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## Experiencing "Both/And-Ness": Dialectics of Interactions of International Students

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EXPERIENCING "BOTH/AND-NESS": DIALECTICS OF  
INTERACTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

by

Yoko Kubo

A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment for the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts  
School of Communication  
Advisor: Leigh A. Ford, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
June 2012

THE GRADUATE COLLEGE  
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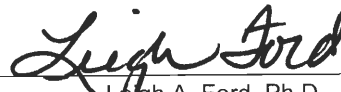
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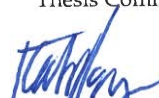
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## EXPERIENCING “BOTH/AND-NESS”: DIALECTICS OF INTERACTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Western Michigan University, 2012

This research focuses on international students in the United States by examining their experiences and interactions as sojourners. Specifically, I explore international students' dialectics within their experiences and interactions in the host culture. Referring to existing concepts from relational dialectics theory (e.g., Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and the six cultural dialectics (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2011), dialectics are the opposing, competing, but co-existing notions or tensions. Eleven international students from 10 different countries participated in face-to-face interviews and follow up e-mail responses. By conducting a thorough thematic analysis (Aronson, 1994), six cultural dialectics, one relational dialectic, and additional dialectic were identified in the international students' stories. International students reflected back and forth between the opposing forces, and reshaped their perceptions toward others and the world. In the discussion, further insights about international students' dialectics are described: the emergent nature of dialectics, meanings that international students gained from their dialectical experiences, the discourses represented in their dialectics, and the possible contributions for the existing theoretical concepts of cultural dialectics.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Every year, a huge number of students transfer from country to country to enroll in educational institutions abroad. These students studying abroad are called *international students* by the host countries. According to the Open Doors Data (2011), between 2009 and 2010, the total enrollment of international students in the United States was 623,119, including 202,970 newly enrolled students. Further, the Open Doors Data (2011) reported the total number of newly enrolled international students (including undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree students) has increased 53.8% since the 2004-2005 academic year. This reflects a trend of a steady increase of international students since 1948 (Open Doors Data, 2011).

The purpose of study abroad for this large group of university level international students differs depending on the individual. For their experiences abroad, some students choose a short-term language course, some spend up to a year as university exchange students, and others enroll for bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree completion (e.g., Open Doors Data, 2011).

During their time in the host country international students have opportunities to interact with people from different cultural and language backgrounds (see e.g., Kashima & Loh's [2006] international students' friendship patterns). These intercultural communication experiences may be an advantage to

international students. For example, international students benefit from studying abroad with their personal growth, intercultural development, and academic and career development (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

At the same time, interacting interculturally with members of the host culture may be challenging. As well as the possible differences in language, international students have cultural norms and values that are different from those of the host culture making it more difficult to effectively interact with host nationals (e.g., Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). International students may experience difficulties through their interactions in the host culture with experiences of culture shock (Oberg, 1960), adaptation stress (e.g., Ryan & Twibell, 2000), and anxiety and uncertainty (e.g., Duronto, Nishida, & Nakayama, 2005).

Some experiences with differences in communication practices may be expected by and acceptable to international students, but other differences may be surprising or challenging or even unacceptable. These challenges may result in communicative tensions that are experienced intrapersonally and/or interpersonally by international students. Such tensions regarding interactions in the host culture can be a challenge to an individual's identity and eventually may affect long term processes such as an individual's adaptation (e.g., Kim, 2005) and assimilation (e.g., Kim, 2005) to the host culture.

To briefly explain, adaptation refers to the ongoing process and degree of adjustment or integration in a new culture, while assimilation refers to being remote

from one's original culture, accepting the new cultural and environmental encounters, and being absorbed into the host culture (Kim, 2005). These processes and outcomes are more characteristic of an individual who expects to interact with the new culture over a significant period of time (e.g., immigrants). A significant amount of adaptation and assimilation are not necessarily required for individuals who enter a new culture for a shorter period of time. Because of their limited time period in the host culture, international students may experience a more temporary accommodation to cultural differences (Brein & David, 1971). This temporality may generate unique kinds of tensions for sojourner international students.

Therefore, rather than the long-term process and outcome of adaptation and assimilation, this study focuses on the tensions international students experience in their interactions with members of the host culture as they attempt to manage and accommodate to these encounter experiences. Even though such tensions might be considered temporary for the duration of the sojourner's stay, they may eventually have the capability to affect individuals' identity and their way of being in a different culture. Kim (2005) describes this notion:

Our old identity is never completely replaced by a new one. Instead, our identity is transformed into something that will always contain the old and the new side by side to form a perspective that allows more openness and acceptance of differences in people, an understanding of "both-and," and a capacity to participate in the

depth of aesthetic and emotional experience of others. Our true strength will no longer be found in rigidly insisting on who we were in the past and who we are at the moment, but in affirming our capacity for change and in embracing what we may yet become. (pp. 395-396)

Kim (2005) describes an outcome of identity that reflects an existence of tensions in that identity is fundamentally unresolvable. Identity, she writes, will “contain the old and new,” reflect “acceptance of difference in people,” and resolve in “an understanding of ‘both-and’” (pp. 395-396); Kim’s statement reveals that these tensions may function for the coexistence of the old and the new selves. If these phenomena are present and even prominent for individuals in the midst of encountering new cultures and interacting with culturally different others, certainly international students experience different senses of selves as their own culture (or country) encounters the culture in the host country (e.g., Lee, 2010). This is consistent with what Kim expressed in the form of the “both-and-ness” of “the old and the new” identity that represents tensions emerge from the opposing and contradicting perceptions. Such tensions or contradictions have the characteristics of *dialectics*.

The concept of dialectics stems from relational dialectics in interpersonal communication. In this view individuals experience contradictions as generated by different or opposing discourses identified as dialectical (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Contradictions that emerge from interpersonal relationships represent the

interplay or tension between unified oppositions, or interdependent themes that function to oppose one another (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Accordingly, dialectics are the experience of “both-and” of the mutual oppositions and contradictions, rather than the experience of “either-or” (Baxter, 2006; Toller & Braithwaite, 2009). Baxter and Montgomery (1996), for example, introduced dyadic pairs of dialectics that oppose each other: separateness vs. connectedness, certainty vs. uncertainty, and openness vs. closedness. These dialectics are contradicting against each other, but at the same time, it is certain that each dialectic is coexistent and mutually effective toward each other.

Intercultural communication scholars Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2010) have elaborated six dyadic concepts of dialectics that may be present in intercultural contexts. Some intercultural communication studies have focused on how experiences of immigrants and ethnic minorities are characterized by dialectics (e.g., Hopson & Orbe, 2007; Semlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008), but few studies have analyzed international students’ experiences of dialectics in their encounters with the host culture (e.g., Chen, Drzewiecka, & Sias, 2001). International students have a different sense of identity compared to immigrants and other ethnic minority members due to their different levels of intention to stay permanently in the host country and to assimilate to the host culture. Although an increasing number of international students are willing to emigrate to the United States due to their interests in the economic and professional opportunities in the host country, personal and societal factors still have a strong influence on them to draw them back to their home country (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Hazen & Alberts, 2006). These facts indicate that

the specific dialectics of international students may vary from those found in the previous studies exploring dialectics in other intercultural contexts. In addition, dialectics in the intercultural communication context may actually influence international students' interaction with the hosts and, eventually, affect adaptation (e.g., Semlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008). The purpose of this thesis study is to examine the dialectics of international students through their experiences and interactions with members of the host culture during their temporary stay in the host country.

Specifically, the present study examines these dialectics using relational dialectics theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008) and the intercultural communication dialectic framework developed by Martin and Nakayama (1999). The experiences expressed by international students are examined based on the basic concepts that Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2010) provide, but also are broadly explored as preceding studies have identified additional dialectics (e.g., Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Braithwaite, Baxter, & Harper, 1998; Gibbs, 2009; Hopson & Orbe, 2007; Semlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008).

The following chapter reviews the literature of previous research about international students in the field of intercultural communication. Then it explains the fundamental groundings of dialectics by introducing relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). It then

introduces Martin and Nakayama's (1999) cultural dialectics as a further means to explain the experiences of international students.

Both relational and cultural dialectics were investigated and analyzed by collecting one-on-one interviews and follow-up question data from students from various countries. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed through the qualitative research method's lens, by identifying dialectics through an extensive thematic analysis.

Because this study is centralized in dialectics in the intercultural communication context, one of my goals is to contribute to existing literature on dialectics and expand the concepts of dialectics that previous studies have investigated. Accordingly, dialectics were identified from the international students' experiences in accordance with the Martin and Nakayama's six cultural dialectics (1999, 2010) and relational dialectics (Baxter, 2004; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In chapter 4, the findings from the analysis of data, refer to the multiple aspects of international students' dialectical interactions and experiences. In chapter 5, the discussion, I will describe the further findings regarding the dialectics identified in the study, and insights that may contribute to dialectics. Additionally, I will discuss how an understanding of dialectic may assist international students as they consider studying abroad. This understanding may also assist universities in their support and preparations of international students for their stay in



the host country. In chapter 6, the conclusion, I discuss the limitations, advantages, and future researches for the present study.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides the overview of the preceding studies about international students and explains dialectics through relational dialectics theory (RDT) (e.g., Baxter, 2004a, 2004b; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) within the intercultural communication context. This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section introduces the overview of international students in the United States and studies of international students conducted through an intercultural communication lens. The section provides a summary of how international students are defined in the intercultural communication context and how previous studies have focused on international students. The second section introduces dialectics which is the major framework of the present study. It reviews relational dialectics theory (RDT) in its earlier and later stage to explain the concepts of dialectics in the interpersonal communication context. This section also describes dialectics in diverse contexts other than that of intercultural situations, elaborates the communicative practices for managing dialectics, and then explains how dialectics can be applied to the present study. The third section reviews Martin and Nakayama's (1999, 2010) concepts of dialectics in intercultural communication contexts. In addition, this section provides information from the preceding studies that focused on dialectics in the intercultural field (e.g., studies about immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, and international students). The chapter is concluded by

stating the research question that guides inquiry into the nature of international students' dialectics.

### Defining International Students' Identities and Experiences in the Host Culture

The following two sections introduce how international students can be defined by their situations and by intercultural communication. The first section explains the situation of international students as sojourners and strangers in the host culture. The second section reviews past studies that have examined international students' experiences especially with adaptation to the host culture through an intercultural communication lens.

#### *International Students as Sojourners-Strangers*

International students are defined as *sojourners* (e.g., Gudykunst, 2005) who stay in another country for a defined period of time. International students study abroad with various academic perspectives and purposes and these purposes also vary in their time to complete requirements. According to Open Doors Data (2011), in 2009-2010, the specifications for international students in higher education regarding their academic status were as follows: associate's degree (n = 68,562), bachelor's degree (n=205,869), graduate degree (n=293,885), non-degree (n=54,803), and total (n=623,119). Therefore, international students' sojourn in the host country depends on the duration of their study and their academic level.

With the exception of some international students who decide to seek permanent residence in the host country after the completion of their degrees (Hazen & Alberts, 2006), international students generally are received by the host country as visitors who come from other countries for a defined period of time. Thus, because international students are time-limited visitors, international students may be considered as different from immigrants and permanent residents in respect to their experiences in the host culture, identity shift, and adaptation outcomes.

For sojourners like international students, the country where they study and the culture of that country are variously called their *host*. The terms “host,” “host country,” “host culture,” and “host nationals,” are used to describe the country and culture in which international students study and reside. The term “host” may commonly evoke images of local people who are welcoming and accepting foreigners with accommodation and hospitality. However, in this case, hosts are simply defined as the new people and the unfamiliar cultural environments that the visitors encounter as they enter a different country. This notion can generate the idea that international students can be defined further than just as sojourners. In the intercultural communication context, sojourners have been referred to as “strangers” because of sojourners’ unfamiliarity with the host cultures (e.g., Kim, 2005). Kim (2005) defined strangers’ boundary conditions as follows.

- (1) The strangers must have had a primary socialization in one culture (or subculture) and have moved into a different and unfamiliar culture (or subculture).

- (2) The strangers are at least minimally dependent on the host environment for meeting their personal and social needs.
- (3) The strangers are engaged in continuous, firsthand communication experiences with that environment. (p. 381)

The boundary conditions described clearly fit the definition and experiences of sojourners. “Stranger” refers not only to a sojourner but also to someone who is new in an environment and culture, such as newly arrived immigrants and permanent residents. In particular, international students meet the boundary conditions of strangers listed above, as they enter a new and unfamiliar culture, depend on the host environment, and engage in communication with the host environment. First, international students are all foreigners in the host country and have their own primary cultures in which they were socialized back in their home countries. Second, they may depend on the host environment to have their demands met, especially with respect to their academic learning, school activities, living, socializing, and so on. This may especially be magnified since international students mostly arrive with no immediate family members or other individual or social support. Third, they engage in speaking and learning the language of the host country and in experiencing communication with the host nationals, especially during their school life with their classmates, friends, and professors.

Considering the particularity of international students’ situations as sojourner-strangers, they are an interesting population to be studied under intercultural contexts.

As international students encounter and interact with the host culture, their experiences likely vary from individual to individual, from encounter to encounter, and from culture of origin to culture of origin. In some cases the encounters heighten perceived differences for international students as sojourners and strangers. These heightened differences emphasize the duality of their present circumstances as they participate in the host culture but are not a part of that culture. Such dual situations for international students provide the focus of research in this study. To provide context for this proposed study, previous studies that have also focused attention on this unique population are examined and reviewed in the following section.

*Studies of International Students' Experiences through an Intercultural Communication Lens*

Past studies have researched the experience of international students from various perspectives. Considerable scholarship in various fields such as international education, higher education, and intercultural communication studies, examines cross-cultural adaptation, acculturation, or adjustment of international students (e.g., Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Brown, 2009; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Lin, 2006; Pitts, 2009; Tomich, McWhirter, & Darcy, 2003; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000; Yang, Noels, & Saumure, 2005; Ye, 2006; Zimmerman, 1995). More specifically, in the communication field, many of these studies examined specific factors that contribute to international students' adaptation in host countries. For example, Zimmerman (1995) studied international student adaptation to U.S. campuses, by focusing on intercultural communication

competence. She concluded that the interactions with host nationals are the most important factor in determining international students' adaptation and communication competency, with communication competence being the incentive for students' satisfaction with their communication skills. Also, Ye's (2006) study about support networks and cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students found that perceived support from online ethnic social groups and interpersonal networks in the host country positively affects international students' sociocultural and psychological adjustment. Lin (2006) focused on culture shock (Oberg, 1960) and how ethnically based student organizations can help international students deal with culture shock. In addition, Lin (2006) investigated how perceived social support from organizations and communication with same culture members could contribute to international students' intercultural adjustment. Pitts (2009) also examined international students' adjustment. She explained that international students manage their expectations and expectation gaps they perceive when visiting and while living in the host country. In doing so, they use everyday talk on expectation gaps as stress buffers, which may ultimately lead to personal growth, sojourn identity shifts, and intercultural adjustment (Pitts, 2009). From these studies, we can see that international students' adjustments are multidimensional, multifaceted, and not limited to their adjustments to academic situations and languages but also include their psychological conditions and socio-cultural interactions (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). In sum, these studies contribute to the scholarships of intercultural communication research through the assumptions about international students' adaptation (including acculturation,

adjustment, and intercultural competence) and the exploration of the contextual factors which can affect adaptation.

Beyond a focus on international students' adaptation, other studies have examined international students in light of other variables as follows. Holistically, a review of previous research includes studies of international students that assess potential contributing factors (e.g., personal traits, communication competence, social support) and their relationship with specific outcome variables or thematic processes (e.g., adaptation, satisfaction, adjustment) that can influence the overall experiences and reactions of international students in the host country. For example, Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung (2008) hypothesized a model to demonstrate the relationship between international students' educational satisfaction and the contributing factors (i.e., identity gaps, acculturation, and perceived discrimination). Their study indicated that acculturation and perceived discrimination were the significant contributing factors for educational satisfaction, with identity gaps partially related to educational satisfaction (Wadsworth et al., 2008).

A recent intercultural communication study focused on an alternative way of understanding international students' experiences in a host culture. Urban and Orbe (2007) studied international students' positionality as minorities and their communicative experiences within the host culture. Their study used co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) which provides concepts to describe the communication processes of marginalized group members within dominant social structures (Urban



& Orbe, 2007). The study neither aimed to examine guidance toward international student adaptation nor revealed any mediating or contributing factors for adaptation, but instead provided its unique insight toward international students by perceiving them as non-dominant individuals in the dominant host culture.

From the preceding studies, we have learned much about the way international students communicate and interact with others in a different culture, and the processes and outcome factors such as their adaptation or satisfaction in communicating in the host country. In a manner similar to Urban and Orbe (2007), this study proposes to examine international students' experiences from an alternative perspective. Little is known about international students' efforts to make sense of their experiences in the host culture. International students own stories and reflections about their intercultural interactions where difference is heightened and where the student must find meaning in the encounter have not been examined. The goal of this study is to investigate how international students experience and make sense of tensions, differences, and challenges that they perceive in the host culture. Therefore, the approach of the present study may add new insights to international students' experiences of the host culture.

Because international students have multiple identities such as sojourners, strangers, and individuals embracing their home culture, their particular experiences may be characterized as having the "both-and-ness" (Kim, 2005) and simultaneous, competing tensions as they try to make sense of their experiences. Such competing,

opposing, but yet coexisting tensions have been termed dialectics. The following section describes the concepts and theoretical background of dialectics.

### Dialectics within Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

In this section, I explain dialectics by describing relational dialectics theory (RDT) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 2004a, 2004b; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). RDT has been developed over time by its primary communication theorists, Leslie Baxter, Barbara Montgomery, and Dawn Braithwaite. Therefore, in this section, I explore the theory by explaining its developmental process. First, I explain the early conceptualizations of RDT that have been articulated by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and review the primary pairs of dialectics that they have identified. Next, I further describe RDT by explaining the later work of Baxter and Braithwaite (2008) that has added more theoretical insights. Then, after exemplifying the communicative practices of dialectics management and the previous studies that focused on examining and identifying dialectics in diverse contexts, I explain how dialectics may be applied to the present study.

#### *Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT): In the Earlier Stage*

Relational dialectics theory (RDT) provides an explanation for the nature and meanings of dialectics that emerge within interpersonal interactions and relationships. Therefore, an understanding of RDT is the starting point to learn, detect, and analyze dialectics. The theory is grounded in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (Baxter

& Montgomery, 1996) and was first synthesized in Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) *Relating: Dialogues & Dialectics* as an interpersonal communication theory.

Baxter and Montgomery argue that in interpersonal relationships, individuals frequently experience opposing or contradictory tensions with one another during interactions. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), a dialectical perspective emphasizes how relationship parties manage the simultaneous constraints of oppositions and contradictions. This is referred to as the "both/and"-ness patterns in individuals' interplays (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). However, as Baxter (2004a) notes, contradictions are not defined as existing in individuals' heads as communicative strategies, but are located in the more discursive field of communication between relationship parties.

Baxter and Montgomery (1998) explained four conceptual assumptions for RDT that complement the nature of the theory. *Contradiction* represents the dynamic interplay between interdependent and unified oppositions; *change* refers to the different motion or process that modifies contradictions and relationships over time; *praxis* is to put simultaneous focus on subject-and-object within relationships; and *totality* refers to the inseparability of contradictions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). These concepts reflect the key principles of RDT that focus on the duality that emerges from opposing contradictions.

In the foundational relational dialectics theory literature, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) have identified three primary dyadic pairs of dialectics that are

perceived in interpersonal relationships. These are closeness and separateness, certainty and uncertainty, and openness and closedness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These dialectics represent the key conceptual assumptions of contradiction: opposites that are experienced simultaneously and not *either-or* but rather *both-and* comprising a duality.

The closeness-separateness dialectic defines interpersonal relationships of those who seek for sustained interdependence with one another, while simultaneously seeking for differentiated independence from one another (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Rather than about physical distances, this dialectic explains the contradictions between closeness and separateness due to the level of mutual dependence, similarities and sameness between individuals, and positive affection toward each other of a relationships party (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argued that relationships are to construct a sense of continuity over time out of what is fundamentally considered to be discontinuous. From this notion, they categorized the certainty-uncertainty dialectic that explains personal relationships are processes of interplay between forces of certainty and uncertainty (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This dialectic presents that certainty and uncertainty are simultaneously and jointly owned by both individuals and constructed through their interactions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

The openness-closedness dialectic refers to individuals' self-disclosure and closure, as well as being receptive or non-receptive toward another's disclosures

(Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This relates to dialectics that emerge according to our self-boundaries, which often depend on the level of personal candor and discretion, and risk and benefit outcomes of relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Based on these conceptual assumptions, Baxter and Montgomery argue that these dialectics do not necessarily perform independently from one another, and within an interaction we may not experience only a single pair of dialectics within our relationships. *Change* is one of the theoretical assumptions of dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998), and interpersonal relationships involve interactions between individuals that constantly change over time (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Thus, we may experience more than one kind of dialectic within a relationship and interactions (Baxter, 2004a). The dialectics discussed above are what can be referred to as primary dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), but in reality, we may experience more than these dialectics within interactions and relationships with others, and those may change and flow over time and contexts.

RDT is designed to examine the meanings between these dialectics of “both/and”-ness and how individuals make sense of oppositions within interplayed discourses and relations. Therefore, an individual’s sensemaking processes as they communicatively manage these relational dialectics reveal the self through interactions with related others (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 2004a).

*Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT): In the Later Stage*

In the recent years, relational dialectics theory's theoretical assumptions have been sophisticatedly synthesized. Baxter and Braithwaite (2008) articulated the main features and principles of RDT in three propositions, and describe them as follows.

Proposition 1: Meanings emerge from the struggle of different, often opposing, discourses.

Proposition 2: The interpenetration of discourses is both synchronic and diachronic.

Proposition 3: The interpenetration of competing discourses constitutes social reality (pp. 351-355).

Proposition 1 indicates that communication is full of competing discourses that we interpret and make meaning out of in our daily lives. In terms of analyzing, we need to be aware of utterances in discourses and make efforts to determine how those discourses are associated with each other in the process of meaning production. Proposition 2 implies that, while new meanings are produced through competing discourses, there are also reproductions of old meanings. This means that meanings are fluid and easily transformed over time through the ebb and flow of the contexts of discourses (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Proposition 3 defines that, in RDT, identity and consciousness are constructed by conceiving and perceiving differences through competing discourses with the other. From this point, RDT is a relationship-in-communication theory defining that relationships are formed based on the meanings

generated from the contexts of interactions and discourses (Baxter & Montgomery, 2008).

Baxter and Braithwaite (2008) state that although RDT is criticized for merely repeatedly identifying the discursive tensions of competing discourses, theorists have argued that the importance of RDT is its capability of interpreting the meanings generated from those competing discourses. This element of RDT is the most crucial for the present study, for its purpose of investigating and interpreting dialectics of international students, experienced through communication and interactions in the host culture.

Further, dyadic oppositions can generate uncertainty in individuals, but dialectics are not necessarily conceptualized to be negative. This is explained by what RDT focuses on: it questions how oppositions construct the consciousness and identity of individuals (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Therefore, even though individuals may perceive uncertainty, concern, frustration, or struggle from dialectics in relationships with others, these can provide individuals an opportunity to rethink who they are and how they should behave. This basic notion has relevance for the study proposed here.

In summary, RDT enables competing and opposing discourses give personal relationships vitality and energy by rejecting the notion of balancing those objecting forces (Baxter, 2004a; Toller & Braithwaite, 2009). And by perceiving dialectics, it helps individuals to make sense of their perspectives and make meaning out of their

relationships through interpretation, even though perceiving dialectics may sometimes be a challenging thing.

### *Existing Dialectics*

The basic contradictions that Baxter and Montgomery (1996) introduced were the following dialectics: separateness vs. connectedness, certainty vs. uncertainty, and openness vs. closedness. Because relational dialectics stem from dialogues that produce contradictions inherent in social life (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and in discursive communicative field between various relationship parties (Baxter, 2004a), the theoretical concept of dialectics are applied in various fields of communication scholarship. Scholars have applied dialectics, for example, in studies of family communication (e.g., Braithwaite, Baxter, & Harper, 1998; Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Toller & Braithwaite, 2009), romantic relationships (e.g., Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Baxter & Erbert, 1999), team communication (e.g., Gibbs, 2009), and minorities within dominant social structure (e.g., Hopson & Orbe, 2007; Sendlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008).

Other than the original pairs of dialectics that Baxter and Braithwaite (1996) introduced, scholars have studied to discover various dialectics. Braithwaite and Baxter (2006) analyzed college stepchildren's perceptions of relationship and communication with their nonresidential parents by eliciting two contradictions: parenting vs. nonparenting and openness vs. closedness. Braithwaite and Baxter's (1995) study on ritual of renewing marriage vows between spouses in the U.S. society



revealed following dialectics: private vs. public, stability vs. change, and conventionality vs. uniqueness. Gibbs (2009) examined dialectics of global software team members who virtually work across time, space, and culture: autonomy vs. connectedness, inclusion vs. exclusion, and empowerment vs. disempowerment. As we can see from these studies, dialectics are applicable to studies of different focuses in various fields. Then, the question is, how dialectics are going to be applied in the present study that foci on international students.

### *Communicative Practices for Managing and Negotiating Dialectics*

Even though experiencing dialectics may influence individuals to manage and negotiate tensions and contradictions, relational dialectics theory (RDT) itself does not provide any strategic concept to guide individuals' communicative practices (Baxter, 2004a; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). But this is because of the nature of this theory. Rather than extracting generalizability or strategies of communication, the goal of relational dialectics is to interpret particular meanings that are emergent in communicative practices and constructed realities between relationships (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Therefore, it can be said that there are diverse ways to manage and negotiate dialectics depending on the topics of studies and background of the participants.

However, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) introduced eight patterns of praxis that represent individuals' communicative choices when facing dialectical contradictions. Here I list them briefly.

- (1) *Denial*: to legitimate only one dialectic pole by eliminating the other;
- (2) *Disorientation*: to perceive dialectics as fatal, inevitable, negative, and impassive reality in the social world;
- (3) *Spiraling inversion*: to privilege the ebb and flow between the dialectic poles;
- (4) *Segmentation*: to make selection between dialectic poles depending on the capable fulfillment of poles;
- (5) *Balance*: to compromise between dialectics but each contradiction is partially fulfilled;
- (6) *Integration*: to respond to each dialectic without compromising;
- (7) *Recalibration*: to synthesis or transform contradictions so it will no longer be perceived as opposing to one another;
- (8) *Reaffirmation*: to accept that contradictions cannot be reconciled, while acknowledging the richness of the contradictions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

These may or may not work as solutions to manage dialectics in participants' desired outcomes, but may be defined as possible choices for communicative practices in managing dialectics. Although this is an assumption, international students may choose some of these communicative practices in order to manage and negotiate dialectics.

### *Application of Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) to the Present Study*

The present study also aims to interpret the themes of dialectics that international students experience in the host culture. This is a particular focus from an intercultural communication context. Dialectics in the context of intercultural communication have been conceptually defined and established by Martin and Nakayama (1999). Their *cultural dialectics* represent possible contradictions that can be perceived in the intercultural communication context. In the present study, their concepts of dialectics are referenced and utilized as the analytical grounding to investigate and interpret international students' dialectics.

The following section examines dialectics and summarizes the concepts through the lens of intercultural communication. It introduces Martin and Nakayama's *cultural dialectics* that allow researchers to see and think about the world in various ways and to be able to engage in advanced intercultural interactions (1999).

### *Dialectics in the Context of Intercultural Communication*

This section is important for the present study for it provides the major concepts that guide the analysis of dialectics in the context of intercultural communication. Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2010) presented six dyadic pairs of cultural dialectics perceived in intercultural interactions and relationships. These

dialectics were utilized as the fundamental examples and guidance to explore and interpret dialectics in the analysis stage.

*Martin and Nakayama's Six Cultural Dialectics*

According to Martin and Nakayama (1999), a dialectical perspective in intercultural communication research and practice emphasizes a more holistic examination of aspects of intercultural communication looking for relationships of tensions, mutual influence and contradictions. Therefore, it may be said that a dialectical approach to intercultural communication offers the opportunity of identifying and knowing about intercultural communication as a dynamic, changing, and oftentimes opposing and contradicting process (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

Extended from the original concepts from relational dialectics in the field of interpersonal communication, Martin and Nakayama (1999) introduced six dialectics that can be identified interdependently in intercultural interactions: cultural vs. individual, personal vs. social contextual, differences vs. similarities, static vs. dynamic, present vs. future/history vs. past, and privilege vs. disadvantage dialectic. The definitions are as follows.

- (1) *Cultural-Individual Dialectic*: In any given interaction, communication is both cultural and idiosyncratic;

(2) *Personal/Social-Contextual Dialectic*: Communication is constant regardless to context, and other times communication changes in response to social context.

(3) *Differences-Similarities Dialectics*: Cultural differences have been emphasized in traditional intercultural communication, but in fact, differences and similarities can coexist in intercultural interactions;

(4) *Static-Dynamic Dialectic*: Cultures and cultural practices are thought to be constant, but they also have the ever-changing nature;

(5) *Present-future/History-past Dialectic*: It is important to balance the understanding toward the past (history) and the present (future);

(6) *Privilege - Disadvantage Dialectic*: Individuals may simultaneously experience privilege or disadvantage depending on individuals' situations and contexts (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

According to Martin and Nakayama (1999), these dialectics always operate interdependently in relation to each other and occur in everyday interpersonal intercultural interactions. These conceptual pairs richly represent the possible dialectics in the intercultural communication context. However, these concepts were established through theorization but not from actual data collection. Therefore, applying these cultural dialectics in examining actual groups of individuals may provide new insights to previous studies of dialectics. In the present study's analysis, I assume that I may find these intercultural dialectics from international students'

communicative experiences, as well as other kinds of dialectics that are emergent in individuals' ordinary lives.

*Studies about Dialectics in the Intercultural Contexts*

Other than Martin and Nakayama's (1999) six cultural dialectics, scholars have researched and expanded the concepts of dialectics. For example, Chen (2002) discussed dialectics in intercultural relationships by making internal and external approaches to each concept. These are dialectics in communication between individuals (i.e., internal) and dialectics between individuals and the culture of the others (i.e., external). This approach transcends dialectics in the interpersonal contexts, for it emphasizes the external/cultural factors that evoke dialectics.

In the field of intercultural communication, dialectics were utilized to describe cultural or ethnic minorities' cognitive status and their relationships with the dominant group members (e.g., Hopson & Orbe, 2007; Sendlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008). For example, Sendlak, et al. (2008) analyzed dialectic contradictions experienced by female African refugees in the United States. Their study uncovered the dialectics of female African refugees that emerged through their acculturation and adaptation process in the United States (Sendlak, et al., 2008). Their study found dialectics that specifically the non-dominant group members (i.e., as being refugees and female African) experience in the dominant culture. Specifically, they found the female African refugees experienced dialectics of positive-negative, inclusion-exclusion, acceptance-rejection, and real-ideal (Sendlak, et al., 2008). Hopson and

Orbe (2007) studied dialectical tensions experienced by Black men in oppressive organizational structures. They conducted a textual analysis of previously published literatures from classics to modern, and examined dialectical tensions that Black men experienced throughout the history. Those dialectics were somatic-perceptions/cerebral-realities, rational-irrational, inclusion-opposition, coping-suffering, and staying-running (Hopson & Orbe, 2008). Both Semlak, et al. (2008) and Hopson and Orbe's (2007) exploration of dialectics were based on relational dialectics theory, with Hopson and Orbe (2007) also referring to Martin and Nakayama's six cultural dialectics (1999). Accordingly each study drew on these theoretical concepts and clarified the dialectics they investigated through their research objectives.

As previously mentioned as an example of dialectics in team communication, Gibbs' (2009) research on global software team members is another example of dialectics in the intercultural communication context. Not only the focus was on global teams, it was also on virtual teams that members work together between distances. Gibbs' study revealed considerable number of dialectics that were particularly present to workers who temporarily, technologically, virtually, and globally engage in a working team. Those dialectics were, for example, autonomy-connectedness, inclusion-exclusion, and empowerment-disempowerment.

Erbert, Pérez, and Gareis (2003) took a different approach from other relational and cultural dialectics studies. They focused on dialectics of immigrants

regarding their experiences of turning points in the United States. However, they took a mixed methodology by conducting both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Immigrants' turning point experiences were gathered through interviews, but then, the dialectics were identified by directly asking the participants to determine the extent to which dialectics were important for them and to rate the levels of each dialectics (Erbert, et al., 2003). In doing so, the researchers showed the existing patterns of dialectics and explain the concepts to the participants so that they can define their identified dialectics. They identified six dialectics, openness-closedness, predictability-novelty, group-individual, judgment-acceptance, directness-indirectness, and independence-obligation, from immigrants' experiences (Erbert, et al., 2003). This style of research is different from the present study, but their approach was effective in identifying the levels of dialectics that the immigrants perceived and were actually aware of by themselves.

At this point, the exploration of dialectics is not prominent in the field of international student studies in the communication field. In one example, Chen, Drzewiecka, and Sias (2001) studied dialectics of Taiwanese international students in the United States. However, their focus was on intracultural dialectics that were characterized from the relationships among Taiwanese students. Therefore, to study dialectics particularly focused on international students encountering the host culture and interacting with the host nationals may provide new understandings. Considering the theoretical concept of dialectics as the core framework of the study, I pose the following question to examine international students' dialectics.



RQ: How are the interactions and experiences of international students within the host culture experienced through relational dialectics and cultural dialectics?

The question was examined by listening to the stories that international students shared to describe their experiences. The methodology is explained in the next chapter, which encompasses the research design and the data analysis method.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

This research study utilizes a qualitative methodology. The inquiry focuses on international students' experiences of dialects contained within their interactions in the host culture. My goal was to interpret international students' experiences through interviews that inquire about the dialectics that may characterize their interactions with the cultures and people in the United States. In this chapter, I will first define what a qualitative methodology is and how it will be applied to this research. Then, I will describe my participants, recruitment procedure, the data collection process, and the data analysis procedures.

#### Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research intends to “preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action” by utilizing “the raw material analysis” of human behavior (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.18). Unlike quantitative inquiry that offers finite questions with categorized, forced-choice responses, the humanistic and interpretive nature of qualitative research enables researchers to focus on understanding human beings' rich experiences and reflections about those experiences (Jackson II, Drummond, & Camara, 2007).

Qualitative research is responsive to the communicative events in social reality, as well as to emerged learning and innovations, and to the communicative activities under

investigation (Arnett, 2007). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) qualitative research, with its characteristic of “logic of discovery and attention to the diverse forms and details of social life – converge on issues of how humans articulate and interpret their social and personal interests” (p.19).

Qualitative research varies in its data collection and analysis methodology. Researchers who use this method identify texts or social objects suitable for analysis (Jackson II, Drummond, & Camara, 2007). These can be practiced by, for example, textual analysis of a written work, journal, or film; content analysis through ethnographical approaches such as fieldwork and participant observations; and content and interactional analysis through interviews and focus groups (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

In the field of intercultural communication, interpretive research “focuses on reciprocal and emergent relationships between communication and culture” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 23). This is relevant to my research approach since I explored and interpreted dialectics that emerged within international students’ personal experiences and communication in the host culture. In utilizing qualitative research method, I conducted an interpretive examination and explored international students’ experiences. In doing so, I conducted interviews with international students and analyzed the collected interview data through thematic analysis (Aronson, 1994).

### Subjectivity of the Researcher

The important point to note about qualitative research is its subjectivity. According to Morgan and Drury (2003), the subjectivity of qualitative research method “provides access to the lived reality of individuals, facilitating the exploration of people's

internal construction of their personal worldview” (p. 74). In addition, qualitative researchers place importance on examining intersubjectivity, which is a social accomplishment that involves exploring how people share experiences and mutually construct social interactions (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Therefore, it is crucial for the researcher to play the role of human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Jackson II, Drummond, & Camara, 2007). This human instrument approach is about the researcher’s effort to become “the vehicle through which data will be collected and interpreted” (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 50) and to be capable of grasping, understanding, and evaluating the meanings within interactions between individuals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In regards to the researcher’s subjectivity, my perspectives as an international student allowed me to have an in-depth interpretation and understanding of the stories of the participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Being an international student from Japan, I had an advantage in conducting this research by bringing my own perspectives and lived experiences to exercise a subjective understanding toward the international students. It also means that my identity as a fellow international student may have created an in-group membership with the participants, which allowed them to have a higher level of disclosure about their experiences.

As a researcher and an international student, I had an advantage in having access to international students’ stories regarding their experiences as a reflection of my own experience. Nevertheless, it was important to note that I should prepare myself as a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which means assuring that I am not imposing my own narrative frame on the participants. It was important to be aware that some participants may omit information by taking it for granted, assuming that the interviewer

must already know about their experiences. Therefore, I had to be attentive to ask questions and communicate in a way that I could encourage the interviewees to deliver their stories and thoughts regarding dialectical experiences. In addition, I had to be mindful with the analysis where the advantages were my own interpretive lens as an international student, while the disadvantages were the possibility of my over assumption toward the meaning of the data.

### Participants

The participants were international students from various countries studying at a large Midwestern public university. The recruitment was open to international students at the university who were in undergraduate, graduate, and Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELSIS). In order to obtain a variety of international student experiences for analysis, the recruitment process did not limit participants' personal backgrounds by their age, nationality, department, and/or type of degree pursued. This is because examining international students from various cultural backgrounds enabled me to analyze dialectics that are unique as well as those that may be in common among a diverse group of international students. The desired duration of the participants' stay in the host country (in the United States) was from about a one-semester-long (3-4 months) minimum to three years maximum. This is because I anticipated the possibility of participants' memories receding from their actual experiences at the very moment when they may have experienced dialectics as a sojourner-stranger in the host culture. The number of participants was estimated to be from 10 to 15, with an attempt at an equal balance of men and women. The increase in the number of participants stopped at the point when the data reached saturation, which is when the data

comes to the point of replication or redundancy that indicate the collected data to be complete (Bowen, 2008).

After gaining approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB), interview recruitment was conducted to invite potential participants. The participants were recruited by utilizing snowball sampling (e.g., Leong & Ward, 2000; Urban, 2007; Urban & Orbe, 2010). Snowball sampling involves using a participant not only as an interviewee but also as a recruiter to introduce a new participant to the researcher (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Because a university is one large community made of smaller communities, the numerous connections and relationships between students can generate a series of recruitments from student to student. The first few participants were recruited through my personal contacts. An e-mail script and speaking script were created to invite international students to participate in the study. The scripts also asked others to provide names of international students who may take interest in participating in the study. Japanese language recruitment scripts were also prepared in recruiting students of Japanese descent. A recruitment flyer was also used to handout and post in the office of international students which is frequented by international students. (See Appendix A for the recruitment scripts.)

After I verbally informed participants regarding the voluntary nature of the interview and e-mail follow-up and issues of confidentiality, I worked with participants to schedule the interview date, time, and location. In advance of starting each interview, the informed consent forms were handed to the participants. The form included information on the purpose of study, the style and length of the interview, a brief explanation about the content of the interview, and the note of confidentiality agreement.

The participants indicated their agreement to participate in the interviews by signing the Human Subjects consent form. International students participated in the study only after this written consent was obtained. (See Appendix C for the informed consent form.)

There were a total of 11 international students, 5 males and 6 females who volunteered to participate in the study. The participants included 4 doctoral degree students, 3 master's degree students, 3 undergraduate students, and 1 undergraduate exchange student. They were from 10 different countries; one student each from China, Korea, Malaysia, Kenya, Jordan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Norway, and Dominican Republic, and two students from Japan. Their ages in years ranged from early-20s to early-30s. Of the 11 students, four volunteered to reply to the follow-up e-mail short answer questionnaire while three responded to inform that they could not recall any further story to share; the remaining four students did not respond.

Some brief descriptions of the participants appears in order. Cindy is a late-20 year old female graduate student from the southern part of China. She is in her second year of the master's program in the field of humanities. Jimin is a 21 year old female student from South Korea who came as an exchange student to participate an undergraduate exchange program for one semester. Eric, from Malaysia, is an early-20 year old male undergraduate student in the field of engineering. He has been in the United States for two years. Also, he is the only participant who spoke English in his home country as one of his native languages. Daniel is a mid-20 year old male student in the doctoral program in the field of science. He is from Kenya and has been in the United States for two and a half years. Jana is a late-20 or early-30 year old female graduate student from Jordan who has just started her third year of doctoral study in the field of

science. She is the only participant who identified her religious identity as a Muslim woman. Hamid is a late-20s or early-30s year old male graduate student from Iran who has stayed in the United States for two and a half years. He is also a doctoral student in the field of science, and he is the only participant who is married. Sajith is also a mid-20 year old male graduate student in his first year of doctoral studies in the field of science. He came from Sri Lanka, and he is the only participant who identified his religious identity as a Buddhist. Kristine is a female undergraduate student from Norway. Including her one-year study abroad experience when she was in high school, the total duration of her stay in the United States has been almost three years. She is around 20 years old and studying in the field of humanities. Isabella is a mid-20 year old female graduate student from Dominican Republic. She is in her second year of master's study in the field of humanities. Makoto is a late-20 year old male Japanese graduate student. He has been in the United States for two and a half years studying in the field of psychology. Chihiro is an early-20 year old female undergraduate student studying in the field of humanities. She is also from Japan and has been in the United States for two and a half years.

### Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected by conducting face-to-face interviews with a solicited follow-up short answer e-mail response shortly after the interviews were conducted. Interviews are useful for researchers who expect “the nature of the actor’s experience to result in words that can be only uttered by someone who has ‘been there’ (or ‘is there’)” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). Because of the importance of collecting the stories of



experiences of international students, interviewing was the appropriate data collection method for the present study.

The interview was a semi-structured conversational interview based on open-ended questions. The interview script was made by referring to questions that were used in previous relational dialectics studies (Braithwaite, Baxter, & Harper, 1998; Semlak, et al., 2008), but mostly by referring to Urban (2007) and Urban and Orbe's (2010) interview framework that inquired on experiences of immigrants in the United States. Each inquiry was made by trying as much as possible to generate a natural conversation in order to obtain the participants' stories about their experiences (Urban & Orbe, 2010). I used the assumptions of personal narrative form, which uses conversational interactions between the interviewer and interviewees as the method for producing life stories (Langellier, 1989). In using this approach, I utilized casual speech (Langellier, 1989) and language that encouraged participants to describe their experiences in their own everyday-language (Bates, 2004). In doing so, the interviewer had to carefully listen to the interviewee's use of language in order to learn how the interviewee expressed their experiences (Bates, 2004). Also mentioned in the later section, there was an option for Japanese students to have their interviews and follow-up e-mail responses conducted in Japanese.

The interview was designed to be completed in 60 to 90 minutes, with the participation of one international student in each face-to-face interview. The actual time of the interviews ranged from 42 to 93 minutes, with an average length of 67 minutes.

The interview questions asked students to recall and describe experiences that may have happened some time in the past. At times participants may not have been able to recall situations immediately after the questions were asked. In these cases, the interviewer kept the question in mind for later when the interviewer believed that participant may have shared stories related to the earlier questions or interviewer believed that participants felt comfortable enough to share their stories at that later point in the interview. The interviews were fully audio recorded and participants were informed again that the recordings would be kept securely and in confidence. The location of the interview was secured on campus with consideration to the convenience of the participants. The locations were chosen carefully in order to avoid recording problems.

The non-verbal factors that cannot be recorded, such as the interviewees' behaviors, appearance, vocalic, and expressions and the atmosphere of the interview location, were documented in field notes at the earliest convenience following each interview (Spradley, 1980; Wolfinger, 2002). Field notes complemented the transcriptions with such non-verbal information. In analyzing the field notes, I referred to Spradley's (1980) list of what to look for in field note analysis: space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal, and feeling. Because this list is applicable in various qualitative methodologies, some of the factors in this list were not identified during the interview (e.g., factors that reflect incidents such as event or activity). Some of the factors were found in the interviewee's spoken language and in those notes taken during the interview. Other factors were observed from the interviewee's behavior, gesture, use of time, and the general atmosphere during the conversation with the interviewee.

In the actual interviews, I made an effort to make the participants comfortable and relaxed as they described the experiences they have had in the host culture. I introduced myself to interviewees who I met for the first time prior to the start of the interview, by telling why I became interested in the research topic. In turn, I had my participants briefly introduce themselves by answering the opening questions. Then I moved on to inquiring about their experiences in the host culture, which were eventually analyzed to examine their interactions and communication that characterized their dialectical experiences. Their anecdotes and other collected data were confidentially treated with the use of pseudonyms in transcriptions. The participant's names provided in this study are pseudonyms which were randomly chosen from the online lists and rankings of popular names in each country.

With the participants' agreement, follow-up questions were asked via e-mail. This was to provide each participant an opportunity to further explain or add to their stories. Because English was not the native language for most international students, some students may have felt more comfortable and/or confident with writing rather than speaking their stories in English. Conveying stories by writing may offer more intimate and personal ways of expressions that could not be outlined in face-to-face interviews (Mesh, 2003). As well as the informed consent was sought regarding the face to face interviews, it also was sought when asking participants for their e-mail address and permission to e-mail them with the short answer questionnaires. The follow-up e-mail questions were e-mailed directly to the participants with instructions to return their responses via e-mail. Four out of 11 participants responded to the e-mail with only one participant providing a full-essay-length response. Three participants responded to inform

that they did not come up with additional stories to share. Responses from the four remaining participants were not gained.

The interview was designed in English, but I prepared another version translated into Japanese for students who preferred to have their interviews in Japanese. I allowed my Japanese participants to speak in Japanese not only because of concerns related to their language proficiencies but also to reduce the awkwardness of the situation; they could have felt uncomfortable responding in English to an interviewee who was a native Japanese speaker. Conducting interviews in their own language enabled the participants to generate sufficient and dense data. The Japanese interview questions were constructed by translating the original English version. A translator proficient with both languages took charge in back-translating the questions into English. Then I compared the back-translated questions with the original English questions to assess the accuracy of my translation. Both of the Japanese students requested to speak in Japanese during their interviews. They also responded the follow up e-mail questions in Japanese.

### Data Analysis

The collected interview data was transcribed verbatim and documented as a series of discourses between each participant and myself as the researcher. The word count of the 11 interviews ranged from approximately 5,600 to 13,900 words. Of 11 participants, two interviews were between 5,600 to 7,000 words; three were between 7,001 to 9,000 words; two were between 9,001 to 11,000 words, and the rest four were over 11,001 words. The two interview data recorded in Japanese were transcribed in Japanese (i.e., transcript A). After I translated the transcriptions into English (i.e., transcript B), those

were back-translated into Japanese by a translator (i.e., transcript C). The volunteer translator was found from my personal contacts. The accuracy level of the translations was assessed by comparing the transcript A and C. Two reliable users of English and Japanese, both of whom completed comprehensive course work in higher education in both languages, came to agreements with the consistency between the translations and back translations. The back translation method used was a modified version of Brislin's (1970, 1980) criteria for back translation with an emphasis placed on the first two criteria, concerning the agreement and reconciliation of disagreements between the back translated transcript and the original transcript. Both interviews marked fairly high translation accuracy with 90.29% and 90.41%. Because Japanese and English have major differences with grammatical organizations and word implications, the translations required skills and careful attention on each segment and sentence. After applying several minor translation corrections, the translation accuracy increased to 92.26% and 94.32%.

The data analysis was conducted by employing a qualitative thematic analysis of the transcribed data (Aronson, 1994; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Owen, 1984; Urban & Orbe, 2010). Any additional data gained from the follow up question via e-mail was also analyzed. The word count of the four responses of the follow-up e-mail questions ranged approximately between 60 to 960 words. In starting the analysis, I read each transcript and grasp the content of interviews before starting in-depth analysis (Urban, 2007; Urban & Orbe, 2010). Then, the transcriptions were thoroughly examined also by associating them with the data I obtained from the field notes. These included, for example, the participants' emotions, expressions, pausing, and gestures.

The thematic analysis was conducted by taking the following stages: (1) List the patterns of experiences found in the transcribed interview data; (2) identify every kind of data that relate to the patterns classified in the first step; (3) create sub-themes by combining and cataloguing related patterns; (4) build a valid argument for choosing the themes by reading the related literature and theory (Aronson, 1994).

By following these four stages, I first started with sorting out the patterns of experiences and stories of international students. In the second and the third stages, although this was not a grounded theory study, I utilized coding techniques (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) to discover relationships among data that access to the themes. In the second stage, I tried as much as possible to discover every single code that related to the patterns of experiences, including those that were relevant to the inquiry and the concepts of dialectics. This is referred to as open coding, which is the unrestricted categorization that researchers engage in when they are not determined to define their coding categorizations and procedures (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In the third stage, I used axial coding to narrow down the collected codes found in open coding into themes that span many categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). During this stage, I continuously searched for categories and patterns that could be integrated into sub-themes. Owen's (1984) criteria were also referred to identifying sub-themes. According to Owen (1984), a theme is noted when recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness are found in participants' narrative remarks (Owen, 1984). In the fourth stage, I looked for themes regarding dialectics that referred to the existing dyadic pairs of dialectics (e.g., Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), Martin and Nakayama's (1999) cultural dialectics, and any other possible form of dialectics.

During these four stages, the collected codes, patterns, and sub-themes were organized to distinguish and interpret the essentials and to discover the commonalities among the participants with respect to their experiences of dialectics. I wrote theoretical memos and journals based on the collected codes and patterns to interpret the data and to identify themes, to make connections with the reviewed theories, and to investigate the nature of the dialectics found in international students' interactional experiences.

Although as the main coder, I was in charge of the entire coding, a comparison coder participated in the coding process to assess inter-coder agreements (e.g., Holsti, 1969). One interview transcription was selected to be coded for the second time by another coder who had in-depth experiences in communication studies and with qualitative research methodologies. The transcription was provided to the comparison coder with the code book (e.g., Kurasaki, 2000) which was developed by the master coder (i.e., I, the researcher) while analyzing the entire data of 11 participants. This code book elaborated every pattern of experiences and the code classifications of those patterns. The comparison coder was in charge of the second stage of analysis: to identify and classify each of the patterns of experiences found in the transcription. 164 codes were discovered in the first coding by the master coder, while the comparison coder identified 156 codes in the second coding. The code agreement was based on the match of patterns of experiences between the master coder and the comparison coder. The total number of agreements was 128, while disagreements were 36. The calculation showed the percentage of agreement as 77.11%. For reconciliation, each disagreed code was reviewed and disagreements were verified by comparing discrepant master codes and comparison codes. Several codes assigned by the comparison coder were also found to be

applicable to the master coder's existing codes and visa versa. All disagreements were of the type known as missed codes. No new codes were needed to be created, however, new types of phenomena were included as codable under existing codes. Accordingly, the total number of agreements rose to 149 whereas disagreements decreased to 17, and the inter-coder agreement increased to 89.75%. All the changes were utilized to go over other participants' data and to reconcile the existing codes. Using the list of reconciled codes from this assessment, the rest of the 10 interviews were reviewed for code reconciliations. The average number of reconciliations was approximately 13 codes.

The further analysis process utilizing the four steps of thematic analysis is described in the next chapter. As well as to identify dialectics in international students' experiences, the chapter also provides discussions that may give further insights to the existing concepts of dialectics.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

#### The Four Steps of Thematic Analysis

To identify dialectics from the data, four-step thematic analysis (Aronson, 1994) was applied. As previously indicated in the method section, different patterns of experiences were listed out from the transcribed interview data and the follow-up e-mail response data (Aronson, 1994). There were 13 patterns of experiences found in the stories of international students: (1) Differences; (2) Similarities; (3) Diversity; (4) Positive; (5) Negative; (6) Communication; (7) Relationship; (8) Self Analysis; (9) Analysis about others; (10) Reactions from others; (11) Actions; (12) Impressions; and (13) Philosophy.

The second step was identifying every kind of data that relate to the patterns classified in the previous step (Aronson, 1994). In this stage, 90 codes were identified from the 13 different patterns of experiences.

Sub-themes were created in the third step by combining and cataloguing related patterns and codes (Aronson, 1994). In this stage, 10 sub themes were created according to the degree of saliency regarding to the recurrence, repetition, and enforcement of the patterns and codes (Owen, 1984): (1) Differences between culture and people; (2) Similarities between culture and people; (3) Positive experiences, accomplishments and achievements; (4) Negative experiences, stress, and challenges; (5) Relationships with people; (6) Self-analysis about one's thoughts, change, and identity; (7) Analysis about

other culture and people (including the individual's home culture); (8) Reactions and perceptions from others about the individual and his/her culture; (9) Impressions toward incidents, communicative interactions, and other cultural practices and customs; and (10) Philosophy, theory, or motto the individual has.

In the final step, dialectics were discovered from the 10 sub-themes and were individually explored with the exemplars of the stories of international students. The sub-themes were utilized to identify and describe the dialectics within the experiences of international students. Some dialectics were found within these individual sub-themes. Other dialectics were discovered when different subthemes were combined or paired in accordance with the paradoxical and contradictory connotations or notions that emerged within the data of a particular participant.

The cultural dialectics and other dialectics are discussed in the following sections. The first section explores Martin and Nakayama's six cultural dialectics (1999, 2010) identified within international students' experiences. To review, they are: (1) cultural-individual dialectic; (2) personal/social - contextual dialectic; (3) difference - similarity dialectics; (4) static - dynamic dialectic; (5) present/future - history/past dialectic; (6) privilege - disadvantage dialectic. Because international students' experiences in this study comprised more than the six dialectics introduced in the literature, the second section describes other dialectics which were salient within their experiences.

#### Six Cultural Dialectics Identified from International Students' Experiences

Each of the six cultural dialectics was found in the transcribed data. Some dialectics were noticeable within particular remarks that described incidents or emotional

reflections in the past, whereas other dialectics were emergent as connotations between the descriptions of individuals' different stories and thoughts over time.

### *1. Cultural-Individual Dialectic*

The cultural-individual dialectic defines that communications and relationships are formulated with some personal aspects as well as cultural aspects (Martin & Nakayama, 1999; 2010). Indicating that some behaviors are idiosyncratic (individual) and some behaviors reflect cultural aspects (Martin & Nakayama, 2010), this dialectic implies that individuals and intercultural interactions are characterized by both of these aspects (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). This section refers to international students' stories which showed implications of both cultural and individual aspects within their experiences and interactions in the host culture. As one of their processes of experiences, the cultural-individual dialectic caused international students to reflect both upon cultural and individual aspects in making contrasts with each other, and in reshaping their notions toward their interactions and experiences in the host culture.

The following passage is from Makoto, a Japanese student who made remarks regarding his dialectical insight about his identity. He referred to the notion between his cultural and personal aspects of identity:

Well, before I'm Japanese, I am "Me". But, I think Japanese, you know, culture have influenced a lot in forming myself. So, I'm now able to strongly feel my identity as Japanese, and I'm really happy about it.

During the interview, Makoto repeatedly mentioned that he has acknowledged himself as Japanese more than he used to be before his studying abroad and that he is now able to

compare different cultures from a Japanese point of view. However, on top of that, he emphatically mentioned about himself as being an individual person regardless of his nationality. He situates himself as Japanese (cultural) but at the same time, he is Makoto (individual) with his own personal identity. Given this fact, he experienced a dialectic that explains the internal negotiation of his identity. Considering Makoto's cultural and national background, this dialectic may have emerged due to a social comparison effect (e.g., Hurtado, Gurin, & Peng, 1994). Because his social identity was constructed by being a majority member in the Japanese society, he was not as much aware of his Japanese identity than he is right now in the host culture. However, becoming a minority in the United States made Makoto realize and increase the saliency of the cultural aspect of his social identity. This intrapersonal dialectic can be explained between his growing notion of Japanese identity in the host culture as opposed to his existing identity as an individual that was cultivated in Japan where he did not contrasted himself with Japanese culture.

Sajith, a student from Sri Lanka had his own philosophy. He had clear opinions and critiques against American people and other international students. One of his critiques against U.S. Americans was about how people lacked respect toward others. His critique of other international students was that some blamed or neglected their own cultures so as to excessively assimilate with U.S. Americans. Throughout the interview, Sajith described his own philosophy, value, identity, and how he perceived others who came from different cultural backgrounds. Interestingly, although there were several times he quoted his cultural and religious identity and values in his discussions, he also mentioned that human beings are who they are due to heart and mind and that there is

nothing called culture. He referred to his perceptions and critiques against others from his own cultural view, but simultaneously, he considered that he perceived others individually. In this observation, he mentions about how he perceived some female international students:

Because of the, the way they [i.e., international students] behave. Because they think that ... they're Americans. But we are not Americans, right? (laugh) You have a question. I think it's like that. Because they think that they're Americans. They're just, they're, they've just forgot their countries and they've just forget their heritage and everything. S, sometimes, for some reasons, right, for some reasons, some girls are really, really okay because, because, actually, you know, you, Yoko, right? Yeah, you know, right, I think everything, everything depends ... it's actually, it's due to heart and mind. That's it. There's nothing called culture. Because we are the people who made the culture. And we are the people who destroy the culture. So, it depends on the man.

Because Sajith referred to his Buddhist spirit during the interview several times, his remark of “everything is due to heart and mind” may be explained by Sajith’s spirituality. However, although Sajith denies the existence of culture (probably in terms of its solidity), he considers that cultures are the ensemble of individuals and traditions by saying “we are the people who made the culture.” From Sajith’s perceptions, individuals’ decisions and actions are the key factors that may influence the preservation of culture and identity. Then, what Sajith means by destroying the culture is his criticism against other international students who chose to excessively try to assimilate with U.S. Americans by being remote from their original cultures, accepting the new cultural and environmental encounters, and being absorbed into the host culture (Kim, 2005).

Another example of the cultural-individual dialectic was found in the interview with Chihiro, also a Japanese student. During her part-time work on campus, she was

having an argument with her U.S. American co-worker who also was her friend. This friend was romantically interested in Chihiro and he had talked with her about this intention. However, later on there was an incident in which he suddenly became negative and started to blame her saying that she would not give him a chance. Chihiro was extremely shocked and harassed by his statement, and she was also irritated that she could not say anything back to his statements that did not even make sense to her. The behavior of this person against Chihiro can be explained by the cultural differences of individualism (Hofstede, 1991, 2001) in the U.S. American culture. But the historical and social contextual notion of how Asian women are perceived to be dominated by men (Chow, 1987) is also a key factor that can reason this interaction. The study of Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Gina (2007) defined White males' exoticization of Asian American women. Although Chihiro is not an Asian American, the demand and the assertive attitude she perceived from her co-worker can be due to the stereotypes against Asian women as being sexual objects, domestic servants, and passive companion to White men (Sue, et al., 2007). In Chihiro's explanation, she recalled her perception of differences between this individual and herself. First, she indicated that this difference was due to his personality, which she framed "different as a person." She considered that this incident did not have association with the fact that he was an U.S. American. However, she turned over her point, also stating that she thought about the cultural aspects. She reasoned this by comparing his blaming attitude with Japanese boys, imagining that Japanese would not blame in a manner that he did. She explained that she also felt the cultural aspects in how he had been straightforward in approaching her and

how he had asked her private questions. These were the factors within this incident where she perceived differences that were more than about person's characteristics:

He was different from me as a person, I guess. I actually thought, we're incompatible as a human being. It's not that he's American. As a person. It wasn't ... as a visitor at all... Let me see. Yeah, yeah, totally different. Ah, but, it might be a cultural thing as well. Like, to blame others, don't you think, like, Japanese boys can't do that? I don't know. I wonder. Yeah. Yeah. Though, I might thought "He's American", to tell the truth, actually. Hmm, the way he asked me things like those. *(laugh)* The things he first asked me were really about my private. Like, about my relationships and so on. I was asked straightforward. I was a little surprised.

Consequently, she perceived this U.S. American friend/co-worker as an individual with a certain personality as well as a cultural image that she identified with that of U.S. American people.

International students tended to describe interactions and incidents with U.S. Americans as culturally different phenomena as well as admitting that they pictured U.S. Americans from their own cultural perspectives from home. However, international students also understood that their framing of other cultures could not explain the entire interaction and incident they encountered. Therefore, they also had a mindset that every single phenomenon can be explained both culturally and personally (individually).

## *2. Personal/Social-Contextual Dialectic*

The personal/social-contextual dialectic defines that communication is formed with some aspect of personal factors and social contexts (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). In the present study, international students' personal factors were interpreted as individuals' personal characteristics, identities, and competencies. Social-contextual

factors were interpreted as individuals' social and cultural background such as their occupations, title, and the sociocultural image and representations. Between those different contextual factors, international students experienced and reflected on both personal and social-contextual factors within their interactions and experiences in the host culture. This section describes international students' experiences when both of their personal and social-contextual factors were implied within their interactions.

Four participants were doctoral students who study in graduate programs and teach undergraduate students in their department as teaching assistants. Interestingly, each individual mentioned their work and the experiences they had either with their students or co-workers. These students had commonalities in terms of having their identities cultivated in their home countries, being international students whose first languages were other than English, and teaching U.S. American students as teaching assistants. Interestingly, each of these individuals mentioned their challenging and/or negative experiences regarding interactions they had with their students. Those experiences were mostly related to the perceptions that U.S. American students had about the personal competencies of teaching assistants. U.S. American students perceived that teaching assistants had questionable academic background and poor English skills. Their personal factors regarding incompetency influenced their social factors of being teaching assistants. Jana from Jordan who works as a teaching assistant shared her story when she had to start teaching right away after she arrived in the United States:

Yes, I already missed that one (international student orientation). So when I came here to, I already told you that I came late, so. I just started teaching at that lab. So I don't know, so I don't know any about these ones. So, the first experiment, for example, was really ... about, you know, um, I still remember, about the scales and you know, American cheese, and



how many slices the American cheese. I don't know about American cheese. It was my first month here. So I couldn't ask American what's American ... didn't want them to laugh, when me, didn't know what American cheese [was]. So what I did, I ask another international student, and he explained all this thing to me. Because the experiment told how many slices in American cheese and this is, it's regard to this information, so, I didn't really know this information. So, international student ... told me about this one and explained all the experiment to me. And it was the first experiment. First week to me.

From this passage, it can be interpreted that Jana was not comfortable asking questions to U.S. American students about something considered to be ordinary in the U.S. American culture. She did not want to embarrass herself by having her students perceive her as ignorant because of her social-contextual standpoint as a teaching assistant who gives instructions to them. In this experience, she struggled between her professional standpoint and her own competency regarding her English skill and knowledge about the U.S. food culture. On the other hand, she was able to more comfortably ask risky embarrassing questions of an international student because she perceived that her personal competency may have been less violated by a fellow international student.

Experiences regarding English proficiency in social-contextual situations were also shared by Hamid and Daniel. Hamid from Iran, who is also a teaching assistant, explained the perceptions he received from his U.S. American students:

[F]or me as a TA (teaching assistant) with my students in my lab. So, I, I feel that, for example, one of them have a question, but he or she uh, uh, can't come to me or, uh, doesn't want to come to me. Because she or he thinks that we cannot communicate very well. And maybe, she don't, uh, doesn't understand me or, I ... don't understand her or him.

In his remarks, Hamid made his own observation about his communication with his students, saying that they do not come to Hamid because of how they

perceived his communication/English-language proficiency as well as his teaching competency. Preceding studies indicate how native English speakers can be ethnolinguistically stereotypical toward non-native English speakers (e.g., Rubin, 1998; Rubin & Smith, 1990). Rubin (1998) and Rubin and Smith's (1990) studies specify that the non-White and foreign appearance of a speaker can trigger listeners to be stereotypical and biased in judging and comparing his/her communication ability with another White speaker with a standard accent. This stereotype is a severe fact for international students, for some of their communication skills can also be judged with bias because of their foreign accents. Daniel's experience gives evidence of how U.S. American native English speakers doubted him and stereotypically perceived him as a teaching assistant:

Undergrad students. They thought that I didn't really understand chemistry, because I'm from Africa. So, they would wonder how ... I know the chemistry. So ... yeah, it was kind of bad experience and took a while for them to realize that, I understand the concept. But, uh, I just said ... I have, um, ... I just said I'm not very ... conver-, uh, very comprehensive with the, the English, the American English. Yeah. I think that ... coming from Africa, is that, makes people think that ... you come from ... like, a century ago. Yeah. For some people, not all the people, yeah.

English proficiency can be a key factor for international students to communicate with host nationals. However, for Hamid and Daniel, personal and social-contextual situations (i.e., between their personal competencies and academic/professional standpoints) actually influenced evaluations and perceptions from host nationals regarding their communication skills and academic knowledge.

Occupations and appointments were not the only social-contextual factors among international students. Chihiro from Japan explained an interesting example of her

communication in the United States. She made the following remarks regarding how she behaves when other people complimented her about her culture:

[W]hen I'm complimented because I'm Japanese, in front of the person who complimented me, see, you know? I have to be a good girl. And, I don't reveal my inner self. Like, I'm actually, really, I'm really noisy and have annoying personality. *(laugh)* But, like, in such situations, I say like, "Thank you so much!" *(laugh)* Well, pretend like a good girl, you know. Like, I'm a representative of Japan.

Even though she described herself as usually being a noisy, annoying person among her friends, she mentioned that there were occasions where she had to behave differently according to her notion of representing Japan. The "good girl" side of her emerged because she was representing her country at the moment, and her sense of responsibility did not allow her to reveal her personal side during the communication. This incident explains the concept of personal (of Chihiro) and social-contextual (of Japanese) dialectic. Similarly, Isabella from the Dominican Republic also described herself becoming a cultural representative of her country and culture:

You know, being Dominican means, being more Dominican means like ... could mean ... being louder because we're really loud, happy, cheery people and all of that. And like, at the same time, I've come to realize that, those things, even though [those] are so much Dominican of me, I've put a lot more control on. You know what I mean? Even if it's so Dominican, and I explain to people, like, sometimes, like, if I'm excited or happy about something, I'm not gonna control myself. And that's just a personal thing. And people's like, "wow", you're like, I'm like, yeah, this is so Dominican of me. You have no idea. We are really loud. We as a community, we as a country, people, we are really loud. .... And a lot louder than Americans. And um ... you know, like, at the same time, even though it's kind of a struggle a little bit. Because it, even though you wanna be more of here I am as ... as my culture, like as a representative of my culture, you also wanna be a lot more respectful to how other cultures do stuff, so ... I guess ... something interesting. *(laugh)*

At the same time explaining how the Dominican culture of being happy and cheery can be a personal factor to describe her personality, Isabella also mentioned what those factors can mean to her in representing her own culture. As with her culture, it is also her personality to be loud. However, there is dialectic in her remarks between “being herself as a Dominican” and “being a cultural representative while respecting other cultures.” From Chihiro and Isabella’s remarks, we can understand that social-contextual factors inform each and every different cultural background of international students. Their stories do not refer to any specific occupation or social status that explains social-contextual factors. However, considering their manner of being a “cultural representative” as their contextual role, I used their stories to describe the personal/social-contextual dialectic.

### *3. Difference-Similarity Dialectic*

This dialectic focuses on how differences and similarities can exist together (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010) working in either cooperation or opposition in intercultural communication (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). In this dialectic, both differences and similarities are contrasted with each other to reflect on international students’ perceptions of the host culture as well as their own cultures. Identification of differences between various cultures has been the tradition of intercultural communication scholars (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Likewise, the common reaction of international students in this study was that the differences between their own culture and the U.S. culture stood out more than the similarities. Each international student had different cultural perceptions depending on his/her own cultural background. Students have different conversational strategies and cultural values depending on their cultural

background, complicated by the fact that they are second-language speakers (Viswat & Kobayashi, 2008). The differences mentioned included food cultures, punctuality, personal distance, hierarchy, and fashions. For example, Eric from Malaysia stated that there is a fine line between the United States and his country. However, Kristine from Norway stated the complexity of her ideas toward the similarities and differences she perceived between the U.S. and Norway:

I guess like entertainment things. Like, movies and music, people like the same things. Um ... work out thing. Like, um, when you go to the gym and stuff, like, people do that in Norway and here it's the same. Um, ... people are ... like in school, I feel like a lot the same kind of like, um ... but then again it's not, it's very different. [Omitted.] ... you kind of understand that wherever you go, it's ... people are different, but at the same time, they're really similar to ... um ... like, you can, I can still see ... some similarities from, um, people in Norway which I don't really know how to explain. But, it's like ... like they're, it's very different one way but in, in other ways, it's like, kind of all the same.

In her remarks, Kristine first explained the similarities she perceived regarding pop culture and living practices of the United States and Norway. However, when she attempted to describe the people in these countries, she could not articulate how similar or different they are. Even though she did not specifically make indications about the differences and similarities she perceived between the United States and Norway, she had a notion of this dialectic within her experiences.

Cindy from China had one of the strongest insights about her perceptions of similarities and differences between the U.S. and her country. During the interview, she continuously tried to observe and analyze the experiences she had with the U.S. culture or people by reflecting on her own insights. In doing so, she often drew upon her culture in China and tried to observe her experience from her own cultural perspective as well as

her own perceptions as an individual. Her observations led to new insights regarding the differences and similarities she perceived between China and the United States. For example, recalling her relationship and interactions with an older U.S. American woman, she discovered differences as well as similarities between her friend and herself. She mentioned that this woman's life experiences were quite different and unusual compared to her own experiences and own cultural background. Cindy revealed her impression of surprise with the life history of this woman who became divorced and lived totally on her own:

It seems like ... wow. The lady is over 50, doing things like that. I think she is a very tough person. I cannot imagine any Chinese women who, at her age can did like that. I think people, if people talk about such, such women, such woman in China, people must be a lot of pity. Or feel sorry, or feel "wow, how can she be that." But, people here are quite normal about that. That's quite, totally different. It's so complicated to, for me to tell you clearly what kind of emotion or what kind of psychological thinking I, I have. But I just feel so comli-uh, complexity. Right, complicated to, to tell. Right. And I'm thinking, if I was her age, I were her age, can I be as tough as her? ... I don't know. I don't know. Because right now, I'm, I'm still in a 20s age. I don't know if I'm strong enough, or I am grow up enough, or I am equipped well enough at that age. (laugh) Right. Yeah, quite new experience. Maybe, and that has a similar stories in China. But I didn't come across from my background. Because, China is very fast and lot of things would happen every day. All of things, maybe "wow", you think "how people can do that. (laugh) It's shameful", maybe, or "how people can do that, wow it's so great!" But I didn't experience that. So I cannot tell.

Although she emphasized the huge impression her friend's circumstances made as she compared her friend to similar women in her country, she also mentioned the possibility of similar situations in her country. Despite the differences Cindy perceived in her relationship with her friend, they had similar aspects in perceiving and advocating about certain topics, which eventually made them become friends:

But, but, although she has a lot of experience quite different with me, we have, we have becoming friends. [Omitted] It's the part we have similar aspects to, to men. (laugh) Similar, similar opinion about men.

While differences were mentioned more than similarities, some international students pointed out the positive aspects of similarities they found between the U.S. and their home countries. Hamid from Iran described how some people in the United States were kind to help out strangers, and Isabella from the Dominican Republic explained how one of the U.S. American families she met was friendly and welcoming. They both mentioned that this kindness and friendliness was also common in their home countries. Here is what Hamid from Iran recalled:

[G]ood people in everywhere. Like, if you have any problem and, uh, uh, in here, one of my, uh, friends' parents came in here. And, uh, they were walking from, uh, his apartment to ours at the time, because he was in a school, uh, ...that day. And they were coming walking actually to our depart-, uh, apartment. So, during the way, it was raining, uh, very, s- ... uh, high at the same day. So it was a lady that stopped by, by, uh, her car, by them, and gave them an, uh, gave them actually an umbrella, to, you know, to be uh ... to keep themselves dry out of that rain. So ... we can see the same stories back in Iran, and I think in every community because, yes, good people are everywhere. If you have any question, if you're looking for an address in here, I think ,uh, people in here will help you very good. Even though you don't have any problem with the GPS or something. But, in, in the case, yeah, it happened to me actually once, that uh, at the very first day I went to downtown and I ... lost there, so I couldn't find the way back, to the ... uh ... you know, my apartments. So, I think it would be the same back in Iran. So, if you have any problem, if you ask anything, uh, especially the address or something from, from people on the street ... like, they will help you.

Although less identified in the international students' stories, perceiving similarities was part of the process of encountering and understanding other cultures and people as well as perceiving differences. From these international students' stories, experiencing both

notions of differences and similarities can steer them to form diverse observations about their own cultures and the host culture.

#### *4. Static-Dynamic Dialectic*

The static-dynamic dialectic focuses on how cultures and cultural practices can be both constant and ever-changing (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). This dialectic was synthesized with the different approaches of how past researchers studied intercultural communication by focusing on the stability of cultural patterns, examining various cultural practices over time, and emphasizing the transiency and instability of cultural meanings (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Thinking both statically and dynamically about culture and cultural practices aids the development of new ways of understanding intercultural encounters (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). International students reflect back and forth on static and dynamic parts regarding their experiences and perceptions, and reshape their notions toward their cultural practices. This dialectic was salient in international students' narratives about changes within themselves since they moved to the United States. One of the participants, Makoto gave an observation about himself that demonstrates this dialectic. He was asked how he has changed during his experience in the United States as an international student. Makoto responded that he thinks he has changed and that he grew up in the United States as he went through the process of realizing himself as Japanese. During his interview, he continuously mentioned about his personal growth and change. However, when he reflected back about the people back home in Japan and how they may think about him, he stated that he has not changed much. In fact he was aware of this contradiction, but he also thought that there is nothing that is unchangeable.



Change within self was mentioned by another student, Jana from Jordan. As she has lived in the U.S. for two years, she has picked up several positive aspects of the U.S. American lifestyle that she wanted to practice in her own life:

Uh ... have I changed? I think I changed. ... um, ... you know that I told you that the best thing here, the American people, they are hardworking and organized, and ... I'm trying to be like them. Um, really become like them right now, yes, I'm different, I changed, to the good things, actually, yeah. Uh, studying abroad actually influenced my, well, it really changed my life style and, uh, ... you know, as I told you before, I really tried to learn the good things here. Even in food, I tried to eat the good food as, because I saw people here take care of, care about their health, care about everything, other one, other people. So I'm really trying to ... to change my life as this one. Other things, that's uh, I see how people here are ... live more comfortable. Because they have everything around them. Actually, this is the good thing here. It's easy to live here. So I really want, really like the life here, style of life that you can do everything in just one call or ... in just on press, that's, that's you know, I think, after I back home, I will try to do to live the same life style, yeah ...

In her remarks, she complimented the characteristics and the life habits of U.S. Americans which she tried to incorporate into her lifestyle. However, she was strongly determined that she had something she did not want to change, which were her basic identities from her childhood religion and her identity as a Muslim girl:

Identity, identity, why ... you know, I have some ... some basics, in my identity I don't really want to change. This is our basic, so, it really, these things are basic, so ... uh, I told you, I, basic things like religion things or traditional things, I really don't want to change. I can keep them. Actually, I'm glad that I can keep them. Um, I'm struggling up to keep them, not to change these things. But I'm just changing the bad thing.

Therefore, the ever changing factors were related with her lifestyle whereas the constant factors were related with her identity. International students are experiencing different cultures and practices of life here in the United States, and some of those differences may

seem attractive to international students depending on their perceptions. On the other hand, international students generally have firm cultural and/or religious basis that are rooted in their own countries and regions. These basics represent identity of international students, and they believe that they remain static and unchanging throughout their life in the host country.

Kristine from Norway recalled her communicative interactions with her family and friends back home. She reflected back on how her relationships with people back in Norway in some ways changed, but in other ways remained unchanged. She did not articulate the reason why she felt the contradictions between the senses of change and constancy. However, when she described how her communication with people in her home country differed from what it was before she studied abroad, she clearly wavered between the change and constancy in describing her relationships back in her home country. There was ambivalence in her remarks about her relationships in Norway:

[A] lot of things happen, changed over the years, so. Um ... but I don't know, like, ... I don't know if my communication skills has really gone better with them [i.e., families and friends back in Norway], because ... uh, I mean, uh ... I feel like nothing really has changed because, when I'm not at home, um, like, as far as friends and stuff, I can't really continue developing friendships in Norway. It just kind of freezes. And then like, I mean it's like, um, a group of friends that I keep up with on Facebook and stuff, but like, for people that I went to school with and stuff, I mean, when I'm h-, home, I'll say hi and like, say how are you doing, but, I don't, like, it's not the same as when I was in Norway, so, um ... I don't really feel like it's ... it has changed a lot. Really, it's .....um, I don't know.

Some international students mentioned about their internal changes and constancies regarding themselves and their own cultural practices just as Makoto and Jana did, while others experienced interactions and relationships like as Kristine did. As

seen from these stories, international students' experiences between changes and constancies range from their identities and practices to their relationships with others.

### *5. Present-Future/History-Past Dialectic*

The understanding of present and future, as well as history and past were important path ways (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010) for international students who had their past and history in their home country and are experiencing present in the host country. This dialectic makes international students reflect between different time intervals from their past to future, and to reshape their notions about themselves. During the interview, the participants were asked to reflect back on their experiences as international students. Their stories ranged from their experiences they have had in the United States to their experiences and perceptions they had from their home culture where they used to live in the past. They used many references from their past as well as from their present selves to understand and explain their own stories and perceptions.

Their history and past meant a lot to them in establishing their present selves, and those are still important dynamics for their present ways of being and future way of being. The concept of their histories and past were embedded in their remarks regarding their identity, values, religion, and relationships with people back in their home countries and home cultures. In other words, international students used stories about their past or history to describe their current selves. Because their current perceptions about themselves had been cultivated before they arrived in the United States, international students' insights reflected various aspects from their home culture. Therefore,

international students' past and history are more than just records that explain their background information.

Also, some students mentioned how their experiences as international students may eventually influence their future selves. Some of their stories revealed how the cultures and customs of the United States influenced their new life in the host culture or even how those may influence their lives in the future. Jana from Jordan mentioned how she was trying to learn and practice what she has obtained from the host culture so that she can influence her current and future life:

Yes (*laugh*), I, everything I, you know, I told you, everything I learned here, good things, I try to practice, I want it to be in my life style. So that's how I ... that's how everybody have to ...treat themselves.

Moreover, there were students who added connotations in their remarks about their future in regard to the influence from their experiences they have had in the United States. The new and eye-opening experiences in the host culture are in fact giving international students strong impressions to their lives that actually may affect their considerations toward their future. Makoto from Japan provided an interesting insight in his follow-up e-mail response:

There were aspects that I thought good as I exposed to the warmness of people, the unique system and the social structure of the United States, the general American culture, but there were also many moments I thought as negative. It is very a valuable time that I was able to experience such thing, and I definitely think that it will become my invisible fortune in the future. Also, by going out from the culture I once grew up, I think it was good that I was able to perceive anew the culture of my country. Because I am a foreigner in the United States, I can calmly view this country, and also on the other hand, I think I am now able to overview and perceive my country.

As well as stating that his experiences in the United States may eventually become his fortune in his future, Makoto also reflected back on his own culture in Japan. From his remarks we can understand that perceiving the new culture in the United States enabled him to view his culture of origin from a new point of view. Having his past as a stranger with his own cultural background enabled Makoto to calmly view the host culture. Conversely, experiencing the present with the new culture in the host country enabled him to overview his home country from a different perspective. Therefore, international students reflect between their old and current perspectives to view the world that surrounds them, and this can ultimately influence their views toward their future.

#### *6. Privilege-Disadvantage Dialectic*

The privilege-disadvantage dialectic focuses on how hierarchies and power differentials regarding political, social position, or status can influence individuals to be simultaneously privileged and disadvantaged, or privileged in some context while disadvantaged in others (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). International students experience both privilege and disadvantage through their communicative experiences (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, 2010). By reflecting on privileges and disadvantages they perceive from their experiences in the host culture, international students reshape their notions toward their circumstances and social/cultural positions in the host culture. Here is an example from a story of Chihiro, a Japanese student. While she was talking with U.S. Americans (or with international students), she noticed that she felt positive about how some people complimented Japanese culture and Japanese people. This certainly was an advantage that she was made aware of by culturally different others in their communication with her. Conversely, she also recalled a story when she experienced the

disadvantage of being a foreigner and a non-native English speaker. She was not able to articulate herself during an argument with an U.S. American friend, and the communicative event was a severe stress to her.

Makoto's interview also indicated the privilege and disadvantage dialectic in his experiences. Because he was the only international student in his program, he has had some U.S. American classmates and friends around him who had helped and supported him in class as well as in his daily life. However, as he mentioned, there were some U.S. Americans who considered it not worthwhile to deal with him because of his English speaking level. In fact, there was an incident which made him feel upset about U.S. Americans who took a "vicious" attitude toward him during their conversation. He described his feelings as follows:

Umm, you know, in those situations, I wasn't dealing with those by myself. Um, the Americans who are native speakers helped me a lot. So, um, my native speaker American friends understood my feelings really well, so, they communicated in adequate English for me. So, in fact, well, those who were vicious, (laugh) those vicious people said things to me, but there were people who would also help me. So I've had close communication with those people, and um, how can I say, dealt with issues. So what I thought is, well, to me, um, language is the most important thing to inform my feelings. I really noticed that I need to skill up [my English], and, on the other hand, I also noticed that people who have a good understandings can really understand me, even though my English is broken.

Neither of these Japanese students articulated these perceptions of their communicative experiences directly as privileged or disadvantaged. However, each event has connotations of privilege or disadvantage, and those were all experienced through the interactions they had with others from different cultural backgrounds. Their privileges can be interpreted as having positive interactions with host nationals with high host

receptivity who are accessible and open to strangers (e.g., Kim, 2005), or even who are interested in and eager to interact with international students. On the other hand, their disadvantages can be interpreted as receiving stereotypical perceptions from host nationals as outsiders (e.g., McCabe, 2009) or as those who are less capable of communicating well due to their language skills (e.g., Rubin, 1998; Rubin & Smith, 1990). Therefore, being an international student can mean privileged at some times, but at other times disadvantaged.

Isabella, a student from the Dominican Republic provided examples of privileges and disadvantages in her interview. In her case, the privilege of being an international student was due to her opportunities to meet new people and experience and learn things throughout her relationships and communication with others in the United States. She continuously mentioned her positive and happy experiences she had with her friends from different cultural backgrounds and how those were valuable for her. However, on the other hand, she struggled through with the hardship she experienced with her studies. This hardship influenced her once, when she noticed the severe future of joblessness she might have to face in the future back home in her country:

And ... you know, you graduated from a good place, you have your master's, you're young, you have your preparation, and you're like, overqualified and it made me think that, I was like, I'm struggling so much here. I am ... doing so much to get this degree and whatever. And then I'm required to go back to my country for two years. And I was like, for what!? What am I gonna do and it just really stressed me out. I was just like, why am I doing this? If I'm knowing the end, why am I going to do? I'm just gonna go home and stay there with my parents? Like a 25 year old would just gonna go back home and stay with her parents and ... yes, I'm prepared, yes, I'm having this great opportunity here. And this is so hard, this is not something I just, you know, ..... it's so hard and it struggle with it so much and ... what is it for? So that really, really stressed me out. Like I, I was like, that totally took away my motivation.

And I was like I don't wanna, why would I struggle here? Why would I make a huge effort here to do stuff when it's gonna be worthless? When I go back home, cuz ... I'll be overqualified? Nobody's wanna hire me? Cuz they don't wanna pay what I'm worth? Like, it's, it was really, really stressful. I was like, why am I here? Why am I doing this? Going through all of this, being away from my family, away from the people I know, away from all the things I am used to ... And, going through this like studying and it's so hard and this reading and all this writing and ... why, why am I doing this? If, if it's just, you know, pointless. That's kind of how I felt. It was really, extremely stressful. I was, it was ... I was like, you know, it's just not worth it. I just questioned the whole ... being here thing. It was really, really hard.

Apparently, the businesses in her country were not in a situation of hiring younger people with higher qualifications. Plus, her scholarship given from the government back home restricted that students must return and stay in their country for at least two years after graduating in the United States. From her explanation, it was clear that what can be a privilege in the host nation may not be a privilege in a different place. Her passage explained the complex feeling toward her privileged experience in the academia in the U.S. standing against her future career in business in her home country. She explained that her degree may be considered overqualified back in her country, which will make it difficult for her to obtain a job. Isabelle understood that studying and having all the new experiences she may not have had in her country were her own privileges as an international student. On the other hand, her stay, studies, and experiences in the United States may turn out to possibly disadvantage her in the future. As such, being an international student can mean both having privilege and disadvantage:

It makes you more understanding about other people, but I feel like, the majority of Americans aren't very understanding of other people from other cultures. So, it's like, I think, if you go to other countries, you would have more use of it. But right here, it's like, the average, um, Americans, they don't really think of that stuff, you know. So, it's like ..... in one way, it's an advantage because it's easier to communicate. But, it's ...



when they don't, like, the other part, isn't really ... um ... how can I say ... well, I just don't feel like they're very aware of other cultures or how to ... they're very like, they like to stick with their own, um ... values and stuff like that. So, it's, ... that I mean, it's good for, I feel it's good for us that, have that experience, because you'll learn a lot more and we can um ..... yeah, get a long, like, once we start having jobs and like, uh ... hopefully like, I'll get to do like, travel to other countries, too. It, it will, I'll have an advantage of meeting people. (laugh) Understanding other cultures and stuff.

In these remarks, Isabelle referred to the host nationals' lack of attention and understandings toward international students as being part of a disadvantage. However, she also considered that this disadvantage is on the surface of an advantage for her, which was to be able to learn how she can possibly behave in meetings and understand people from different cultural backgrounds.

Isabella also described her intrapersonal emotion in response to her challenges she faced with English and when accommodating her academic style to U.S. American standards. She recalled that these difficulties made her struggle with studying as an international student. She explained how stressful these challenges were to overcome. However, she also recalled that these experiences also functioned as an advantage for her to stimulate her personal growth to become more independent. As of now, because she had to be on her own in the United States, Isabella thinks she has had advantages to individually grow and to experience many eye-opening facts and cultures from all around the world:

So, I, it's, it's really been very challenging for me to, like, ... be able to ... kind of accommodate that ... to ... the American standards, basically. It's, it's been really, really hard for me to, um, ... it's been a challenge, I'll say. It's really, seriously been a challenge. And, of course, being away from home ... has been extremely hard also, um, to get used to being ... on my

own. It's ... it's just really challenging and ... I think the advantage is, ..... um ... I've grown a lot ... as an individual, like, ... by that same challenge of being on my own and all that. Like, I've become so much more independent. And ... and the beginning I felt ... like, I was kind of, of course, inevitably forced to, because I was on my own. Um ... but, I think I've grown a whole lot from this experience. It's, it's just being like, very eye opening, being in touch and in contact with so many cultures from all over the world. That's been just ... remarkable. Like, it's something I'll never forget.

Daniel from Kenya introduced his privilege and disadvantage interactional experiences with U.S. Americans. His first episode was about his interactions with his U.S. American roommates:

I had somebody who thought that Africa was big, a huge jungle. ...Like uh ... Yeah ... I ran down, cuz I was in the pleaded lands, and all the type of thing. They're really curious about Africa. Yeah, so ..... that was a good experience. And the ... *(laugh)* I showed them a few pictures and, told them that Africa is a mix of both. Yeah. So that was a good experience for me.

Although their initial perspectives were stereotypical, Daniel mentioned that it was a good experience for him because his roommates were extremely curious about Africa and asked him many questions. Then, he described the downside of his experience with his interaction with U.S. Americans. This is a repetition of the same passage used in the previous section to explain the social-contextual factor of international student. In his remarks, Daniel explained an episode when he was communicating with undergraduate students as a teaching assistant:

Undergrad students. They thought that I didn't really understand chemistry, because I'm from Africa. So, they would wonder how ... I know the chemistry. So ... yeah, it was kind of bad experience and took a while for them to realize that, I understand the concept. But, uh, I just said ... I have, um, ... I just said I'm not very ... conver-, uh, very comprehensive with the, the English, the American English. Yeah. I think that ... coming from

Africa, is that, makes people think that ... you come from ... like, a century ago. Yeah. For some people, not all the people, yeah.

He noticed that the undergraduate students were doubtful about whether Daniel really understood the field of study just because he was from Africa. It was a struggle that took a while to understand the rationale for why students thought this way. Regarding his first experience, Daniel perceived a privilege for having his cultural background in Africa and for having host nationals have high host receptivity (e.g., Kim, 2005). These U.S. Americans were curious and interested in his country although their perceptions were initially stereotypical. Conversely, he experienced a disadvantageous reception from his host national undergraduate students in his second experience listed immediately above, for also having his cultural background in Africa. However, by reviewing these two experiences that generated two opposite feelings, Daniel realized that he himself was ignorant as well:

I felt like, for the, for both of the experiences, I felt like, I myself is, um, I was kind of really ignorant of what the situation is out here in America. Yes. Yeah, I thought that America ... had um ... like the same weather all year around. Because we have, we happen to have the, the same kind of weather all year around in my country. I thought that America was just one big country. And the states were like, tiny villages like ... That kind of come up to one country, which is America. I mean, I was really ignorant. So, I don't really blame Americans on the fact that they're ignorant about my continent, yeah.

He acknowledged that he also had misunderstandings with the United States before he arrived, and therefore he did not blame U.S. Americans who were ignorant about his country and continent. He generated a new meaning and reflected back on himself through the dialectic of privileged and disadvantaged experiences about other's perceptions toward his country.

Regarding these experiences, dialectics between privilege and disadvantage of international students mostly referred to their social and cultural positions as viewed by host nationals. From their remarks we can understand that international students' social and cultural positions were identified by the host nationals through their stereotypic perceptions of different ethnicities and countries, and judgments about English language skills. Additionally, degrees of host receptivity (e.g., Kim, 2005) may affect international students with their experiences and interactions between privilege and disadvantage.

In summary, every one of the six cultural dialectics were identified from the stories of international students in this study. Although interview questions also asked the participants to share their stories regarding their interactional experiences with other fellow international students, most dialectics identified in this study were experienced during their interactions with host nationals or regarding their relationships with host nationals. Each dialectic was identified within at least four participants' stories, but cultural-individual, personal/social-contextual, static-dynamic, and privilege-disadvantage dialectics were more frequently identified than the remaining two dialectics, difference-similarity and present-future/history-past dialectics. The next section describes other dialectics which were also identified from the data.

#### Other Salient Dialectics Identified in the International Students' Experiences

As well as Martin and Nakayama's six cultural dialectics, there were several other dialectics that were salient in international students' experiences. First, I introduce an additional dialectic which was especially considered to be salient in the data: home-culture/host-culture dialectic. Then, the following discussions go over the findings

regarding the foundational dialectics which are Baxter and Montgomery's relational dialectics.

### *1. Home-Culture/Host-Culture Dialectic*

According to Kim, participating activities either or both of the host communication/culture and ethnic communication/culture (i.e., home culture) is an expression of the fundamental human need to belong (2005). Also, both home culture and host culture may behaviorally and cognitively influence sojourners' adjustment (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). However, international students' positionality between host and home cultures can be viewed as dialectic. This is because international students' positions/standpoints differ from what the local people have in their host country. International students have their own cultures and identity that originate from their country, but at the same time, they are experiencing a new culture in the United States. During their life in the United States as international students, participants were exposed to the host culture, and they were also embracing their home culture in their identities and perceptions. Therefore, they can view their experiences in the United States from different perspectives. Their standpoints are different from the people who remain in their own countries considering their opportunities and experiences they have in a different country. However, their standpoints are also different from the native and local people in their sojourn country. Between these different standpoints and circumstances that referred to both of their home cultures and host cultures, international students reflected upon the contrast of each to the other, and reshaped their notions toward those cultures. I defined this back-and-forth reflection process as home culture-host culture dialectic.

Chihiro from Japan described her own perceptions toward U.S. Americans and Japanese people back home. There were several examples in which she indicated her negative and/or surprising perceptions toward the culture in the United States. She indicated straightforwardness of U.S. Americans during their relationships and communicative interactions. Where at times she perceived straightforwardness as a negative communication trait, she also thought in other occasions that straightforwardness is a communication style she learned and absorbed from the U.S. culture. She also shared an example of when she was surprised by how U.S. Americans were casual regarding conversation and behavior, whereas when she was positively impressed with the casualness of how people held doors for others in public. In addition, she mentioned her opinion toward her country. Therefore, Chihiro is processing her experiences as dialectical because she described how she had both agreeable and disagreeable feelings for some of the cultures and people in Japan when she compared them with the experiences she had had in the United States. She mentioned how her experiences in the United States have been influential for her: “[I feel the U.S. American culture has influenced me] when things that I take it for granted here [in the United States] is not understood [in Japan].” Throughout these different perceptions she had with Japan and the U.S., she concluded that she can watch and learn. She thinks she has to “behave as Japanese” and should not be “Americanized too much”, but still she thinks there are positive things she has learned and has tried to apply to herself from the host culture. However, again, having her strong sense of identity as Japanese, she added: “Japanese people really have good aspects as well. So, I just keep those things as they are.” Considering these statements she made, her attitude between her Japanese culture

and the U.S. culture is not either-or, and each culture is influencing her through the process of reflecting back and forth between them. There is a constant dialectic between home culture and the host culture, and she is learning and constructing herself and making new meanings of her own as an international individual between these two cultures.

Eric, a student from Malaysia was perhaps the most eager person to learn and absorb the host culture. He complimented the United States both socially and economically, whereas he criticized his country for being unorganized and unequal with opportunities. However, he mentioned that he feels more connected with people of the same nationality when sharing their stories about differences that they perceive in the host culture. He received better understanding from people from his country compared to U.S. American people. Though he said he is still learning about the culture in the United States and still eager to change from what he was before when he was in his home country. Still, he could not discard the entire element of his cultural background:

I guess it's just ... like I said, you can't really share certain things with American people, because they don't get it. Because it's your culture, and they, they don't understand anything about it. ... But, yeah ... understanding their culture and having that ... being part of that is not too bad either.

In Isabella's descriptions, paradoxical perceptions toward her Dominican culture and U.S. American culture were salient. Here is her statement where she mentioned her connectedness with her home culture and her adaptation to the host culture:

I ..... but I've also felt like, since there're, I don't know, like ... I've never been more Dominican. I'm not gonna just now, like, I am fascinated with the fact of, like, showing people like, stuff about my culture and my

country and all of that. Like, I'm totally, you know, a lot more aware of a lot of things. And I ... care, most of all ... much more about stuff that are like, from my country. So, and that's I think I've grown a little bit more like, I've had ... my Dominican pride a little bit ... you know, growing in me. Um, and then, adapting to the American culture I guess ... I've ... you know, I think I've tried at least to ... take away as much positive things as I could from them, from the American culture like, in my country, people, it's always late. Totally, super late. So I've kind of tried to, you know ... work with that and, and be like no, you know, you gotta be like American you gotta be on time! You gotta be on time and all that, like, you know ... Stuff like that. Like, I think I've got, I've gain that from this culture, for example.

In her other remarks, she states that she sometimes feels she wants to be more Dominican, but at the same time, she said she wants to be respectful of other cultures. Isabella mentioned that there were some cultural aspects in the United States that she adopted in her lifestyle, but on the other hand, she noticed the difficulties she may experience back in her home country when she moves back and re-adapts to her country. On another front, she wanted to become a cultural representative to introduce her Dominican culture to others as well as being respectful of other cultures (i.e., both the U.S. culture and international students' cultures).

As previously introduced in the findings of static-dynamic dialectic, Jana from Jordan had a strong sense of her identity originating in her home culture:

I don't want to drink [alcohol]. But in the same time, I'm free to talk. I'm, I'm good with you, um, really communicate with them, so ... So ... this is how is it. Changing, but without ... I didn't actually let myself actually to keep these basics. That's the good thing that I did. I'm free, but I want people, people, I, want, I teach people how to ... treat me.

From her statement above, it is clear that she thought she deserves to maintain her identity and to have others understand and respect her culture. However, in her later



statement, she also showed a positive attitude in adapting to some cultural aspects in the United States:

Like for example, I told you about the e-mail that when I sent to my country, an e-mail they don't respond to me sometimes, they're not professional. So, I'm trying to with them right now, on they send e-mail, I reply to them, I, you know, I'm trying to teach them *(laugh)* how the good things, how to do these things. So, what I learned here, I try to ... practice it, with my country, yes. I already started actually. *(laugh)*, I, everything I, you know, I told you, everything I learned here, good things, I try to practice, I want it to be in my life style. So that's how I ... that's how everybody have to ... treat themselves.

Given these statements, Jana is balancing both of her home culture and the host culture in her life. This dialectic is functioning in positive ways to both enrich her experience abroad and maintain her cultural identity and traditions. Hamid from Iran also mentioned about the restrictions in his home culture and the drinking culture here in the United States:

The culture in here and the culture back in Iran. But, in about something that embarrass my, like, uh, lifestyle before coming here and after ... Yeah, there are some, uh ... uh, examples like, ... drinking is one of them. Because, uh, uh, like, Iran is like, uh ... because of the kind of government that, uh, it's, it's ruling there, it's kind of religion, uh, society ..... And, uh ... well, I couldn't for example, drink in the ... public there. And here, we have like some places for that specific purpose, you can go there and drink. It, it was exciting for myself, because I wanted to do that, but it wasn't anything ... uh, to, uh ... any, anywhere actually, that uh, you can go there and do that in Iran. And even, uh, if they ... they I mean the government, knew that you're doing that, it was like a ... big problem for you. So, this is something that I do in here, but I rather to keep that as ... my own secret, not like to ... you know, ... announce that [to] everywhere. Because that is ... something that is not acceptable in my home country, but it's something very usual and okay in, in here.

Hamid was from a culture where drinking alcohol is more strictly restricted than the United States. Now that he is living in the United States, Hamid is accepting and

enjoying the drinking culture here. However, he also reflected back on the customs and the rules with drinking in his country by stating that he would keep his new drinking culture in the United States off the record. Even though he is now in the United States, which means he would not get into any trouble if he drinks in designated areas, the customs and rules in his country remain crucial factors for him in considering how he should behave.

How people view the world is not stable, and in fact, it constantly changes. This means that how people perceive one's standpoint or view others can change over time. International students can also have multiple standpoints and may understand each of them. These are for example, standpoints from one's cultural or national perspective, from U.S. American's perspectives, or from an individual's perspective as a sojourner. These different standpoints can be recognized within an individual at the same time as international students reflect back and forth between their home cultures and the host culture.

## *2. Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics*

One dialectic from Baxter & Montgomery's (e.g., 1996) original literature is salient in international students' stories: openness-closedness dialectic international students experienced through incidents and interactions with U.S. American people. This dialectic refers to individuals' self-disclosure and closure within interactions and relationships with others, as well as being receptive or non-receptive toward others (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Reflecting back and forth between these dyadic poles makes international students think about how they can experience the host culture. When

encountering new or different cultures, international students' stories exhibited open or close-mindedness depending on the cultural acceptability of this encounter from the cultural lens of one's own home culture. Chihiro explained an incident where she perceived her own "culture shock" when attending an U.S. American home party at her friend's house:

And, first, well, when I first came, I made my first American friend here. And I was invited to a house party. So, I went. Then, well, everyone was dancing, in the house. And, that really was a culture shock. *(laugh)* And that, what they were dancing was, like, boys and girls were, see, like, doing something a little like a dirty dance. Yeah, it's like, yeah, you see? That kind of thing happened. But, they are friends. And, so, between boys and girls, like, they just lightly do that. And, well, house party like this [is] America's characteristic. And, outside, people are drinking out in the yard. And, well, so. It was, a little culture shock, you know, yeah. It was my first experience.

During this party, Chihiro did not participate in the dance. The unfamiliarity and discomfort she perceived through her own cultural lens made her want to stay away from the dancing scene. However, she did not flee from where she was. She stayed at the party, still kept a distance away from the group of dancing people, but joined another group of people who were playing drinking games. In recalling her experience at this party, Chihiro said, "[h]mmm ... um, but it really was fun. At the same time as I felt the shock, well, but, those people were, like, welcomed me." On one hand she had a hard time accepting the situation, but on the other hand, she enjoyed the new experience. Referring to her story, Chihiro's openness-closedness dialectic was about her behavior between receptivity and non-receptivity to the host culture. A U.S. American students-style-partying might have been her first experience in her life. A dance with sexual and physical contact as well as the drinking activities had not been included in her cultural

practices for home parties. What prevented her from being entirely closed and non-receptive to the situation can be the welcoming attitude of the host nationals at the scene. Their friendliness may have affected Chihiro's receptivity toward the people and situation at the party. This influenced her to individually make a choice to stay there, although it was not enough to resolve the "culture shock" she perceived. Her perception can be contrasted with the remarks made by Jimin, a Korean student who also went to a similar party:

... um ... here ..... I went to party. It was not really our friend's party. I went there with my friend, and then, my host was my friend's friend. So I was, I was not really familiar to her, but, I went there and, I found that American people are pretty aggressive in sexual ways. Yes. So... I felt kind of uncomfortable. So, I just came back. It was not really a bad thing, but while we were dancing, there was kind of touching, ... Yes. There were touches, so, I didn't feel, I didn't feel comfortable.

Similar with Chihiro, Jimin also had her own cultural perspective that found these behaviors unacceptable. Jimin's perception was not dialectical, but only included her feeling of closedness due to the discomfort she perceived from the new experience. From these two student's stories, we can understand that dialectics are not dictated by situations but by individual's lens.

Regarding the two remaining dialectics, separateness-closeness and certainty-uncertainty, there was not much evidence in the collected data that these dialectics exist in international students' experiences. In respect of separateness-closeness dialectic, several international students described the physical distances as well as the intimate relationships with their family and friends back home. However, this paradox was not defined as separated-closeness dialectic in this study because the original relational

dialectics literature did not prioritize physical factors to define this dialectic (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). On the other hand, separated-closeness dialectic explains the similarity and sameness of individuals (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and therefore has commonness with difference-similarity dialectic. Considering certainty-uncertainty dialectic, there were not enough episodes that deeply describe international students' interpersonal relationships and the different interplays between individuals over time. Because certainty and uncertainty are constructed through the interactions of relationship parties (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), this dialectic may have emerged if the international students were more specifically asked about the process and development of their particular relationships with others.

However, referring back to the propositions of relational dialectics theory described in the literature review, the international students' experiences were associated with the core definition of relational dialectics. In the literature review, one of the propositions of relational dialectics (i.e., proposition 3) defined that identity and consciousness are constructed by conceiving and perceiving differences through competing discourses with the other. "Discourses" have a wide range of interpretations in the intercultural context which Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012) defined as a "cultural toolkit" that consist of "ideas and beliefs about the world, conventional ways of treating other people, ways of communicating using various kinds of texts, media, and 'languages', and methods of learning how to use these other tools" (p. 8). In fact, there were several stories provided by international students who mentioned the differences they perceived from the host culture and their competing notions regarding their social identities. While international students have been experiencing their new lives in the host

culture, they have faced and were made aware of different discourses of U.S.

Americanness and foreignness. Through those experiences, international students constructed a new sense of social/cultural identity within the host culture.

For example, Daniel from Kenya showed his bracelet with the design of the national flag of his country. He explained that he always has the bracelet on his wrist to be aware of his identity, to be recognized from others as an “African from Africa” and to be differentiated from “African Americans”:

I always keep this on. [Showing his bracelet with a design of the national flag of Kenya.] ..... This is I like to be recognized as an African from Africa. As opposed to Black American. *[Omitted]* I think most of the time, most of the times, it's a good thing. Yeah. Because Americans are always curious [about him and his culture]. Hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, they ask questions and um ..... yeah, in some ..... you know, some Black Americans, they kind of miss that, you know. .... Because they, I mean, it's kind of ..... you know, Black Americans are considered African Americans. Like, a Black, yeah, iconology is Black Americans, African Americans. They ... they feel like they're not really accepted in America. While America is your home. .... So, at times when some of them talk to me, they feel like ... with me, I belong in Africa. I have somewhere in Africa I belong. But with them, they kind of belong here, but they're not really accepted.

In this remark, Daniel referred to his notion toward African Americans as being non-dominant, marginalized group members, or also in other words, co-cultural group members (Orbe & Spellars, 2005) that receive less social acceptance in the United States. In fact, the homogenization of blackness from the dominants perspectives can collapse the diversity and the various cultures and people from Africa (Balaji, 2011). Daniel had a strong feeling that he belongs to Kenya, Africa, which he wanted himself and others to be more aware. Although Daniel may be framed as a minority being an international student

in the host culture, he would perceive this more positively because of the acceptances that he receives as an African.

Another example was provided from a Sri Lankan student, Sajith. During the interview, Sajith showed me his ring on his left ring finger. Then he asked whether I thought he is married or not because of the common notion that marriage rings should be on the left ring finger in the U.S. culture. Actually, his ring was a gift from his mother who lives in Sri Lanka. Although some of his friends advised him to wear the ring on the other hand because of the different perception in the United States, Sajith was determined to follow his own cultural perceptions and his mother's demand who wanted him to wear the ring on his left ring finger. Here is what Sajith explained:

[A]ctually, this is [pointing his ring on his left ring finger], you think I'm married. This is not my marriage ring. If I'm going to marry, we use ring on this hand [showing his right hand] in my country. Yeah. Yeah. So, this ring, actually given by my mother. So, that's why I wear this one. All the people say like this, "Hey, it's not good to wear on this hand because you're not married", so it will be ... *(laugh)* Yeah, kind of [misunderstood]. And, but, I wear this one because my mother gave it to me. And she asked me to wear it on this hand. So, I wear this one. It's my, it's my, it's my, it's my culture, I think, my way. It's my way, right.

Daniel and Sajith's stories remind one of identity negotiations (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 2005) in the intercultural context. Their statements both clarify their own perceptions of who they are: Daniel as an African differentiated from African Americans and Sajith, as a Sri Lankan maintaining his cultural traditions. Given these examples, encountering and observing different cultures and perceptions, which are defined as a key proposition of dialectics, stimulated international students to become more aware and conscious with their identities. International students' perceptions toward different cultures influenced

them to negotiate their social and cultural identities in the host culture. In addition, international students' various cultural backgrounds explain how their identities and worldviews are constructed and negotiated differently (Drummond & Orbe, 2010) within the host dominant culture.

In summary, international students' dialectical experiences including episodes regarding cultural dialectics were identified across all different demographic groups including the ten national identities of country of origin, gender, race, and educational degree being pursued. However, there was one pattern distinctive to doctoral students who were working as teaching assistants. Their access to undergraduate interactions in the classroom exposed them to more stereotyping and discourses of foreignness.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter articulates how the findings in the data analysis described in the previous chapter relate to the research questions and how these findings can be connected to the existing literature. As stated in chapter 2, the present study explored the following research question:

RQ: How are the interactions and experiences of international students within the host culture explained by relational dialectics and cultural dialectics?

As described in the findings in chapter 4, international students' stories possess various characteristics of dialectics within their experiences in the host culture. Synthesizing the findings gained from the participants' stories, this chapter discusses how international students experience dialectics within their stay in the host culture and how dialectics can be utilized in the existing literatures to explain sojourn experiences.

First, I describe the emergent nature of dialectics within interactions and experiences of international students. Second, I explain how international students understood or made meaning out of their dialectics. Third, I synthesize my interpretation with how particular discourses were woven through some dialectics. Fourth, I discuss what may possibly contribute to our understanding toward dialectics and how dialectics can also contribute to the existing intercultural communication theories.

### The Emergent Nature of Dialectics

One of the characteristics I found from the participant's stories was that international students' dialectics were not only momentarily or temporarily formed through a single communicative experience or incident. This is consistent with what Baxter and Montgomery (1998) proposed as one of the characteristics for relational dialectics: change. In fact, international students' experiences changed over time, including the changes with the environment, changes with their interpersonal relationships, and changes within themselves. For example, Jana from Jordan experienced competing identities since she started her life in the United States. Her stories regarding change were referred to in the static-dynamic dialectic and present-future/history-past dialectic in the previous findings chapter. While maintaining her identity as a Muslim woman was her top priority, her different experiences in the United States have affected her identities over time to change herself with what she had absorbed in the host culture.

Revisiting the example of a Kenyan student, Daniel, used in privilege-disadvantage dialectic in the previous chapter, he realized how he was ignorant of the opinions and experiences of members of the host culture before having some key experiences of interactions with U.S. American people. One time, he experienced a positive interaction with U.S. Americans who were curious about his country and interested to hear his stories. Although their attitudes were initially stereotypical toward his country, it was a privilege for Daniel to have members of the host culture take interest in his culture to receive questions about his home country. Another time, he perceived a disadvantageous reception from U.S. American students who doubted his knowledge and

ability in teaching just because he was from Africa. There was an interval time between these two different experiences. However in the interview, by reflecting back on both of these experiences that occurred in a different time period, Daniel synthesized those and made himself realize that he was also ignorant and stereotypical with how he used to view the United States. He further mentioned that he would not blame the others with the fact that they were also ignorant about Daniel's country.

Individuals synthesized and eventually framed chronological and opposing experiences and emotions as dialectical. Each of these experiences gave meaning to the others through contrast and connectedness. Some of the dialectics were pulled together in the process of the interview through the act of retrospective recalling of events each of which may have occurred separated by time. This is also consistent with one of Baxter and Braithwaite's propositions for relational dialectics: the interpretation of discourses in forming dialectics is both synchronic and diachronic (2008). While new meanings were produced during a certain experience, old meanings from the past were reproduced. Then, these eventually transformed into another meaning that contains the old and the new opposing contexts (Baxter & Erbert, 1999).

Given these characteristics, it is important to note that paradox is not an identical term to define the emergent nature of dialectics. Dialectics may emerge from paradoxical experiences or notions, but dialectics give further meanings to individuals' experiences and identities. Whereas a paradox is a dyadic pole that contradicts, negates, or is incompatible with each other, dialectics form a process of experiences for individuals to reflect back and forth between the opposing or different notions. Therefore, dialectical experiences are not just the contradictory experiences between the two opposing poles,

but they influence each other and cause individuals to reflect upon the contrast between those oppositions and to reshape their notions and perceptions toward the world.

Another finding is the possibility of expanding the variation of concepts of dialectics. As seen in the review of the literature, Martin and Nakayama overviewed cultural dialectics with six variations of insightful and practical concepts that are salient in intercultural situations. These dialectics are highly practical in representing the paradoxical meanings that emerge in intercultural relationships. However in reality, international students may experience more than these six dialectics. In fact, the present study identified an additional dialectic (i.e., home-culture/host-culture dialectic) other than Martin and Nakayama's six cultural dialectics and one of Baxter and Montgomery's relational dialectics. These findings from the present study implicate the further possible discoveries of dialectics within intercultural situations.

The emergent nature of dialectics then, is characterized with its randomness for its possible emergence between different intervals of time and contexts. Also, the dialectical frames are broad and show different characteristics depending on different contexts of experiences of individuals. Other studies have in fact identified various frames of dialectics through their observations (e.g., Gibbs, 2009; Hopson & Orbe, 2007; Semlak, et al., 2008). Then, the next section discusses the interpretation of meanings out of the dialectics that international students experienced.

#### The Meanings International Students Gained from Dialectics

Reflecting back on Baxter and Braithwaite's first proposition that defined relational dialectics, they explained that meanings emerge from the struggle of different,

often opposing, discourses (2008). This means that we can interpret and make meaning out of dialectics. Reviewing the participants' stories, I found that international students had their own meanings generated from their dialectical experiences.

Again, bringing the example from privilege-disadvantage dialectic, Makoto from Japan described the different interactions he had with U.S. Americans. On one hand experiencing a disadvantage with his English communication skills and with the "vicious" attitudes of some U.S. Americans, on the other hand he was also having other U.S. Americans who helped him to deal with the problem and closely communicated with him. Regarding these comparative and different interactions he had with U.S. Americans, he realized the importance of communication and his improvement with his English skills. Through these interactions, Makoto was experiencing the host nationals' stereotypes and discriminations against strangers due to his language skills and accents, as opposed to the receptivity and hospitality of host nationals willing to help out strangers.

Participants may have not used the language of dialectics when describing their contradictory experiences. Part of the reason is because some international students were neither familiar with the conceptual notion of dialectics nor realizing the rationale behind their contradicting experiences. But when probed or asked, to make meaning of these contradictory experiences, their responses were characterized by dialectics. Just as Daniel described in the previous section, he gave each end of the dialectic of privilege and disadvantage to reach to the point where he realized his own stereotypical and ignorant perceptions toward the United States.

Given that meaning making of dialectics was not salient with international students' experiences, dialectics identified in this study were mostly part of the conceptual factors of intercultural/interpersonal relationships or experiences that were interpreted and characterized through the theoretical lens. Also, international students did not necessarily try to manage the dialectics they had experienced. In fact, managing dialectics was not the priority in the original theory which did not generalize the management strategies of dialectics (e.g., Baxter & Montgomery, 2008). Management of dialectics of international students will be discussed in the future research section in the final chapter.

#### Discourses Woven through Dialectics

Although Martin and Nakayama's (1999, 2010) literatures of the six cultural dialectics do not specify discourses as the opposing notions and forces that explain the formulation of dialectics, discourses are an important concept to describe the nature of dialectics in the original theory of relational dialectics (e.g., Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Erbert, 1999). As previously explained in the findings chapter regarding some of the international students' experiences being associated with the core definition of relational dialectics, competing discourses make individuals conceive differences and eventually construct identity and consciousness (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). In addition, discourses are also used to explain the emergent nature and meaning making of dialectics in Baxter and Braithwaite's (2008) relational dialectics literature. This section digs down into the stories of experiences and interactions of international students to find further meaning in their discourses that frame their dialectics.

Repeating the definition of discourses described in the findings chapter, discourses in the intercultural communication context is defined as an ensemble of people's ideas, beliefs, and predictions regarding how they view the world and treat other people, and their different ways of communicating with others (Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2012). The different discourses of individuals and cultural groups can compete with each other to frame dialectics. From the international students' stories, I tried to weave the discourses that explain the dialectics that international students have had in their interactions and experiences.

In analyzing international students' dialectics identified in their interactions with U.S. Americans, prominent discourses that competed with international students' discourses were found to be the U.S. Americans' perceptions toward international students. The key factors that included in those discourses were the host nationals' stereotypical and discriminative notions toward others (e.g., Balaji, 2011). Because international students are strangers as well as sojourners in the host country, they were oftentimes perceived by the host nationals through a lens that views the foreignness of international students. The discourses of international students' foreignness regarding their race, ethnicity, and language skills often triggered host nationals' stereotypical and discriminative notions toward international students. The following sections revisit some of the stories of international students that included those discourses.

Referring to Daniel's (Kenya) story which was discussed in the emergent nature of dialectics, Daniel had a disadvantageous episode with his U.S. American students who perceived him as being incapable of teaching. Daniel observed that his students thought so because he was from Africa, and coming from the third world country made their

stereotypical perceptions toward him. Also, reflecting back to the Iranian student Hamid who also works as a teaching assistant, he also made a similar observation with his U.S. American students that they did not come to ask him questions because they thought Hamid could not communicate with them. These examples of U.S. Americans' perceptions can be explained as both racially and linguistically stereotypical and biased against the foreignness of others (e.g., Balaji, 2011; Rubin, 1998; Rubin & Smith, 1990). In fact these were the discourses U.S. Americans had toward others which are framed as a part of dialectics in Daniel and Hamid's interactions. These discourses were also implied in other dialectics within international students' interactions and experiences. Chihiro's experience with U.S. American men's (especially White men's) exoticization of Asian women (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Gina, 2007) discussed in the findings chapter is another example that explains the discourses of being ethnically stereotypical toward others. In addition, the discourses of Americanness that international students experienced in the host culture and of foreignness of international students have constructed in their identities were salient in framing international students' dialectics. As seen from the example given in the findings chapter regarding relational dialectics, international students implied about the differences they perceived from the U.S. culture and their competing notions regarding their identities. Those encounters with new and different discourses of Americanness as opposed to the existing discourses of foreignness and identity embedded in international students eventually constructed their new sense of social/cultural identity within the host culture.



### Possible Contributions for Cultural Dialectics

Throughout the analysis, I considered what may be an important factor for individuals in experiencing dialectics. As described in the literature review, dialectics focus on how differences and oppositions can construct the consciousness and identity of individuals (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Therefore, dialectics help individuals to rethink and become more aware of self as well as others. Especially in intercultural situations, having opposing notions such as, for example, difference-similarity or cultural-individual may not be easy, because an individual must have awareness of both self and culturally different others. Considering this importance of dialectics, mindfulness (e.g., King & Sawyer, 1998) has possible contribution for dialectical experiences and meaning making of dialectics.

Mindfulness (e.g. King & Sawyer, 1998) is used in Gudykunst's anxiety/uncertainty management theory (e.g., 1998, 2005) as a moderating process to balance anxiety and uncertainty perceived in interpersonal and intercultural interactions. In intercultural situations, being mindful or mindless influences the process of intercultural adjustment. By being mindful, strangers can create specific categories to predict host nationals' behavior with enough personalized information, be open to new information, and be aware of other perspectives in terms of understanding cultural interactions with the host nationals (Gudykunst, 2005).

From the concept of mindfulness, being mindful can be understood as being aware of different cultures and different perspectives. These relate to the concepts of dialectics and to the awareness of opposing and different factors that may exist in

relationships with others and experiences in different cultures. Therefore, mindfulness may contribute to understanding the experience of dialectics between opposing notions and to generate fine meanings out of those dialectics to rethink about the self and the world.

Furthermore, applying the concept from discourses from the relational dialectics can also contribute to the understanding of cultural dialectics. As discussed in the previous section, various discourses can characterize international students' interactions and experiences and explain the dialectics they experience in the host culture. Discourses in intercultural contexts may include various perceptions, notions, traditions, and insights for observing the experiences of those who have different cultural backgrounds. These may contribute to our further understandings toward differentness not only from the perceptions of international students, but also from the host nationals' point of view.

By studying dialectics and international students' experiences in the host culture, I also reflected how dialectics can be utilized through embedding in other intercultural theories to expand its theoretical frameworks and concepts. Dialectics were originally developed in the interpersonal communication field, but it has a strong potential with expanding existing intercultural communication theories. This is because the present study identified cultural dialectics and several other dialectics in the international students' stories in the host culture. Therefore, the assumption developed from the present study is the possible applicability of dialectics in theories of intercultural adjustments for strangers or sojourners in host countries. Here, I specifically exemplify Young Yun Kim's integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation (2001, 2005). This is one of the intercultural communication theories that connote the

applicability of dialectics. As also shown in the literature review of the present study, Kim (2005) referred to the notion of both/and-ness of the “old” and “new” that reflects on the identity of strangers. Therefore, although the concepts of dialectics were not applied and articulated in Kim’s theory, dialectical experiences of strangers may add insights to the various factors and theoretical concepts she utilized to explain cross-cultural adaptation.

Additionally, Kim referred to dialectics to explain the motion of the cross-cultural adaptation pattern. In her theory, Kim (2001, 2005) stated that strangers take a “stress-growth-dynamic” model in pursuing cross-cultural adaptation. Her “stress-growth-dynamic” diagram shows a cyclic progress of strangers toward adaptation. The model configures adaptation and personal growth on the vertical axis and time passage on the horizontal axis. The cyclic action continues over time with dialectic motions of drawing back and leaping forward, which represent strangers’ each stressful experience (as draw back) and proactive and adaptive attitude (as leap forward) (Kim, 2005). This model is based on the human adaptation perspective articulated by Dubos (1965), perceiving adaptation as “a dialectic between performance and change” (as cited in Kim, 2005, p. 384).

However, dialectics may also function as a critique against Kim’s theory. Dialectics can change and be modified over time during interactions and relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Also, as seen from the findings from the present study, dialectics may emerge at any time during the sojourners’ experiences in the host culture. This indicates that dialectical motions of cross-cultural adaptation may also change and be modified over time depending on sojourners’ contextual situations. Regarding that

dialectics do not have regularity or constancy, it is skeptical whether a dialectical motion should be expressed in a predictable spiral motion. Considering these factors of what dialectics may add to existing theories, it is worthwhile to expand and apply dialectics to the benefit of refreshment or construction of intercultural communication theories.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews the present study with reflections and further applications for research in cultural dialectics. The following sections are composed of the limitations of the study, the advantages of the study, and applications for future research. In addition, how dialectics may expand intercultural communication theories is discussed in the end of the chapter.

#### The Limitations of the Study

This study was efficient in discovering dialectics from the stories of international students. However, the study could not sufficiently identify the further meanings generated from the dialectics. Perhaps the reason is because the interview questions were not designed to inquire about participants' in-depth reactions and feelings toward the dialectics in their experiences. Because the purpose of the research was to identify and interpret the dialectics from the data, the interview questions did not insist on questioning whether international students were cognizant of dialectics they were experiencing. Pursuing further meanings and outcomes of dialectics will be discussed in the later section of future application.

Another limitation was found in the interview protocol. The follow-up questions were not effective for drawing out additional stories from international students. Some participants did not reply while many others just simply and briefly listed out additional

information. The follow-up e-mail response was offered for the convenience for the international students who came up with any additional story after their interview or who may have felt more comfortable in writing rather than speaking English. However, repeating the same questions from the interview was not stimulating enough for international students to rethink the questions and describe them in a written format. Considering the sufficiency of the interview data, future studies may deselect follow-up e-mail questions from the method or prepare questions in a different format that can invoke participants to recall any additional experience to share.

### The Advantage and Practicability of the Study

One of the advantages of the present study was that the interviewing was not only beneficial for me as the researcher who collected the data. I greatly appreciated when some of the participants told me they were glad to have participated in the interview. Because every participant was asked to participate in the interviews without any compensation, I was in fact surprised and pleased to hear that they were happy about experiencing the interview. Some of them complimented the study and the interview, mentioning that it they were able to “do a self-analysis through this interview;” “now I have a feeling that I know myself a little better;” “I didn’t understand this until talking to you. *(laugh)* That’s really, that’s me.” The interview process helped students to be retroactively mindful. Giving international students an opportunity to recall and talk about their experiences through questions enable them to rethink about their identity and self as well as other cultures and people.

The second advantage of the present study was identifying its applicability to other intercultural communication theories and concepts. Relational dialectics were created to inform the opposing forces or notions within interpersonal relationships (e.g., Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), as well as cultural dialectics were developed to inform dialectics emergent in intercultural contexts (Martin & Nakayama, 1999; 2010). Now that dialectics were identified in international students' stories, it is certain that dialectics emerged at intervals during the processes of interactions and forming relationships, and moreover, intercultural adjustment (e.g., Gudykunst, 2005). Therefore, the present study indicated that dialectics may be applied to existing intercultural communication and adjustment theories as additional theoretical concepts that explain how dialectics may characterize the interactions and relationships in intercultural settings.

The third advantage of the present study is to have a dialectical perspective in studying about sojourners. Focusing on sojourners under this topic can normalize and give value to experiences characterized as different and dialectical in intercultural contexts. Experiencing the push and pull and reflecting back and forth between oppositions enable us to rethink and reshape our notions and perceptions toward selves and others. Also, dialectics offers us a comprehensive manner in thinking about different ways of knowing (Martin & Nakayama, 1999), which means that it offers researchers to have more than one perception in viewing the world. Thus, dialectics enable us to view the world in multiple ways, as well as to be better prepared in engaging in intercultural interactions (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Additionally, dialectical perspective will hopefully stimulate researchers and practitioners to think about the process of adjustment rather than to focus on adjustment as an endpoint. Furthermore, the understanding toward

different discourses is an important pathway for the understanding toward some dialectical experiences of international students. Therefore, dialectics and different discourses can be the crucial perspectives in developing an intercultural personhood especially for those who study abroad in a foreign country, but also for the host nationals who receive them and interact with them. As was expected in the beginning of the present study, awareness toward dialectics and discourses can contribute to assist international students and host nationals in the academic institutions to value multiple, broader, and opposite perspectives if applied in practice.

#### Applications for Future Research

The exploration of dialectics within international students' experiences has a potential for expansion in research. The focus of this study was on discovering dialectics by referring to the various existing literature that investigated and conceptualized dialectics in interpersonal and intercultural communication fields. The present study can be expanded by further examining the identified dialectics and how individuals realize and react to those.

The first expansion of the study is to examine dialectics as *perceived* dialectics (e.g., Erbert, Pérez, & Gareis, 2003) as opposed to those indirectly asked about by the researcher. Although there were dialectics identified in the interviews, the present study did not indicate much situation where individuals actually realized their dialectical notions. A few dialectics appeared to be acknowledged by participants in accordance with their paradoxical feelings, but others were interpreted through synthetic analysis.



Perceived dialectics may allow researchers to step forward to focus on the meaning-making of dialectics. When people are aware of their perceived dialectics, they may try to make meaning out of those dialectics. This is associated with sensemaking that individuals attempt in understanding their interactions and communication with others. In the present study, there were indications that some participants tried to make meaning out of their perceived dialectics. (e.g., Kristine from Norway tried to comprehend her dialectical perception between similarities and differences between the United States and Norway.) However, this potential analysis can be extremely complicated and in depth, because meaning makings can be diverse and different depending on individuals. Especially when it comes to international populations, generated meanings may consequently differ depending on one's cultural backgrounds.

Another possible expansion of the study is to examine strategic aspects of dialectics. This is to inquire how individuals negotiate dialectics after they perceive and make meaning of dialectics. Many of the previous studies have not focused on this aspect, as relational dialectics theory (RDT) itself does not provide any strategic concept to guide individuals' communicative practices (Baxter, 2004a; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008) when experiencing dialectics. However, it is noteworthy that this is because of the nature of this theory to interpret particular meanings that are emergent in communicative practices and constructed realities between relationships, rather than to extract generalizability or strategies of communication (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). In fact, not all dialectics are necessarily negative and in need of management. Therefore, as well as the meaning making of dialectics, strategizing for managing dialectics depends on individuals' perception of dialectics, situations, and cultural backgrounds. This is verified in the study

of Chen, Drzewiecka, and Sias (2001) which showed an example from their interview data that exemplified how their participants from Taiwan managed their tensions generated from perceived dialectics. They explained that their communication strategies for dealing with dialectics were consistent with Taiwanese cultural preference and values (Chen, Drzewiecka, & Sias, 2001).

As already elaborated in the literature review, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) introduced eight patterns of praxis that represent individuals' communicative choices when facing dialectical contradictions: (1) denial; (2) disorientation; (3) spiraling inversion; (4) segmentation; (5) balance; (6) integration; (7) recalibration; (8) reaffirmation (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These may or may not work as solutions to manage dialectics in participants' desired outcomes, but may be defined as possible choices for communicative practices in managing dialectics. Further expansion of these concepts may lead to enhance the strategic aspects to negotiate tensions generated from dialectics.

Considering the future in researching academic populations, researching international students has a potential in its development and expansion in the field. International students are small groups of people coming from different countries and staying in academic institutions, and therefore they may receive limited attention as a research focus. However, studies about international students may provide new hints for how individuals may communicate in a different cultural environment or with others from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, the studies about international students can be expanded by putting focus from a different angle. Other than focusing on

international students who are visiting the United States, future research may attend to U.S. Americans who travel abroad to study in different countries.

### Epilogue

Perhaps unsurprisingly, but what stood out during the data analysis were the gaps between international students with how they individually viewed the world while studying abroad. There were eleven participants from ten different countries in the present study, and each of them had their own cultural standards, religious circumstances, value sets, social/economic foundations, and language basis. Therefore, it was natural to consider that each individual perceive the U.S. culture and people from their own cultural lens. In fact, they had a variety of perspectives from where they view the U.S. culture and people, and even some of them had totally different points of views. For example, while one participant perceived U.S. Americans were respectful, another participant criticized how U.S. Americans lacked respect toward others. Also, although one participant thought the social system and how people work are organized in the U.S., another participant considered one's home country is better organized. As we can see from these examples, how international students observe their world in the United States differs to some extent, depending on their cultural backgrounds and attitude towards the host culture. On the other hand, international students are conscious with the fact that they are bracketed by U.S. Americans as "international students" or as certain ethnic groups to which they belong. Some of my participants were aware of this fact of being recognized as a member of a huge group: "international students". Consequently, what they are demanding is perhaps a higher awareness by the host nationals with the students' cultures and an understanding that each international student is different. International students also

desire an understanding that they as international students also comprehend the world through values from their own home culture.

Starting from Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) construction of relational dialectics, many researchers have applied dialectics to their studies and expanded the concepts in various fields of communication. The present study's dialectical perspective also gave a new insight for international students and intercultural communication studies. Given the implication of "both/and-ness" that Kim (2005) referred in her literature about intercultural adjustment, the dialectics may add its insight to explain how people in the intercultural, international, and global contexts view the world and make meanings out of their experiences. Having an opposing or different forces or notion within interpersonal and intercultural relationships may sometimes be difficult or even be hard to notice. However, the understanding of dialectics may certainly influence individuals to broaden their perspectives toward the world.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment Script

1. The following e-mail script will be used to recruit international students in the student investigator's personal contacts to participate in face-to-face interviews.

Hello, this is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am working on a research project in the field of intercultural communication for my master's thesis, and I would like to invite you to participate in a face-to-face interview and a follow-up short answer e-mail response. The interview will be conducted one-on-one, and will take about an hour to an hour and a half. The short answer e-mail follow-up should take about 20 to 30 minutes. If you are interested in sharing stories of your own experiences you have had as an international student in the United States, please feel free to participate in an interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Therefore, your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any way. Before you make your decision of participation, we can schedule a meeting for you to read the consent document and ask questions regarding the interview and the study. At that point, you will have an opportunity to agree or refuse to participate in the interview. If you are interested in participation, please contact me at [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) or call [269-873-3890](tel:269-873-3890). Thank you.

2. The following e-mail script will be used to recruit international students whose names are provided from others.

Hello, my name is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am working on a research project in the field of intercultural communication for my master's thesis, and I would like to invite you to participate in a face-to-face interview and a follow-up short answer e-mail response. The interview will be conducted one-on-one, and will take about an hour to an hour and a half. The short answer e-mail follow-up should take about 20 to 30 minutes. If you are interested in sharing stories of your own experiences you have had as an international student in the United States, please feel free to participate in an interview.

The potential participants should be international students, but I am looking for participants with various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Also, the participants' enrollment can be in the wide range, including CEISIS students, undergraduate students, and graduate students. However, please note that I am particularly looking for international students who have stayed in the United States for more than three months, but no more than three years.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Therefore, your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any way. Before you make your decision of participation, we can schedule a meeting for you to read the consent document and ask questions regarding the interview and the study. At that point, you will have an opportunity to agree or refuse to participate in the interview. If you are interested in participation, please contact me at [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) or call [269-873-3890](tel:269-873-3890). Thank you.

3. The following e-mail script will be used to request the people of student investigator's personal contacts to provide names of international students who may be interested in participating in the interview.

Hello, this is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am looking for international students who can volunteer to participate in my research project in the field of intercultural communication. If you know any international student studying at Western Michigan University who may take interest in providing stories of his/her own experiences as an international student in the United States, I would like to ask you to take a little time for cooperation.

The potential participants should be international students, but I am looking for participants with various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Also, the participants' enrollment can be in the wide range, including CEISIS students, undergraduate students, and graduate students. However, please note that I am particularly looking for international students who have stayed in the United States for more than three months, but no more than three years.

If you know any international student who meets the criteria above, it would be very helpful if you could provide me with the person's contact information. If you have any question, please contact me at [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) or call 269-873-3890. I appreciate you for taking time to read this e-mail. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

4. The following e-mail script will be used to request international student organizations on campus to forward the second recruitment e-mail script to international students.

To whom it may concern: Hello, my name is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am looking for international students who can volunteer to participate in my research project for my master's thesis in the field of intercultural communication. I am particularly looking for international students studying at Western Michigan University who may take interest in providing stories of his/her own experiences as an international student in the United States.

Because many international students on campus are affiliated with [the name of organization], I would like to ask you to take a little time forwarding the recruitment e-mail to international students within your organization. You can either copy and paste the following recruitment message to the forwarding e-mail, or forward the word document file I have attached on this e-mail. If you have any question, please contact me at [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) or call 269-873-3890. I appreciate your taking time to read this e-mail. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

5. The following speaking (phone) script will be used to recruit international students in the student investigator's personal contacts.

Hi, this is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am working on a research project in the field of intercultural communication for my master's thesis, and I would like to invite you to participate in a face-to-face interview and a follow-up short answer e-mail response. The interview will be conducted one-on-one, and will take about an hour to an hour and a half. The short answer e-mail follow-up should take about 20 to 30 minutes. If you are interested in sharing stories of your own experiences you have had as an international student in the United States, please feel free to participate in an interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Therefore, your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any way. Before you make your decision of participation, we can schedule a meeting for you to read the consent document and ask questions regarding the interview and the study. At that point, you will have an opportunity to agree or refuse to participate in the interview. If you are interested in the interview or have any question, please contact me by calling 269-873-3890.

6. The following speaking (phone) script will be used to recruit international students whose names are provided from others.

Hello, my name is Yoko Kubo and I am a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Currently I am working on a research project in the field of intercultural communication for my master's thesis, and I would like to invite you to participate in a face-to-face interview and a follow-up short answer e-mail response. The interview will be conducted one-on-one, and will take about an hour to an hour and a half. The short answer e-mail follow-up should take about 20 to 30 minutes. If you are interested in sharing stories of your own experiences you have had as an international student in the United States, please feel free to participate in an interview.

The potential participants should be international students, but I am looking for participants with various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Also, the participants' enrollment can be in the wide range, including CEISIS students, undergraduate students, and graduate students. However, please note that I am particularly looking for international students who have stayed in the United States for more than three months, but no more than three years.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Therefore, your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any way. Before you make your decision of participation, we can schedule a meeting for you to read the consent document and ask questions regarding the interview and the study. At that point, you will have an opportunity to agree or refuse to participate in the interview. If you are interested in the interview or have any question, please contact me by calling 269-873-3890.

## Appendix B

### Recruitment Flyer

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# EXPERIENCES AND STORIES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR OWN STORIES AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT?

**YOKO KUBO, A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE  
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION, INVITES YOU TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A 60-90 MINUTE, CONFIDENTIAL  
INTERVIEW AND 20-30 MINUTE FOLLOW UP SHORT  
ANSWER E-MAIL RESPONSE.**

**THIS IS A RESEARCH STUDY THAT COLLECTS DATA  
FROM INDIVIDUAL, FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS.**

**A POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT MUST BE AN  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AT WESTERN MICHIGAN  
UNIVERSITY, WHO HAS STAYED IN THE UNITED  
STATES FOR 3MONTHS – 3 YEARS. MUST ALSO BE  
AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD TO PARTICIPATE.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY,  
PLEASE CONTACT YOKO KUBO AT**

**(269)-873-3890 or yoko.kubo@wmich.edu**

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## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Form



## Western Michigan University

### School of Communication

**Principle Investigator:** Dr. Kathleen Wong, Assistant Professor, School of Communication, Western Michigan University, 269 387-3186, [kathleen.wong@wmich.edu](mailto:kathleen.wong@wmich.edu)

**Student Investigator:** Yoko Kubo, MA candidate, School of Communication, Western Michigan University, 269-873-3890, [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu)

**Title of Study:** Experiencing “Both/and-ness”: Dialectics of Interactions of International Students

You have been invited to participate in a qualitative research study conducted by Yoko Kubo, from Western Michigan University, School of Communication. This project will serve as Yoko Kubo’s thesis for the requirements of the master’s degree in communication. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

The purpose of this study is to explore and examine international students’ experiences during their stay in the United States. Participants of this study are international students at Western Michigan University who have stayed in the United States for more than three months, but no more than three years. Participants must be at least 18 years old.

Your consent to participate in this study indicates that you agree to participate in a face-to-face interview and a follow-up short answer e-mail response on a date following completion of the interview. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The short answer e-mail response will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. If you are a Japanese student and feeling uncomfortable to have the interview conducted in English, the interview is also available in Japanese. During the interview, the interviewer (student investigator) will be taking notes for the later usage in the analysis. An appointment for the interview will be scheduled at your convenience and be conducted at your preferred location or on campus of Western Michigan University.

The risk of participating in this study is the time commitment to schedule and complete the face-to-face interview and the time to compose the short answer e-mail response. Other risks may include the sensitivity of the topic and the possible discomfort participants may perceive while sharing experiences.

Your participation in this study is truly valuable and appreciated. However, there are no direct benefits or compensations that the participant will gain by taking part in this study. Also, there are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Your identity and information collected in this study shall remain confidential. The interviews will be fully audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by the investigators of this study. If you choose to have your interview conducted in Japanese, a volunteer translator will have access to your translated transcript at the point of back translation

from English to Japanese. This process is necessary to check the accuracy of the translated data. If you are interested, you are welcome to review a written transcript of your interview. In doing so, you have the right to suggest any modification for accuracy or clarity. The e-mail responses will be received via a Western Michigan University e-mail system with the e-mails printed out and the e-mails deleted from the investigator's e-mail account after receipt. Both interview transcripts and printed e-mails will be stored with restricted computer access to researcher and her committee. Pseudonym will be used to ensure the confidentiality of your interview transcription. When identifying areas of study or academic discipline, larger categories of disciplines will be used such as social sciences, hard science, humanities, foreign language, education, etc. This will decrease the chances of any individual being easily identifiable by a combination of national status and major area of study. Students will also be identified with campus designations such as large public university in the Midwest.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Therefore, your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you in any way. You may choose not to answer questions or may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. There will be no consequence of any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the student investigator, Yoko Kubo at 269-873-3890 or [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu), or the principle investigator, Dr. Kathleen Wong at 269 387-3186 or [kathleen.wong@wmich.edu](mailto:kathleen.wong@wmich.edu). You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

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I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

---

Please Print Your Name

---

Participant's signature

---

Date

I give my consent to be contacted via the e-mail address below for follow up questions after the interview.

Participant's e-mail address for follow up questions:

---

Participant's email address

---

Participant's signature

## Appendix D

### Interview Guide

Using a semi-structured methodology for interviews, this interview protocol is designed as a guide to the possible interview questions for the face-to-face interviews. During the interviews, the interviewer will be flexible sorting out the applicable questions from this protocol, depending on the kinds of information each participant expresses and elicits while responding to questions. Therefore, in order to avoid overlapping information, some interview questions may not be used if a participant has already shared a related story in response to other questions.

#### *The General Inquiries Rooted in the Interview*

1. Experiences of international students regarding interactions with U.S. Americans and encounters with the culture in the United States.
2. International students' identity and their perceptions of selves being a short-term visitor coming from their home countries.

#### *Opening Questions*

1. What country are you from?
2. When did you arrive in the United States?
3. Can you tell me what made you decide to study abroad in the United States?

#### *Exploratory Questions*

4. Can you describe an interaction or situation with a U.S. American that is an example of your experiences in the United States as an international student? It could be either positive or negative.

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
  - (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
  - (3) What did you say?
  - (4) What was said to you?
  - (5) How did you feel?
  - a. How would you explain that experience from your own perception as a visitor?
  - b. How would you explain that experience from your own cultural perspective?
  - c. How do you think the U. S. citizen perceived the interaction with you?
5. Can you describe an interaction or situation with another international student that is an example of your experiences in the United States as an international student? It could be either positive or negative.

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
  - (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
  - (3) What did you say?
  - (4) What was said to you?
  - (5) How did you feel?
  - a. How would you explain that experience from your own perception as a visitor?
  - b. How would you explain that experience from you own cultural perspective?
  - c. How do you think the other international students perceived the interaction with you?
6. Can you tell me about critical and memorable communicative experiences you have had with the U.S. Americans (or with other international students)?

- a. Can you describe your impression from the experience in detail?
- b. How did it influence your own communicative or cultural norms?

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
- (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
- (3) What did you say?
- (4) What was said to you?
- (5) How did you feel?

- 7. Could you explain, if any, the challenges and benefits you have experienced in the United States?

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
- (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
- (3) What did you say?
- (4) What was said to you?
- (5) How did you feel?

- 8. When you feel stressed or troubled, who do you seek out to help you deal with your stress?
  - a. Can you give an example and describe the type of stress you have experienced while here as an international student?
  - b. Can you give an example of when you went to someone either in person, over the phone or other media?
  - c. What makes this person a good person for you to go to when you need someone?

9. When you feel happy or feel you want to celebrate an accomplishment, who do you seek out to share your good feelings?
- a. Can you give an example and describe the type of happy situation you have experienced while here as an international student?
  - b. Can you give an example of when you went to someone either in person, over the phone or other media?
  - c. What makes this person a good person for you to go to when you need someone?
10. Can you describe two experiences that best captures the similarities and/or differences in the United States compared to your home country?

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
  - (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
  - (3) What did you say?
  - (4) What was said to you?
  - (5) How did you feel?
11. Is your communication with people in your home country different now from what it was before you came here?
- a. Can you describe an instance that demonstrates how it is different?

Possible Probes:

- (1) What happened?
- (2) Who was there? Describe your relationships with this person (people).
- (3) What did you say?
- (4) What was said to you?



- (5) How did you feel?
12. How do you think you have changed after you have studied abroad?
    - a. How do you think studying abroad influenced your life style and identity?
    - b. How do you think about those changes?
    - c. How do you compare yourself now in the United States and back when you were in your country?
  13. How do you feel about embracing your home culture, and at the same time, experiencing the new culture in the United States?
    - a. How does this affect your interactional experiences in the United States?
    - b. How does this affect your interactional experiences at home in your country?
  14. Is there any more information that you would like to share with me that we have not talked about?
  15. Do you know any other international students who may be willing to participate in an interview?

## Appendix E

### Interview Guide (Translated In Japanese)

## インタビューガイド

このインタビュー企画は、半構造的手法を用いた直接インタビュー用の指針としてデザインされたものである。インタビューの間、インタビュアーは参加者の返答次第で臨機応変に適切な質問を選び出すことができる。つまり、返答内容の重複を防ぐため、参加者が他の質問で触れてしまった事柄についての質問は使われない可能性がある。

### インタビューの主な内容

1. アメリカ人との交流や米国における文化との出会いを通して留学生達が得る経験について。
2. 留学生達のアイデンティティや、他国からの短期滞在者としての立場に関する彼等の見解について。

### 初めの質問項目

1. あなたの出身はどちらですか。
2. あなたはいつから米国にきていますか。
3. あなたが米国に留学しようと決心した経緯を教えてください。

### 探究的質問項目

4. あなたの留学生としての米国での経験の中で、アメリカ人との交流や関係にまつわるエピソードを教えてください。ポジティブな経験でもネガティブな経験でも構いません。  
追加項目：
  - (1) 何が起きたのですか。
  - (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。
  - (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
  - (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
  - (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか。
    - a. その経験を滞在者としての立場からどのようにとらえていますか。
    - b. あなたの文化背景をもとにすると、その経験をどのようにとらえていますか。
5. あなたの留学生としての米国での経験の中で、他の留学生との交流や関係にまつわるエピソードを教えてください。ポジティブな経験でもネガティブな経験でも構いません。

#### 追加項目：

- (1) 何が起きたのですか。
- (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。

- (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
- (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
- (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか。
- a. その経験を滞在者としての立場からどのようにとらえていますか。
- b. あなたの文化背景をもとにすると、その経験をどのようにとらえていますか。
- 6. アメリカ人（またはその他の留学生達）とのコミュニケーションの中で危機的な体験と良い意味で思い出に残る体験があれば教えてください。
- a. その体験におけるあなたが感じた印象を詳しく教えてもらえますか。
- b. その体験はどのようにあなたのコミュニケーションや文化規範に影響を及ぼしたと思いますか。
- 追加項目：
- (1) 何が起きたのですか。
- (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。
- (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
- (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
- (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか。
- 7. これまでに米国における暮らしの中で直面したことのある難問、または逆に得をしたと思うことがあれば教えてください。
- 追加項目：
- (1) 何が起きたのですか。
- (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。
- (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
- (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
- (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか。
- 8. 留学生活の中でストレスや問題を抱えた時、それらを解消するためには誰に話そうとしていますか。
- a. 留学生として経験したことのあるストレスについて、それがどのようなものであったか例を示してください。
- b. 電話かその他のメディア媒体を通して誰かに相談したことがあれば、その例を教えてください。
- c. 誰かに話す必要がある時、その人物がどうして良い話し相手になるのかを教えてください。
- 9. 留学生活の中で幸福や達成感を喜びたいとき、誰に話そうとしていますか。
- a. 留学生として経験したことのある嬉しい出来事について、それがどのようなものであったか例を示してください。
- b. 電話かその他のメディア媒体を通して誰かに話したことがあれば、その例を教えてください。
- c. 誰かに話す必要がある時、その人物がどうして良い話し相手になるのかを教えてください。

10. 米国とあなたの国とにおける類似点と相違点を最もよく体現していると思う経験を、それぞれ教えてください。

追加項目：

- (1) 何が起きたのですか。
  - (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。
  - (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
  - (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
  - (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか
11. あなたの国にいる人たちとのコミュニケーションは、あなたが米国にくる前と比べて変わったと思いますか。
- a. どのように変わったのか、実例を用いて説明してもらえますか。
- 追加項目：
- (1) 何が起きたのですか。
  - (2) その時誰がいましたか。その人(人たち)とあなたの関係も説明してください。
  - (3) あなたは何を言いましたか。
  - (4) あなたは何と言われましたか。
  - (5) あなたはどのような気持ちでしたか
12. あなたが留学して以来、あなたはどのように変わっていったと思いますか。
- a. 留学したことは、どのようにあなたのライフスタイルやアイデンティティに影響を及ぼしたと思いますか。
  - b. それらの変化について、あなたはどのように考えていますか。
  - c. 現在米国にいるあなた自身とまだ国にいた頃のあなた自身をどう比較していますか。
13. 自分自身の国の文化を持ちながら、それと同時に米国で新しい文化に身を置いていることについて、どのように感じていますか。
- a. これらはアメリカにおける、あなたの対人経験にどのような影響を与えていますか。
  - b. これらは日本における、あなたの対人経験にどのような影響を与えていますか。
14. 話題に上がらなかったことで、あなたが話したいことが他に何かあれば教えてください。
15. このインタビューに参加できそうな留学生を誰か知っていれば教えてください。

## Appendix F

### Follow Up E-Mail Questions

Dear [participant's name],

Hello, this is Yoko Kubo, a graduate student from the School of Communication, at Western Michigan University. Thank you very much for participating in the interview the other day.

We have finished our face-to-face interview, but now I would like to ask you to take some time to respond in writing to questions I may have for clarification on what you shared in your interview. This e-mail also provides you with the opportunity to share answers that may not have come to you in the moment of a face to face interview but that you may want to share now. Please think back about our interview, and reconsider if there is any additional story about your experiences as an international student that you would like to share.

[Add the following sentence if applicable.] Also, please respond to the following question(s) of clarification regarding your responses from the interview. The questions are mostly ones asking for more details or for stories and examples for answers you already provided in the face to face interview. [Insert applicable question from the interview script as a follow up question.]

I would like to ask your cooperation by having you responding in a written format via e-mail. Below is the template for your responses. Please type in your stories as you respond to the provided question(s), and reply to [yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) . Please try to be descriptive as much as possible as you explain the stories of your experiences. This may take approximately 20 to 30 minutes of your time, but your response will be truly appreciated. I would appreciate to have your response within the next seven days if

possible. An e-mail reminder will be sent in three days advance the requested deadline.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Yoko Kubo

1. Please think back about our interview. Is there any additional story about your experiences as an international student that you would like to share? If so, please describe it in detail.

2. [Insert applicable question from the interview script as a follow up question.]

3. [Insert applicable question from the interview script as a follow up question.]



## Follow Up E-mail Questions in Japanese

[参加者名] 様、

こんにちは、ウェスタンミシガン大学コミュニケーション学部修士課程の久保陽子です。先日はインタビューにご参加頂き、ありがとうございました。

直接のインタビューは終了しましたが、今度は[参加者名]さんにして頂いたお話しについて加えて詳細を伺うため、いくつか筆記回答式の質問をさせていただきます。また、インタビューの際には話題にならなかったこと、もしくは後になって付け足したくなったことについて答えて頂くこともできます。先日のインタビューを思い返してみても、留学生としてのあなたの経験談について、他に付け加えたい事柄やエピソードがあるかどうかもう一度考えてみてください。

[必要であれば、以下の段落を追加。] また、インタビュー中の回答内容を補って頂くために、下記の質問項目に答えてください。これらの質問のうちほとんどは、既にインタビュー中に答えて頂いた経験談やお話について、より詳細に教えて頂くためのものです。[ここにインタビュー・スクリプトの中から該当する質問を挿入。]

これらの質問には、Eメールを用いた筆記でのご回答をお願い致します。下に質問と回答欄を設けましたので、回答内容を打ち込んだ上で、[yoko.kubo@wmich.edu](mailto:yoko.kubo@wmich.edu) までご返信ください。ご自身の経験談を説明する際、出来る限り詳細に記述することを心掛けて頂けると幸いです。この作業には20~30分程かかってしまうことが予想されますが、ご回答頂けると大変有難いです。可能であれば、この先1週間以内にご回答頂けると嬉しいです。お願いした期日の3日前に、メールでリマインダーをお送りします。ご協力感謝致します。

久保陽子

1. 先日のインタビューを思い返してみてください。留学生としてのあなたの経験に関して、何か他にも加えて話したいことはありますか。あれば、出来る限り詳しく説明してください。
2. [インタビュー・スクリプトから、該当する質問をフォロー・アップとしてここに挿入。]
3. [インタビュー・スクリプトから、該当する質問をフォロー・アップとしてここに挿入。]

## Appendix G

### HSIRB Approval Letter

## WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: March 20, 2012

To: Kathleen Wong, Principal Investigator  
Yoko Kubo, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Amy Naugle".

Re: HSIRB Project Number 11-12-01

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled "Experiencing "Both/and-ness:" Dialectics of Interactions of International Students" requested in your memo dated March 19, 2012 (to add volunteer second coder Krystal Bresnahan) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 9, 2012