202-211. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2012.12.004

Rudmin, F. (2009). Constructs, measurements and models of acculturation and acculturative stress. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 33,* 106-123. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.001

Russell, J., Thomson, G., & Rosenthal, D. (2008). International student use of university health and counselling services. *Higher Education, 56*(1), 59-75. doi: 10.1007/s10734-007-9089-x

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2014). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Sato, T., & Hodge, S. R. (2009). Asian international doctoral students' experiences at two American universities: Assimilation, accommodation, and resistance. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 2*(3), 136-148. doi:10.1037/a0015912

Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 118-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Senyshyn, R. M., Warford, M. K., & Zhan, J. (2000). Issues of adjustment to higher education: International students' perspectives. *International Education, 30*(1), 17-35.

Sheu, H., & Fukuyama, M. A. (2007). Counseling international students from East Asia. In H. D. Singaravelu and M. Pope, (Eds.), *A handbook for counseling international students in the United States* (pp. 173-193). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Shi, X., & Wang, J. (2011). Cultural distance between China and US across GLOBE Model and Hofstede Model. *International Business and Management, 2*(1), 11-17. doi:10.3968/j.ibm.1923842820110201.004

Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2014). A group psychological intervention to enhance the coping and acculturation of international students. *Advances in Mental Health, 12*(2), 110-124. doi:10.1080/18374905.2014.11081889

Spears, A. (1999). Race and ideology: An introduction. In Spears, A. (ed.), *Race and Ideology: Language, Symbolism, and Popular Culture* (pp. 11–59). Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press.

Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2001). Consensual and individual stereotypic beliefs about international students among American host nationals. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 25*, 639-657. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(01)00029-3

Stewart, E. C. (1987). American assumptions and values: Orientation to action. In L. F. Luce & E. C. Smith (Eds.), *Toward internationalism* (2nd ed., pp. 51-72). Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.

Sue, D. (2006). Counseling strategies for Chinese Americans. In C. C. Lee (Ed.), *Multicultural issues in counseling: New approaches to diversity* (3rd ed., pp. 127-138). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2015). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Sue, S., Zane, N., Hall, G. C. N., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The case for cultural competency in psychotherapeutic interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology, 60,* 525–548. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651

Suzuki, B. H. (2002). Revisiting the model minority stereotype: Implications for student affairs practice and higher education. In M. K. McEwen, C. M. Kodama, A. N. Alvarez, S. Lee, & C. T. H. Liang (Eds.), *Working with Asian American college students: New directions for student services* (No. 97, pp. 21–32). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. doi:10.1002/ss.36

The Word Bank. (2016). *China's GDP*. Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/country/china

Thomas, K., & Althen, G. (1989). Counseling foreign students. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Conner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (3rd ed., pp. 205–241). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press

Ting-Toomey, S., & Kurogi, A. (1998). Facework competence in intercultural conflict: An updated face-negotiation theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 22*(2), 187-225. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(98)00004-2

Tseng, W., & Newton, F. B. (2002). International students' strategies for well-being. *College Student Journal, 36*(4), 591-597.

Uba, L. (2003). *Asian Americans: Personality patterns, identity, and mental health*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Wang, C. D., & Mallinckrodt, B. (2006). Acculturation, attachment, and psychosocial adjustment of Chinese/Taiwanese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(4), 422-433. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.53.4.422

Wang, K. T., Heppner, P. P., Fu, C., Zhao, R., Li, F., & Chuang, C. (2012). Profiles of acculturative adjustment patterns among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *59*(3), 424-436. doi:10.1037/a0028532

Ward, C. (1996). Acculturation. In D. Landis, R. S. Bhagat, D. Landis, R. S. Bhagat (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (2nd ed., pp. 124-147). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781452231129.

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1999). The measurement of sociocultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 23*, 659-677. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00014-0

Wei, M., Heppner, P. P., Mallen, M. J., Ku, T., Liao, K. Y., & Wu, T. (2007). Acculturative stress, perfectionism, years in the United States, and depression among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *54*(4), 385-394. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.54.4.385

Wei, M., Liao, K. Y., Heppner, P. P., Chao, R. C., & Ku, T. (2012). Forbearance coping, identification with heritage culture, acculturative stress, and psychological distress among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *59*(1), 97-106. doi:10.1037/a0025473

Wetzel, P. J. (1993). The language of vertical relationships and linguistic analysis. *Multilingua, 12*(4), 387- 406. doi: 10.1515/mult.1993.12.4.387

Winkelman, M. (1994). Cultural shock and adaptation. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 73*(2), 121-126. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1994.tb01723.x

Würtz, E. (2005). Intercultural communication on websites: A cross-cultural analysis of web sites from high-context cultures and low-context cultures. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*(1), 274-299. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00313.x

Yakushko, O., Davidson, M. M., & Sanford-Martens, T. C. (2008). Seeking help in a foreign land: International students' use patterns for a U.S. university counseling center. *Journal of College Counseling, 11*(1), 6-18. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2008.tb00020.x

Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2013). Chinese international students' personal and sociocultural stressors in the United States. *Journal of College Student Development, 54*(1), 62-84. doi:10.1353/csd.2013.0010

Yang, H., Harlow, S., Maddux, C., & Smaby, M. (2006). The impact of cross-cultural experiences on worldviews of Chinese international students. *Counseling and Values*, *51*(1), 21-38. doi:10.1002/j.2161-007X.2006.tb00063.x

Yeh, C. J., & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, *16*(1), 15-28. doi:10.1080/0951507031000114058

Yeh, C. J., Arora, A. K., & Wu, K. A. (2006). A new theoretical model of collectivistic coping. In P. P. Wong and L. J. Wong (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural perspectives on stress and coping* (pp. 55-72). Dallas, TX: Spring. doi:10.1007/0-387-26238-5_3

Yi, J. K., Giseala, J., & Kishimoto, Y. (2003). Utilization of counseling services by international students. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, *30*(4), 333-342.

Ying, Y. (2005). Variation in acculturative stressors over time: A study of Taiwanese students in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*(1), 59-71. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.04.003

Yip, K. (2005). Chinese concepts of mental health: Cultural implications for social work practice. *International Social Work*, *48*(4), 391-407. doi:10.1177/0020872805053462

Yoon, E., & Jepsen, D. A. (2008). Expectations of and attitudes toward counseling: A comparison of Asian international and U.S. graduate students. *International Journal for The Advancement of Counselling*, *30*(2), 116-127. doi:10.1007/s10447-008-9050-4

Yoon, E., & Portman, T. A. (2004). Critical issues of literature on counseling international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*(1), 33-44. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00359.x

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011a). Acculturation and psychosocial adjustment of Chinese international students: Examining mediation and moderation effects. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*, 614-627. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.11.004

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011b). Predictors of international students' psychosocial adjustment to life in the United States: a systematic review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*(2), 139-162. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.11.011

Zhang, N., & Dixon, D. N. (2003). Acculturation and attitudes of Asian international students toward seeking psychological help. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 31*(3), 205-222. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2003.tb00544.x

Zhang, Y. (2016). International Students in Transition: Voices of Chinese Doctoral Students in a US Research University. *Journal of International Students, 6*(1), 175-194.

Zimmermann, S. (1995). Perceptions of intercultural communication competence and international student adaptation to an American campus. *Communication Education, 44*(4), 321–335. doi:10.1080/03634529509379022

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Please read the following consent agreement and choose one of the options below.

If you agree to participate in the research study entitled “Exploring the Cross-cultural Experiences of Chinese International Students in the United States and Their Perceptions of Professional Counseling Services in the Context of Acculturation” that is being conducted by Fengkan Zhu (Department of Counseling & Human Development at the University of Georgia, phone: 573-825-8308), you need to understand that your participation is entirely voluntary and you need to be 18 yeas and older to be eligible for participation in this research. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate or not participate will have no bearing on your grades or class standing at UGA.

Please make sure you understand the following points:

1. PURPOSE: In this study we are interested to investigate UGA Chinese international students’ cross-cultural experiences in the U.S., their coping strategies of daily stress and their perceptions and/or experiences of professional counseling services.
2. BENEFIT: This study might help you become more aware of your mental health needs. If necessary, you will be provided brief introductions to the mental health agencies at UGA and their contact information. As a larger benefit to the population of Chinese

international student at UGA, the results of this study may be used to help on-campus mental health agencies to better serve this population in the future.

3. PROCEDURES: You will receive two rounds of individual interviews conducted by the researcher. During the first interview, you will be asked several questions about your cross-cultural experiences in the U.S. and at UGA, your daily stress studying abroad, how you cope with your stress, and your knowledge, perceptions, and attitude toward seeking processional counseling services. This semi-structured interview will take approximately one hour. You will be contacted by the researcher after your first-round interview and will receive a second-round individual interview with the researcher. During the second interview, you will read the transcript of your first-round interview and the coding results of it. You will be asked to elaborate on the changes that you want to make and areas raised in the first interview that either you or the researcher thinks need further exploration. You can refuse to answer any question that you don't want to answer. You can discontinue the interviews any time you want.
4. DISCOMFORTS or STRESSES: No discomforts or stresses are associated with participating in this study.
5. RISKS: No risks are foreseen.
6. ANONYMITY: Once you sign this consent form, you give the researcher the permission to record our interview. Your interview record will be transcribed by the researcher later. Your anonymity will be protected by assigning pseudonym in the transcription from the interview and in the final report. Only the researcher will have access to the interview transcript, and your interview record will be deleted in the end of this study.

7. FURTHER QUESTIONS: After interview, you will be able to contact the researcher if you have any questions (zhufengkan@uga.edu or 573-825-8308).

Printed Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Fengkan Zhu, M.A.

I give the researcher the permission to audio record our interview and transcribe and analyze the record for his research.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Fengkan Zhu, M.A.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia; Telephone 706-542-3199; Email Address irb@uga.edu.

APPENDIX B

Questions for the First-Round Interview

1. Please briefly introduce yourself including where you are from, your age, gender you identify with, what is your current major or program of study at UGA, and how long you have been in the U.S. and at UGA.
2. What does your experience look like come to the U.S. from China and study at UGA?
3. How is your cross-cultural adjustment in the U.S.?
4. What are some of the stress that you are facing now in the U.S.?
5. How do you usually cope with your stress in the U.S.?
6. Have you ever heard about counseling in China? What's your first reaction when you hear counseling?
7. What do you know about counseling? If you know nothing about counseling, what do you imagine it would look like? What picture came to your mind first as I was talking about counseling?
8. What do you think people can gain from counseling?
9. Where did your knowledge of counseling come from?
10. What do you know about mental health services at UGA? Where did you hear about them?
11. Have you ever thought about seeking any on campus counseling service? What is your attitude toward it? What factors could influence your decision?

12. What would you like to discuss that has not been covered so far? What do you think is important for me to know about your story that I did not ask about?